Effective Redundancy Discussions

During any redundancy process, the major hurdle for employees is often the psychological and emotional. For leaders and managers of the redundancy process, the major concerns in the initial planning stages are usually logistical together with concerns for the wellbeing of employees.

A common practice to address the wellbeing of employees usually involves providing on site support during and after any redundancy announcements. While this is a good approach, there are a number of additional steps that will achieve a higher level of success.

1. When information of a distressing or stressful nature is given, most individuals hear selectively and may not retain all of the information verbally given. Employees will also absorb information from sources other than verbal communication, for example body language, tone of voice, rate of speech etc. DTC consultants and counsellors are often given feedback about perceived insensitivity of managers and HR in the manner in which information has been communicated. This perceived insensitivity may not be an accurate reflection of the process employed, but may be a result of the managers own discomfort in delivering the message. Preparation for the people delivering the information is critical to ensure that the desired message is correctly delivered and received accurately and with the highest level of sensitivity. Similarly, best practice in managing change encompasses support for all the participants in the change process, including those driving and managing the change.

2. Provision of on site support during and immediately following your announcement provides a safety net, however some employees may not want to access support on the day of the announcement and the focus for those employees should be on identification of key questions and individual risk assessment such as:
   - Timeframes for implementation of the change
   - Preparedness of the affected teams and groups across the business
   - Longevity of employee tenure
   - Nature of the change to be announced
   - Individuals identified as being at risk
   - Environmental and market factors regarding re-employment opportunities etc

3. Some employees do not wish to see a counsellor/consultant on the day of the announcement and it is therefore important that support is provided over a number of days. In addition, the support provided by friends and family is of great benefit and should not be discounted from your process. In addition to on site support in the days following any announcement you may wish to consider activities such as group level discussions on maintenance of wellbeing during change and other relevant topics. This ensures that those people unable or unwilling to access assistance of their own accord will still receive information and support to assist them to manage the process in a constructive and healthy manner.

4. When an on site counsellor/consultant is provided, there is often a lack of information provided to both the counsellor/consultant and employees. The quality of the on service is enhanced if a discussion is held with the counsellor/consultant regarding any staff for whom there is concern. Other helpful strategies include:
   - Introduce the counsellor /consultant to the group/individual or give the counsellor/consultant the opportunity to introduce themselves. This is important even if the meeting is only a meeting to inform staff that they may be made redundant.
   - By doing this you are making staff aware that the organisation is attempting to care for them in difficult circumstance rather than providing no message or a poorly delivered message (such as if you want to see a counsellor/consultant after this they will be in room xx ) which may be perceived as cold or uncaring
   - Consider introducing everyone to the counsellor/consultant after individual meetings so that no one feels singled out. It can be a simple part of the redundancy announcement process.
► Consider the room where you want to place the counsellor/consultant. If you were distressed and wanted to talk with a counsellor/consultant would you want everyone to know which room you were in?

► Explain to your staff the role of the onsite counsellor/consultant. Some examples of what you can say to staff to further explain and demystify the role of the counsellor/consultant include:

  o The counsellor/consultant provides support and information for people regarding EAP services that may be available.

  o The counsellor/consultant is there to give people the opportunity for support independent from the organisation and with confidentiality and privacy assured.

The onsite DTC counsellor/consultant can:

► Help formulate how to tell family/partner about the redundancy
► Help start the process for planning ahead
► Help you clarify and manage emotional responses
► Help you to seek support for family members

To adequately support the emotional and psychological wellbeing of employees requires the same degree of planning and attention as other aspects of the organisational change process. Involvement of the EAP counsellor/consultant in the early stages ensures:

► Appropriate risk assessment and management of duty of care
► Support to all people involved in change, including the managers and HR
► Targeted intervention where required and where most useful
► Consistent communication at all levels regarding respect for the individuals affected by change.

ős Your EAP is there to help

Remember the EAP offers support through confidential face-to-face, telephone, video and online counselling for individuals and support, coaching and advice for managers. Appointments can be made by telephoning your EAP provider, Davidson Trahaire Corpsych (DTC), on 1300 360 364.