BEST PRACTICES in HR™

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'Humanizing' Layoffs and Aftermath Lessens Guilt, Resentment for Survivors

Much attention had been paid to the effect of layoffs on workers who lose their jobs, but companies often overlook the impact layoffs have on the remaining employees.

Behaviors Send Message

Many companies claim that they care about their employees and that their employees are their most valued asset. Yet, when it comes time for layoffs, their behaviors tend to send a different message, says David Jones, president of PassionWorks!, Inc. (www.workpassionately.com), a performance improvement company specializing in leadership and team development and employee engagement.

Jones recalls the case of an employee who was summoned to a meeting in HR for the first time in her 8-year career with a company. A junior HR rep she had never met informed her that she was being laid off and asked if she needed a hug.

In other companies, veteran employees are told to leave the premises immediately after notification of a layoff, says Jones. "You don't even get to pack up your stuff. Someone else does that for you." And, worse yet, some companies hire third parties to inform employees that they're being laid off and to handle all subsequent communications, according to Jones.

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Economy, Housing Market Drive Companies to Rev Up Relocation Perks

Although family issues are still the top reason employees turn down relocations, housing and mortgage concerns are increasingly to blame, according to a recent survey.

Of participants in Atlas's *2008 Corporate Relocation Survey*, 62% report that employees decline relocation due to family issues/ties, while 50% cite housing/mortgage concerns. The latter figure is up significantly from 30% in the 2007 survey.

In response to current housing market and economic conditions, companies are making relocation opportunities more attractive to new-hires and transferees.

Perks Pack a Punch

"Whether it's because employees don't want to move their kids to a new school or they've just paid off their mortgage, it's becoming increasingly difficult to lure top talent to a new city," says Greg Hoover, president and chief operating officer of Atlas Van Lines, Inc. (www.atlasworldgroup.com), an Evansville-based corporate relocation, transportation, and global logistics firm. "To remain competitive, businesses are becoming more generous. They're offering spousal perks and full reimbursement; they're paying for losses on home sales."

The survey found that 42% of participants offer employment assistance to spouses and partners—the highest percentage in 5 years, according to Atlas.

In addition, more than half provide a temporary housing allowance, reimburse for homefinding trips, and pay for storage.

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'Humanizing' *(continued from page 1)*

Such scenarios "dehumanize" the layoff process and can leave both outgoing and remaining employees feeling disenchanted. Jones says employers should "humanize" both the way they handle layoffs and how they manage their workforce afterwards.

Ongoing Communication

Employers can "humanize" the layoff process by giving employees advance notice, whenever possible, of an impending layoff, having direct supervisors deliver the news, and providing outgoing employees with an opportunity to say goodbye to their co-workers, according to Jones.

After a layoff, managers need to be aware of potential reactions of remaining workers. Some employees may feel guilty for having survived the layoff and worry that they might lose their job, too; others might be so fearful about it that they put unrealistic pressure on themselves and/or subordinates; and some might grow increasingly resentful over the layoff and the additional work they have to assume, Jones says.

He offers the following advice for addressing the needs of remaining employees in the wake of a layoff:

- **Keep employees informed.** "Communicate quickly and frequently," Jones says. If managers are not allowed to divulge certain information, they can acknowledge questions and explain that they will provide answers as soon as possible.
- **Confront tough topics head-on.** Feelings of guilt can be allayed by explaining the rationale behind the layoff, stating outright that the layoffs were not the result of anything employees did or didn't do, and discussing the types of things the company is doing to assist laid-off employees. Open discussion also can help break down feelings of resentment. For example, a manager can start by saying something like, "If I were you, this is how I would be feeling" and then letting employees talk openly about their feelings.
- **Be proactive.** Employees need to know whether the company has new objectives, what those objectives are, how their department's work aligns with those objectives, how their work will change, and how the team members can support one another going forward, he says. "In layoffs, it's uncertainty that really drives people crazy."
- **Avoid burnout.** Managers should help employees set realistic goals and priorities, determine which projects and processes are most meaningful to employees, and ensure that their work still has meaning to them.

Economy *(continued from page 1)*

Full, partial, and lump-sum payments for expense reimbursement are up compared to the previous year—with 63% of firms offering full reimbursement to transferees (compared to 55% in the 2007 survey) and 54% offering it to new-hires (compared to 42%).

