

People Success Toolkit

Post-Layoff Recovery



Dear Senior Leader,

Major change, whether from a shifting business strategy or economic conditions, can lead to difficult decisions, including employee layoffs. Staff reductions can have a lasting effect on your organization, especially for your remaining employees. They typically face a range of challenges and emotions, affecting how well they're able to do their jobs.

They may feel worry and guilt. They may have concerns about equality and fairness. Most importantly, they often continue to have concerns about their own job security.

As a leader during and after layoffs, you can serve your people and your organization by seeking to understand how employees feel and addressing their concerns in a way that is consistent with your company's culture and values. In turn, that understanding will help you develop and communicate renewed focus and inspiration for the future.

In June 2020, in the United States alone, **17.8 million were unemployed**, many because of layoffs.

Based on our experience, a few core people-centric habits can make a big difference in helping organizations understand and respond effectively to employee needs while shepherding organizations through change:

- Frequently gather employee feedback on critical topics
- Equip managers with insights that help them address concerns
- Have regular team and one-on-one conversations
- Check in on goals to prioritize work and time
- Learn from input in a way that improves organizational and individual success

I'm pleased to share this toolkit, and I hope you and your team find it informative and helpful.

I'd also love to hear what you think. Please [message me](#) if you have questions, would like to learn more, or want to connect with others who are working through these same challenges.



Justin Black

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An HR Leader's Playbook: Post-Layoff Recovery

Successfully navigating a reduction in staff, whether from downsizing, restructuring, merger, or acquisition, requires a thoughtful approach. It's critical to communicate transparently, listen to employees, and take care in addressing their concerns. HR leaders play a key role in advising senior leaders on how and what to communicate as they look forward.

Be prepared to deal with a range of emotions—from anger to disbelief—with compassion and empathy. Managers may be leading totally new teams. Individuals may have new assignments that stretch the boundaries of their strengths and passions. Understaffing can lead to burnout.

This moment is an important opportunity to help people feel focused and supported. Look for ways to empower your employees with learning and development and a sense of agency. The following habits can create a positive transition and replace feelings of worry and uncertainty with feelings of renewed purpose.



Habit 1
Get Feedback and Insights



Habit 2
Have Conversations



Habit 3
Set Effective Goals



Habit 4
Encourage Learning and Growth

Stay connected, understand, and respond to employee needs

Here are a few high-impact practices that you can adopt today.

- Frequently gather employee feedback on critical topics
- Equip managers with insights that help them address concerns
- Have regular team and one-on-one conversations to ensure people can adapt effectively to change
- Check in on goals to prioritize work and time
- Provide resources to help people make sense of this change in work
- Learn from input in a way that improves organizational and individual success



Habit 1

Get Feedback and Insights

Gathering employee feedback is critical to creating a smooth experience for those remaining after layoffs. While no two organizations are the same, there are a few fundamental questions that every organization should ask to monitor and evolve practices that help employees during this time.

Who should we survey?

The context and scope of your organization's layoffs should influence your survey strategy. Depending on the extent of layoffs, there may be regions or groups that you do not survey. It's good to keep in mind that layoffs can have an impact on employees far beyond those directly affected. Downstream changes in workloads, processes, organizational structures, institutional knowledge, and general concern about "who's next?" can ripple across an organization during and after layoffs.

As a result, a larger group than those directly affected by the layoffs, and possibly the entire organization, may benefit from a targeted, agile survey program. This survey will help you understand how various parts of the organization are experiencing the changes and guide constructive conversations about them.

For displaced employees, consider a targeted exit survey near their termination date focused on their separation experience instead of including them in other post-layoff surveys. While this is a positive gesture of interest in their well-being and an opportunity for them to voice final concerns, it's common to see a low response rate and negatively skewed feedback.

When should we survey?

When layoffs occur, consider surveying your employees at least once per month while employees' feelings of uncertainty and communication needs are at their peak. In more stable times, surveys can return to a more typical, quarterly cadence. It is important to remember that employee feelings of anxiety and stress may evolve and increase rather than subside as time goes on.

Organizations can integrate post-layoff or other distress pulse items into their quarterly engagement survey program or keep it a standalone, interim pulse administered occasionally in between those regular engagement pulses.

What should we ask?

Research points to the following topics as key indicators of employee engagement, and you can use these questions on the next page to survey your team or organization to understand people's needs.

If you're already surveying your employees, or just starting, consider asking the following questions for remaining employees (not those laid off):*

How are you?	How are you doing?
Support	I feel well supported by my organization at this time.
Transparency	My organization communicates openly and honestly.
Decision-making	Overall, I am satisfied with how decisions are made at my organization.
Prospects	I am confident about my organization's future.
Manager Support	I can get the support I need from my manager
Prioritization	I know what I should be focusing on right now.
Resources	I have the resources I need to do my job.
Empowerment	I feel empowered to make decisions regarding my work.
Speak My Mind	I feel free to speak my mind without fear of negative consequences.
Belonging	I feel a sense of belonging at my organization.
eSat	How happy are you working at your organization?

