



WHITEPAPER:

CAREER TRANSITION SERVICES ARE A SMART
BUSINESS DECISION



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Anyone who has ever been terminated from their position can vividly recall specific details of that day, even years later. People remember what their boss wore; what the weather was like; who was involved in the notification; how they felt and what it did to them. Termination makes a deep impact on a cognitive level that can be felt by everyone involved. Given this powerful and long-term impression, you can easily begin to see the benefits of providing a support program to help your exiting colleagues navigate their transition. Not only does it help the employee manage the emotional impact of their exit and set them up for success in their job search, but it is a smart business decision to guard against operational and brand risk both inside and outside your organization.

THE NEURO EFFECT

Before we can fully unveil why offering transition support is a smart business strategy, we first need to understand the termination process from the perspective of the brain. Whether or not we want to admit it, emotions are a key part of business and our working lives. Whether it is a new job, a promotion, or a termination, emotions are unavoidable, but also very important.

On a cognitive level, research shows that losing a job can be the equivalent of going through a divorce or experiencing the death of a loved one.¹ Our jobs are strongly associated to our identity and purpose, so when in the blink of an eye that is taken away, it can completely disrupt your life as you know it. Our sense of purpose, belonging, stability and security are all intrinsically linked to our jobs, which makes a termination the beginning of

a lengthy and difficult grieving process.

The neuro effect goes beyond the individual being let go from the organization. What's often forgotten is that the termination process also has a profound physiological effect on the individuals delivering the news, which research shows can't be controlled or "shut-off".

According to Neuromanagement expert, Dr. Carlos Davidovich, in our brains, we have what are called "mirror neurons" which are responsible for our feelings of empathy. These neurons are what give us the ability to put ourselves in someone else's shoes or that sense of *feeling* what others are feeling.

This means that the supervisor or HR manager delivering the news of a layoff is subject to feel the same range of emotions that the individual being terminated is experiencing. That's why no matter how many terminations a person does, it's never an easy or unemotional process.

¹ <http://time.com/money/4757432/effects-of-getting-fired-study/>

Given the significant mental impact for all parties involved, it is critical for organizations to have the right transition processes and support in place. When companies have a thorough career transition program they are better prepared to handle the emotions that can affect the organizations reputation and profitability.

REDUCE STRESS & MAINTAIN PRODUCTIVITY

When a downsizing occurs, it doesn't just impact those directly involved. It can penetrate deep within the organization and cause stress, a lack of engagement and mistrust amongst the remaining employees. "While a leader might prefer to quickly move past job losses, doing so without addressing the needs of the workforce could cause serious performance setbacks."² Leaders must be proactive

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and prepared to respond to the needs of their team in order to maintain productivity and trust and keep the company's culture intact.

² <http://business.financialpost.com/executive/c-suite/7-ways-leaders-can-boost-staff-morale-and-productivity-in-the-midst-of-downsizing>

To do so, you must start by reframing your career transition process. All too often it is seen as a necessary evil with little forethought. As suggested by Dr. Davidovich, terminations should be considered a process, not an event. There should be internal protocol and process in place that starts long before, and continues well beyond, the employees last day to ensure everyone involved is prepared and properly supported.

So, what does this mean for your organization? Well first, you must ensure that your managers are properly trained and supported by human resources throughout the termination process so that they are better equipped to handle the emotions involved, mitigating any interruption it may cause to their performance and productivity.

Next, you need to have a proper communications plan in place that includes transparent and frequent communication. Be prepared to explain why the decision has been made, provide opportunities for questions and feedback, and steer away from fear or uncertainty by offering some clear and achievable short-term goals.³ By offering several clear communication touch-points, including in-person discussions where possible, you can provide reassurance, address rumors and strengthen morale.

Lastly, offer your departing employees a formal career transition program or

³ <http://business.financialpost.com/executive/c-suite/7-ways-leaders-can-boost-staff-morale-and-productivity-in-the-midst-of-downsizing>

outplacement support. This not only helps the individual but shows that the organization is committed to the welfare of its employees. This builds a sense of trust and appreciation among the remaining workforce that their peers have been well taken care of. Not only that, "outplacement solutions show your dedication to your team, no matter how bad things may get", which can boost productivity and engagement.⁴

PROTECT YOUR BRAND

In today's ultra-connected world with social media and news feeds at everyone's fingertips, organizations need to be more aware of their reputation than ever before, and how you approach the termination process is a critical piece to this.

While no termination will go without some negative emotions, you certainly can improve the experience and the chance of a more successful outcome!

Imagine you offer an exiting employee with an outplacement package that provides them with skills to deal with the emotional component of their job loss, access to networking, resume and interview support, help with job searching, and more. How do you think they will reflect on their experience? Of course, they are more likely to have a positive experience and better impression of the organization.

⁴ <https://www.hcamag.com/hr-news/opinion-top-five-advantages-of-outplacement-services-184236.aspx>

Now think of the alternative. You frog-march someone to the door, give them their package and that's it. The organizations reputation is left much more vulnerable, and not only that, you are opening yourself up to legal risks.

By investing in outplacement support and giving the departing employee what they need to be successful these risks are greatly minimized.

"As many as 60% of departing employees will remain in their former company's eco-system as buyers, suppliers, influencers, or competitors. So how you treat your departing leaders really does matter."

We have long known the power of positive and negative impressions and have seen the statistic that states dissatisfied customers will tell 10 friends about their experience, whereas a satisfied customer only tells a few.⁵

Well this holds true for employment as well. If an employer treats a departing employee poorly, they are likely to do things such as, bad-mouth the organization, leave negative reviews online, and potentially take legal action.

⁵ <https://medium.com/swlh/word-of-mouth-the-power-of-the-people-d03a85ad0ab>

What's more, as many as 60% of departing employees will remain in their former company's eco-system as buyers, suppliers, influencers, or competitors. So how you treat your departing leaders really does matter. ⁶

Terminating employees is never easy, but the situation can be made better. Whether you are restructuring, changing leadership, dealing with poor performance or going through a merger offering career transition services is a smart business decision.

Through an understanding of neuroscience, internal training and planning, and offering proper outplacement support you can transition employees to a new future and keep your internal culture and productivity intact, all while maintaining your reputation and image.

⁶ <https://huntscanlon.com/employees-will-easy-lose-hard-hire-2017/>