

When Organizational Change Affects You

How can you turn downsizing into a positive career move?

Would You Be Ready?

- Do you have an active network inside and outside your company?
- Have you considered which new fields or companies you might want to explore?
- Are you aware of the resources offered by your company to find a new position?
- Have you negotiated the best severance package possible?

son, downsizing shakes up the company status quo, forcing employees to reassess their career goals.

Effects of Downsizing

Each workplace has a corporate culture, and downsizing disrupts that culture. Employees can become unproductive, often paralyzed by anxiety. Downsizing can challenge the loyalty you felt toward your employer, especially if you thought you would be working for the company until you retired. Whatever your situation, keep working steadily while you consider your options. Avoid

pointless discussions with coworkers that intensify dissatisfaction and do not move you forward. You may feel initial relief if you're not affected by downsizing, and then guilt because your friends are fired. Downsizing is a wake-up call that can spur you to take positive action to improve your life.

turn to drinking or drugs to cope. Explain the situation in matter-of-fact terms to your family and ask for their support. Don't settle back and take a break with any paid-out vacation time and/or severance pay.

Make Your Pitch

Most jobs are found through personal networks. Identify your skills and companies that might be interested in your capabilities. What career or company motivates you? Meet people for lunch. Get names of contacts and gather information. Ask, "Can you think of anyone else I might talk to?" Brush up your resume, and have different formats for the career fields you are considering. Do not jump into the first job offered. Think about where you want to be. A lateral move in pay range might make sense if the company your considering is known for advancement. Do not send resumes randomly. Get the name of the HR person or department head you should contact. Send your resume with a cover letter and mention any contact who lets you use his or her name. Follow up with a call and set an appointment. They may have a position open next week. You never know.

Why Downsizing Happens

Many companies periodically downsize or lay off employees to reduce the cost of producing goods or services and remain competitive in the market. Industry indicators often point the way to layoffs. Be aware of the movement and projections for your industry. Layers of an organization or entire departments can be downsized or outsourced to cut costs. Often the affected positions are reinstated within two years, but the company "right-sizes" to realize quick, short-term benefits. Whatever the rea-

Short Term Actions

Most companies have a set rollout for a downsizing. Communications should be ongoing. If not, you may want to ask management to clarify objectives. What is the process and the timeline? Be matter-of-fact. Avoid anger. If you are staying, remain upbeat, efficient and offer to cover new areas that need attention. However, avoid setting a pattern of overtime that will make you and your family miserable. If you are affected, keep personal spending down. Bank as much back-up funds as possible. Do not

The EAP Can Help

You will have many questions and concerns if downsizing looms. Downsizing offers an opportunity to reevaluate your career path. Would self-employment be a good fit for your skills? Is taking an early retirement an option for you? Choices are often determined by where you are in your career now. Get support and turn to the EAP, if needed. Together you and the EA professional may discover a solution or path that will be just the right one for you. The point is to keep moving.