Significant jumps were reported in employers' reimbursement for moving recreation and lawn equipment, a second automobile, and valuable collections.

Slight declines were found in the number of employers reimbursing or paying home sale costs (50%), home purchase costs (48%), packing service for all belongings (75%), and unpacking of all items (47%).

Formal Policy Essential

Hoover recommends that companies establish a formal relocation policy, outlining the benefits available to new-hires and transferees. "It's amazing how, without a policy in place, your costs can double or triple instantly" when a relocating employee asks the company to reimburse for certain expenses that it had not anticipated, he says.

A well-written policy will clarify in advance the types of expenses that the employer is willing to cover, he says.

Unlike other policies, HR does not typically deal with the company's relocation policy on a daily basis. "It's not something that's in your face every day like the dress code, how you evaluate employees, or how you administer pay increases," Hoover says. However, he says it is still important to continuously review your relocation policy and to revise it as needed so that your policy accurately reflects company goals, market conditions, and the employment landscape.

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CASE STUDY

College Students' Project Helps Ready New Workers for the Healthcare Industry

Who: Cambridge Health Alliance

What: Partnered with a Bentley College class to add new programming to employee orientation.

Results: Received a creative, informative group of employment readiness modules and presentation format for incorporation into employee orientation.

Local colleges and employers often partner to help graduating seniors find their first jobs and internships for underclassmen. However, colleges can also provide free resources for human resources projects and at the same time, learning fodder for their courses.

Bentley College Professor Helen Meldrum contacted Karen Sontag, workforce development manager for Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA), this past spring semester suggesting that a group of her students in Human Relations Analysis in Healthcare complete a course project that would benefit CHA. Both the college (www.bentley.edu) and CHA are located in the greater Boston metropolitan area. The CHA healthcare system (www.challiance.org) serves area residents with three hospital locations and more than 20 primary-care and specialty practices, the Cambridge Public Health Department, and Network Health plan.

Sontag, who is responsible for new employee orientation for CHA, explains that annually, CHA reviews employee orientation, making necessary changes to make certain it continues to meet the needs of new employees and healthcare industry regulatory requirements.

One of the areas that hadn't yet been addressed by CHA orientation was employment readiness, and Sontag explains that this is an aspect of orientation that is important, particularly to individuals new to the workforce and individuals from other cultures and countries coming into the workforce.

Workforce Challenges at CHA

With four generations in the workforce at CHA, Donna Bonaparte, senior director of human resources, notes that members of Generation Y may not have received the career opportunities that they should when entering the CHA workforce because of the other generations' perceptions of their demeanor, communication style, and lack of style and skills.

"We were finding overwhelmingly that individuals were coming to interviews unprepared and coming to their first [work] assignments unprepared," Bonaparte explains.

"Add to that the complexities of the culture with our very culturally diverse populations (more than 50 percent of our patients speak languages other than English), and you have a challenge. All the complexities of the different cultures of immigrants and the generational piece mean you need to help new employees be successful."

Since CHA's goal is to have the workforce of a particular health center reflect the culture of the communities served, the challenge of orienting new staff from diverse cultures and backgrounds to the American healthcare industry will never go away.

Sontag comments, "Health care is a very exacting employment environment. Shift changes must be punctual, personal hygiene [is critical], there are rules about what people can wear and not wear in clinical settings; it's one of the more strict work environments."

These points made by Bonaparte and Sontag underline the importance of employment readiness for young workers and for workers new to the American healthcare industry.

The Employment Readiness Assignment

The Bentley students were provided with the task of creating modules for an employment readiness program geared to new CHA employees. Sontag spoke at one class to familiarize the students with CHA, provided a written assignment sheet, and covered the assignment verbally.

Students began the assignment by writing an outcomes statement designed to cover their objectives for a 3-hour training program. The broad objectives as listed by the students included:

- Gain insight into basic competencies within the workforce.
- Strengthen interpersonal relations with one another.
- Learn how to become an asset to your organization.
- Help improve the health of the greater Boston area.

The students also supported what they learned from Sontag with Internet and media research to find out more about CHA and the challenges the healthcare system faces, notes Sontag. She comments, "Students made the connection that doing all these things [meeting the objectives] helps the mission of CHA."

