

RETENTION THROUGH LAYOFF



Foundations Human
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THE CURRENT COVID-19 PANDEMIC IS REQUIRING MANY OF US TO CONSIDER THE UNTHINKABLE: A LAYOFF OF A SIGNIFICANT PORTION, IF NOT ALL, OF OUR EMPLOYEES.

We were already dealing with the lowest unemployment rates in most of our lifetimes, creating all kinds of problems for attracting and retaining talent. Now, faced with a layoff, one of our top priorities must be taking the best care of our valuable human resources so that they remain loyal to us and wait for us to bring them back to work as safely and as quickly as possible.

There are **three key items** to prepare for in the event of a layoff, all of which have to do with meeting employee needs in the most effective way for your organization. In times of crisis, employees – in fact, people in general – have the following basic needs you will want to strive to meet:

1

LEADERSHIP

Employees will want to hear your plans from a trusted leader in your organization. They want to think that someone is in control of the situation and looking out for their welfare.

- Identify a spokesperson to be the primary source of communication for your company.
- Introduce your spokesperson and methods by which you will keep employees informed of key information and plans through your identified leader.
- Utilize your identified leader as a primary communicator only for especially important information that may need to be shared at critical times during the layoff period.

2

INFORMATION

Your employees will need information throughout the layoff process and while they may be isolating at home. You may want to take the following steps.

- Identify who the process owner(s) will be for gathering and providing key information through-out this period (see checklist item related to project team in **COVID-19 Temporary Layoff Checklist**).
- Determine the information that can be provided, for example, resources available through the company or available locally in the areas in which your employees reside.
- Establish processes that are currently in place to communicate with your employees remotely and those processes that must be developed to coordinate information and communications throughout the layoff period.
- Consider the information that may be critical for your employees to hear from the company.
Examples may include:
 - Local resources and links for unemployment and other benefits
 - Contact information related to telemedicine support and/or counseling services
 - Information related to how best to meet basic needs – shopping advice, staying physically active, remaining calm, and ideas for family bonding activities

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- Plans the company is making to be able to bring people back to work, timing, and methods. The more information you can share about plans, the more comfort this will provide employees. It will also go a long way in managing the rumor mill and misinformation on social media.
- HR and other company resources which may be available by phone or email for employee questions and support

3

CONNECTION THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Perhaps the most important item in your planning is how you will maximize connecting with employees and demonstrating care and concern through this unprecedented time. Planning is critical – develop your communication strategy and plan which identifies key messages, methods, specific audiences, timing, and messenger – throughout the layoff period.

Here are some points to consider:

- The methods and communication channels you will use to communicate the actual layoff (see our **COVID-19 Temporary Layoff Checklist** to help you prepare)
 - Remember that group, in-person announcements are not advised at this time to avoid the spread of the virus so you may need to be creative. Consider if a video message may be an option for you
- The messages, including the main three key points you want employees to retain, will need to be carefully crafted
- The various ways you will utilize your communication resources to communicate. Methods for communication may be through a company website, a call-in phone line, a mobile phone app, or by a newsletter sent to the homes during the layoff period on some regular basis to keep your employees informed along the way
- Determine who will be responsible for preparing the communications and for approving them for distribution to employees. Also, outline the processes you need to have in place to manage a very fluid situation

The bottom line is to remember that you cannot over-communicate at this time! The more information and resources you are able to provide through structured and planned communication processes by trusted company sources, the better your chance to weather this storm and retain your greatest assets, your employees, for future success of your company.

For support in preparing for a layoff, including developing the project team, identifying needed information, and developing communications strategy and plans, contact Foundations HR Consulting at 859.286.1100 or FHRC@FoundationsHR.com.