Working through layoffs at your workplace

Surviving a round of layoffs brings many challenges. Those employees who remain often find themselves part of a shrinking labour force, coping with the extra workload of their departed colleagues. Morale is often low and insecurity levels are high.

Layoffs are tough on everyone, including your boss. By demonstrating an understanding of the business realities behind the downsizing and expressing your desire to do whatever is necessary to help get things back on track, can make a tough situation better for your colleagues and your boss.

Some approaches to consider during these situations may include:

Stepping up communication

- Let your boss know that while you may not feel good about the loss of your colleagues, you understand the reasons for it.
- Emphasize that you are eager to do what is required to keep business running as usual.
- Discuss and clarify the new responsibilities you are being asked to take on.
- Offer to work with your boss to develop a new job description that reflects these extra duties.

Showing the right attitude

- Try to be positive at all times. Avoid joining in negative talk about the issue.
- Think like a partner. Try to come up with ideas to help solve work issues or brighten poor morale.
- When talking to others in your industry, say positive things about your boss and your company.

Problem-solving

- Important details can easily slip through the cracks after downsizing. Try to identify where problems lie and work to find solutions.
- If your new workload seems overwhelming, reflect on whether the cause lies in you being overworked or in a possible lack of skills.
- Measure your workload by keeping a time log for a week or more. Talk to your boss about the time required to complete new responsibilities. Offer to help find solutions.
- If you lack the skills for new tasks, talk to your boss about how part-time or company-based skill upgrading could make you a more effective employee.

Career protection

- Keep your resumé and job search skills up to date.
- Continue to network in the industry and keep in touch with headhunters.
- Keep in touch with colleagues who were laid off. Chances are that you'll meet up again in the workplace.
- Help laid-off colleagues in their job search, as it may work to your advantage in the future.

The fact that you are still around means that you are considered a valuable employee. There may also be new opportunities for you to expand your skills as you take on more responsibilities in your current position.

In times of economic volatility, it can feel like no one’s job is safe. This is never truer than when colleagues

suffer layoffs. Try to regard these unfortunate circumstances as an opportunity to help your colleagues and your company, as well as to broaden your own skills and protect your best interests.