Open-ended question

In addition to survey items, Glint strongly recommends allowing free-form comments to capture employees' direct perspective and practical solutions. With artificial intelligence available today, even tens of thousands of employee comments can be quickly summarized and categorized into actionable insights to help leaders understand where more work is needed.

Open Ended	As a result of these challenging times, what do you see changing for the better?
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Who should see the results?

Share employee survey feedback at the organizational and manager-level to ensure actions are relevant to address what matters most to people by geography, function, or role. Empowering managers and teams to tackle local concerns enables people to exert a level of control over their work experience, helping to alleviate the common feeling of helplessness. To facilitate this process, quickly release survey results to managers and encourage them to lead frequent team and individual conversations based on the insights. From an enterprise view, corporate teams, such as HR or IT, can use survey results to guide future actions to support employees who remain following a downsizing.

* Unless noted otherwise, we suggest you ask each item on a 5pt scale, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree" and customize as appropriate. For question 1, the 5pt scale can range from "Not at all well" to "Very well." Also, in these questions, "organization" can be exchanged for the company's name.



Habit 2

Have Conversations

Layoffs introduce uncertainty and loss of control into organizations, making markers of stability even more important. Emphasizing organizational culture is a clear mechanism to help reinforce resilience and predictability. Another way is to ensure people clearly see leaders and managers demonstrating organizational values. Regular conversations, both team and one-on-one meetings, provide the opportunity for leaders and managers to act as role models and reinforce key organizational values.

These conversations also give people a way to be heard, build trust, fuel prioritization and targeted action, uncover roadblocks and resource needs, and encourage sustained focus following a reduction. For a set of questions we've seen work well, please see [the conversation guide in this toolkit](#).



Habit 3

Set Goals Effectively

When reducing staff, consider how organizational priorities will change and how those priorities impact team-level goals. Remaining employees will likely need support to determine how to best allocate their time to be most effective and help the business succeed.

Consider shifting to more frequent goal-setting conversations with smaller, more near-term objectives. This will help employees concentrate on the most critical activities that will contribute more immediately and will better align with the broader organizational objectives if they evolve.

What employees don't need:

- A lot of documentation
- Rigidity
- Complexity

What employees need:

- Support
- Focus
- A feeling of control
- Connection with colleagues and with the organization



Habit 4

Encourage Learning and Growth

Learning is critical to help people respond resiliently to a changing environment. Additional responsibilities, shifting business priorities, and new protocols can be challenging, but they also provide opportunities to develop flexibility, to rethink or rebuild skills, and to reflect on what meaningful work looks like.

Learning may look very different for each employee. Some might want to expand their skills to help the organization in new ways or change paths altogether, while others may need to learn new ways to practice self-care in the midst of major stressors brought on by a layoff.

Encourage managers and employees to reflect on challenges and take steps to learn as they adapt. Revisiting learning goals and progress during frequent manager and employee touchpoints (and in everyday work experiences) helps signal the focus on continuous improvement.

Post-Layoff Learning Resources

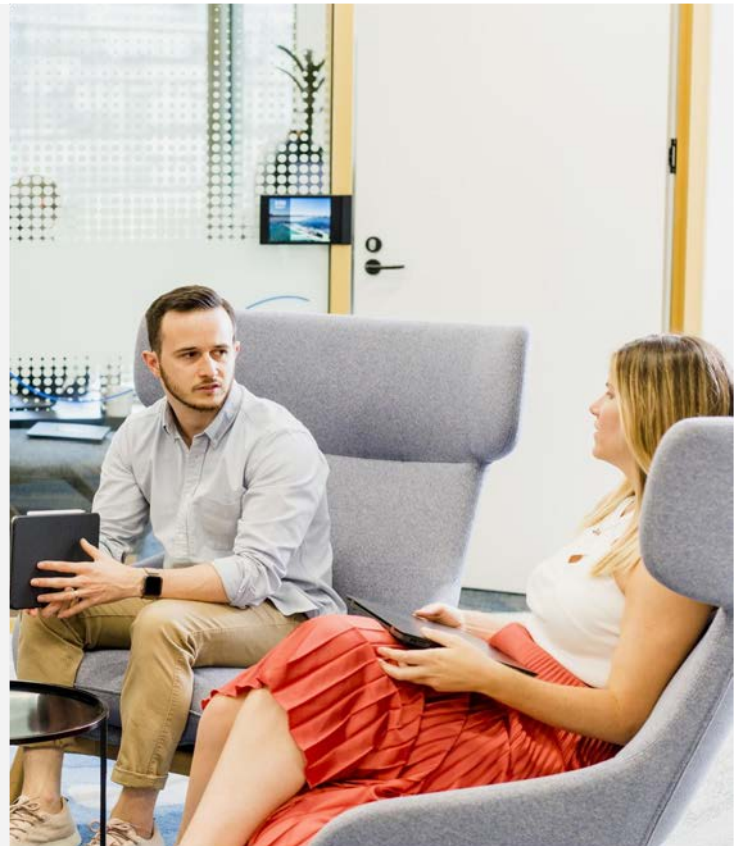
[How to Support Your Remaining Employees After a Layoff](#)