Some specific areas covered in the employment readiness training included a game called "Dress or Not" that helps new employees identify what is appropriate to wear, as well as a game that covered the importance of punctuality and attendance in a humorous and fun way. "I was pleasantly surprised by the professionalism of the students and the freshness brought to this [training]," says Sontag.

"The Internet culture, things that are part of their world that older generations are removed from, [contains] elements that would particularly resonate with new employees in the same age range," she explains, adding that the students' diverse backgrounds help them better understand the diversity of CHA's workforce and patients.

Sontag says that she will be able to incorporate many ideas from the students' project as she develops an employment readiness program.

Her advice to other HR professionals regarding student input and projects with local colleges is to narrowly focus the assignment, provide tools to the students with which to work, and train the students to put together specific goals and outcomes that they wish to achieve.

From the Courthouse

Police Officers Charge City with Discriminating on Basis of Pregnancy

The city of Albuquerque contends that it applied a uniform policy applicable to all employees when two veteran police officers took maternity leave in 2000. However, the officers maintain that they were discriminated against on the basis of pregnancy.

What happened. Cynthia Orr and Patricia Paiz requested time off under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) in 2000 for the births of their children. After their supervisors at the Albuquerque Police Department approved their leave, the department's personnel director told them that they could not use accrued compensatory time during leave, and that they would have to use all of their sick leave before using vacation time.

Orr and Paiz were concerned for several reasons. First, department employees taking FMLA leave for other reasons (e.g., kidney dialysis or caring for a sick family member) were routinely permitted to use comp time and vacation time before exhausting their sick leave.

Second, department policy specified that unused sick days could be carried over from year to year and used to help secure an early retirement.

Third, only a certain amount of vacation time could be carried over to subsequent years (with the remainder being "cashed out" at year-end), and officers with more than 250 hours of comp time had to use it before they could work more overtime. Since Orr and Paiz were not allowed to use comp time during leave, they would effectively be prevented from earning overtime pay when they returned.

They filed suit against the city and its personnel director, saying they had been discriminated against on the basis of pregnancy in violation of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act.

A district court granted summary judgment to the defendants, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit reversed the decision and remanded the case for further proceedings. The district court sided with the city and personnel director a second time, and the officers appealed again to the 10th Circuit, which includes Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming.

What the court said. The appeals court also reversed the second decision, rejecting an argument that the city was simply following department policy and, alternatively, that the personnel director had made a good-faith mistake.

A reasonable jury could conclude that the city's justification was pretext for intentional discrimination, according to the court. Orr and Paiz "presented evidence suggesting that: (i) they were required to use sick leave for their maternity leave at a time when, (ii) the department's regulations in force *permitted* the use of vacation time for FMLA leave, and (iii) other employees seeking FMLA leave for purposes unrelated to a pregnancy were routinely allowed to use vacation or compensatory time," the court said.

In 1997, the personnel director had required eight female officers on maternity leave to use sick time, the court said. At the time, the department restored their sick leave after finding that other employees were allowed to use comp and vacation time for FMLA leave.

"The evidence shows that … [the personnel director] singled out the FMLA leave requests of ten separate pregnant women over the course of three years; enforced against them a rule at odds with Department policy and practice; and, critically, continued to do so after being put on notice that her actions were inconsistent with department policy and practice," the court said. "Simply put, the evidence is sufficient to allow, if not compel, a reasonable fact-finder to conclude that … [the personnel director] did not honestly err but instead intentionally singled out pregnant women for differential treatment" (*Orr et al. v. City of Albuquerque et al.*, No. 07-2105, U.S. Court of Appeals, 10th Cir., 7/8/07).

THE LAW

The **Pregnancy Discrimination Act** (PDA), which applies to employers with 15 or more employees, prohibits discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. The basic principle behind the PDA is that women affected by pregnancy and related conditions must be treated the same as other applicants and employees on the basis of their ability or inability to work.

The PDA does not *require* employers to provide pregnancy leave. However, if an employer does have a short-term disability plan, it must be available to pregnant women just as it is to employees with other temporary disabilities. Nearly all the states have their own laws on pregnancy leave, and most of these mirror the PDA.

