Reductions In Force, Involuntary Terminations & Furloughs:
Managing Employee Behaviors In The Aftermath

Sponsored By:
Maryland Public Employers Labor Relations Association

Who Is “Affected” By A Reduction In Force?

Psychological Conditions of the “Survivors”

• Survivor’s Guilt
• Survivor’s Envy
• Emotional Contagion
In Lay Terms…

• Whew! I made it.
• Why Joe?
• I have to do all this work now?
• Am I safe?
• They don’t appreciate me.

This Is Manageable!

Management of Survivor’s Guilt Starts Before You Even Announce Lay-offs.

• Be upfront and open with employees about the economic realities your organization is facing.
• Avoid absolutes.
• Train and engage your middle managers.
• Utilize your EAP for help prepping managers and crafting your message.
• Develop a layoff procedure that is open and transparent.
The Day of the Lay-Off.

- Have a clear plan.
- Logistics.
- Security.

Offer Assistance To Those Reached By The Reduction

- Severance.
- Administrative leave.
- Extend EAP.
- Job search assistance.
- Explain the recall procedures that exist.
- Make it known that you are doing this.

Moving Forward

- Day 1 make it clear you have sketched out a general plan for moving forward.
- Layoffs should appear to be part of a general plan for a better tomorrow.
- Recognize that workloads will be different.
- To the extent possible, allow employees to have input.
- Be prepared to re-purpose office space.
Communicating with Employees

- Use multiple outlets and media.
- Acknowledge your feelings.
- Be Honest!
- Expect questions – from the big picture to the most minute detail.

Facilitate the Grieving Process

- Acknowledge the hurt.
- On-site grief/transition groups.
- Stress EAP benefits.
- Team building experiences.
- Involving employees in shaping tomorrow.
- Behave like you would at a funeral.

Remember to take care of yourself.
Questions???

Scott T. Gibson, MGA
Director of Human Resources
Harford County, Maryland
(410)638-3537
STGibson@harfordcountymd.gov