Article in HBR

[Learning Path: Leading During Times of Change](#) Online learning through LinkedIn Learning

[Building Your Resilience](#) Article in American Psychological Association

[Paying Attention: How To Focus On What's Important](#) Article in Forbes



Get Started

Actions to Support Post-Layoff Recovery

Here are some specific actions for a people-centric approach to post-layoff recovery. We've broken it down for each level of your organization. Start where it makes the most sense for your situation.

Organization

- Communicate with transparency and compassion to address your employees' concerns about their livelihoods and competence to succeed in a changing organization.
- Discuss the principles that guided decision-making throughout the process and leverage your company values.
- Increase the frequency of communications and the visibility of key leaders through town hall meetings, office visits (when possible), and one-on-one or one-on-many conversations.
- Reinforce the integrity and fairness of past and future decision processes to help retain or rebuild your employees' trust.

Manager

- Be ready to provide context surrounding the layoff. If you were not involved in the decisions themselves, it is important that you understand the rationale, any guiding principles for how decisions were made, and how your team is impacted.
- Make sure you can communicate the rationale in a way that feels true to you, so you can be authentic with your team while supporting the organization's decision.
- Demonstrate confidence in the decisions, compassion for those impacted, openness to teammates' questions and concerns, and a patience with executives and HR as they are focused on supporting impacted employees.
- Use your team members' feedback as a guidepost to help you tailor the tone and content of your communications.
- Ask each person what you or the team can do to support them and make a commitment to one action you can do.
- Follow up on that commitment regularly to see what's working or needs adjusting.

Employee

- Share your perspective through surveys and direct feedback to your manager.
- Let your manager know what would make it easier for you to feel more comfortable and productive at work, your concerns, and ideas for making the work more efficient and effective.
- Understand that your manager and leaders will not have all the answers; they are also experiencing challenges and worries of their own. Patience and compassion is important during such difficult times.

A Conversation Guide for Managers and Employees

When layoffs occur, conversations often shift toward concerns about fairness, job security, financial implications, and how to execute work with available resources. This guide is designed to help you connect with your team members through a high-quality conversation.

Conversation Prep

Before you connect with one of your team members, check in with yourself. Are you okay? Are you in the right physical and mental condition to have a conversation right now? Are you able to be present? If not, it might be best to reschedule. Your team will understand if you need to shift the time. If you are ready to have the conversation, make sure you are clear on the most pressing priorities for your team. Aside from support, the most critical need for most employees is understanding how best to prioritize work.

Tips for a Successful Conversation

Listen more than you speak to create space for your employees to share their individual experience

Show empathy and share your own challenges and experience, when appropriate. It is OK to say, "I don't know!" If solutions are beyond your ability to help as their manager, connect them to HR and/or employee assistance resources

If meeting virtually, try to be on camera and avoid distractions

Stay on top of communication from leadership to stay aligned with messaging and share relevant resources

As best you can, make sure everyone leaves the conversation with a clear idea of how to prioritize time, which priorities need to shift, and when you'll have the next check-in.

Questions to Ask in Your Next 1:1 Conversation

Whether you are in a manager role or employee, these questions are helpful prompts to create a quality conversation following a layoff. If you're in a manager role, keep these questions in mind to help guide the conversation. If you're in an employee role, think ahead about how you might answer these questions. If there's a question below that's important to you and it doesn't come up during your conversation, bring it up yourself.

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- 1 How are you doing with everything that has been going on?

 - 2 What's one thing we can do to make things easier for you?

 - 3 Reflecting on the past quarter, what are you most proud of?

 - 4 What are the most critical and valuable work priorities for you to spend your time on right now?

 - 5 What less critical goals can be pushed back or even transferred?

 - 6 What do you want to learn next?

Post Conversation

After your conversation, make sure to document any action items. In order to encourage good follow-up, try to identify at least one action you can take before your next conversation. It could even be something small like adding the next conversation to the calendar. Small actions are more likely to get done and build to larger change.

Connect, Share, Grow

Connect with your peers and Glint's People Science experts to share challenges, ask questions, and swap experiences in our LinkedIn Group: [People Success Forum: Building the New World of Work](#)