What to Remember

- **Put it in writing.** Outline the specifics of your leave policy, and educate supervisors on it.
- **Make sure written policy matches common practice.** In this case, Orr and Paiz showed that employees on leave for reasons other than the birth of a child were allowed to use comp time, as well as vacation time, without exhausting their sick leave first.

'Lean' Concepts of Six Sigma Free Up HR to Become Strategic Partner

Some critics say that many HR departments and professionals are reactive, process-driven, and service-oriented instead of being strategic business partners. Stephen Coco, associate principal, Intellilink, comments, "Everyone wants HR to do more succession planning, organizational design support—in short, 'strategic HR.' However, how do you make yourself more available to be strategic?"

The workload for HR is already overwhelming in many organizations and it may seem impossible to add any more work. Coco suggests that using some of the concepts from Six Sigma, specifically the "lean" process management philosophy, can help free up time so you can focus your resources on being more of a strategic business partner in your organization. This back door entrance to strategic HR helps you examine processes and tasks that might be eating up the time of your HR executives and professionals.

The three concepts from the lean process management philosophy that will help you, according to Coco, include:

1. Focusing on process value,
2. Improving service throughput, *and*
3. Embracing pull systems.

Using Process Value And Mapping

Process value and process mapping help you to determine whether the HR function is procedure and process heavy, explains Coco. "Any process that doesn't help keep costs and cycle time down, or doesn't contribute to quality, needs to be reconsidered. Inefficient processes cause waste and can introduce errors into the system.

"Particularly in HR, where there is much data manipulation and movement of information, there are many "re's"—repeats, reworks, and rechecks. These 're's' add much time and length to the process and don't add a tremendous amount of value…."

Challenging the old way of doing things, such as questioning what may be unnecessary layers of approval, can make a process more efficient, says Coco. "In HR, we've seen so many instances where the ceremonial check-offs [checking someone else's work and signing off on it] occur because that's the way that it has been done before."

If your HR team takes each task and process and reviews the steps involved, the team can decide which steps might be discontinued or streamlined to speed up the processes.

Improving 'Throughput'

Improving service throughput (rate of successful message delivery) involves reviewing the systems and staffing for your processes since both affect the end result.

For example, if you have staff that can handle 50 telephone calls per hour when 100 calls are coming in, would doubling the staff solve your problem? "Not necessarily," explains Coco.

"It could be that your telephone system cannot handle 100 calls per hour, in which case it wouldn't make sense to add personnel without also upping the system capacity. If you upgrade the system, maybe you can handle the demand by adding only 50 percent more employees."

In HR, perhaps too much time is spent on tasks and taking calls because your systems or processes are not up to par, and one or both need an overhaul, he says. Systems quickly become antiquated or obsolete and need to be upgraded or replaced to meet current and future demands.

Introduce 'Pull' Systems

The last concept that applies well to HR is implementing pull systems—systems that are based on actual customer demand, explains Coco. "Linking process and demand cuts out waste that would otherwise result from overproduction. For service [providers] like HR, the objective is to reduce the overall lead time of providing services by reducing things in progress."

For example, by using an Internet-based, self-service employee portal that allows workers to change personal information; sign up for benefits; and access policies, procedures, forms, communication tools, and wellness information, you could drastically cut down on the need for human interaction within the HR function and give employees better service.

The result of reviewing the three lean concepts and examining your processes to determine what needs an overhaul will be the freeing up of HR professionals to serve the organization as business partners. HR can then apply its strengths in the areas of talent management, succession planning, employee and leadership development, and other critical aspects of HR to move the organization toward greater business success and profit margins.

For more information about this topic and Intellilink, a management consulting firm that improves the productivity of knowledge worker organizations, visit www.intellilink.com.

Editor's note: A detailed definition of Six Sigma may be found on the Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute's website at www.sei.cmu.edu/str/descriptions/sigma6_body.html.

Tips & Tactics

Celebrate National Work & Family Month in October!

Let your employees know that you care about their ability to achieve a good level of work-life balance by celebrating the fifth anniversary of National Work & Family Month in conjunction with the Alliance for Work-Life Progress (AWLP) and WorldatWork.

If your company's senior management is already onboard with the fact that workers who balance their lives in ways that provide them with the family life that they desire and a challenging, interesting career are more productive, you should honor that during October 2008. If your company needs a nudge in the direction of adding supportive, employee work-life programs, this month provides a good opportunity to start.

For example, a resource that is available to help you is a 16-page PDF titled "Categories of Work-Life Effectiveness: Successfully Evolving Your Organization's Work-Life Portfolio," downloadable from the National Work & Family Month website in the Work-Life Resources section on the right (www.awlp.org/awlp/nwfm/nwfm-home.jsp#ideas).

The publication begins by defining Work-Life Effectiveness as "a specific set of organizational practices, policies, and programs as well as a philosophy that actively supports efforts to help everyone who works to achieve success within and outside of the workplace."

The publication also reports that compiling a supportive work-life portfolio for your organization means covering seven categories well. They include: caring for dependents, health and wellness, paid and unpaid time office, community involvement, workplace flexibility, cultural change initiatives, and financial support. There are other resources on the same Web page under the heading "Articles, Reports, Tools & Timelines" that may assist you in building up your work-life portfolio.

Two may be helpful to employees who are contemplating how a flexible work schedule or work arrangement might help them better balance their work and personal responsibilities. One is the "Flexible Work Arrangement Self Assessment Questionnaire" and the other is the "Flexible Work Arrangement Request." Both documents may be customized for your organization's purposes and special needs.

Celebrating National Work & Family Month

For companies that already have robust work-life portfolios, below are a few ideas shared by AWLP for the celebration of National Work & Family Month:

- Post photos shared by employees of their families on your company Intranet that show names, ages, and interesting achievements.
- Conduct a work-life survey to solicit employee opinions on programs or offerings for feedback regarding whether the organization should expand or discontinue some of them and add others.
- Solicit testimonials from employees on how they successfully manage work and family challenges for an article on the employee Intranet [or an article in your employee newsletter].

For more information about the month-long celebration and work-life reports, ideas, and tools, visit the AWLP website (www.awlp.org).

Need to Provide Employee Training? Here's Help

Training for supervisors and employees is increasingly mandated under state and federal laws. Several states, for example, require annual sexual harassment training—and documentation that employees and supervisors have completed such courses and understood their content. And there are safety topics that you must present to help workers avoid injuries and be prepared for emergencies—such as training in back safety, exit routes, or fire prevention.

BLR now offers a cost-effective, up-to-date source for such training. It's called the Employee Training Center (training.blr.com), and it's easy to use.

Here's how it works. First, any employee or supervisor with a personal computer and Internet access can take any one of more than 60 different training courses at his or her convenience. Employers don't need any additional or special equipment, and training is available to workers 24/7. In addition, both comprehension tests and documentation of course completion are built into the product.

BLR's experts monitor changes in state and federal training requirements and continually update offerings, so your courses are always up to date.

The courses are also cost-effective because each organization pays only one annual fee, based on the number of people it employs, for full access to the program. There are no extra costs for set-up, adding new employees, repeated training for any employee, technical support, updated information, or other changes. That makes it easy for an HR manager to track the return on investment of the program and prove to top management that it's a good value for the price.

Better Equip Your Supervisors

The Employee Training Center can help hone the skills of supervisors in such areas as effective performance appraisals, new-employee orientation, interviewing skills, team building, attendance management, workplace ethics, and much more.

Many courses, such as those on diversity, are available in one version for supervisors and one for employees. Other employee safety topics offered include slips, trips, and falls, and defensive driving. Supervisors can delve into substance abuse, COBRA, and HIPAA compliance, and much more.

You can also use the Employee Training Center to motivate employees who are eager to learn on the job: An ambitious worker who wants to improve can negotiate with his or her supervisor for the time to take such optional courses as effective communication or time management.

Visit training.blr.com/HR/default/aspx?funcode=VN01 to see a full topic list and a sample course.

C A S E   S T U D Y

Timely, Tiered Recognition Program Encourages Positive Acts by Employees

Who:	MetLife Auto & Home
What:	Provides ongoing employee recognition
Results:	Strong employee morale, employee and customer retention, and customer satisfaction

"Better late than never" might be a good philosophy when sending a belated birthday card to a family member or friend, but it's not a good mantra when it comes to employee recognition.

That's because effective employee recognition is timely and meaningful, says Tommy Lee Hayes-Brown, AIC, a certified recognition professional and member of the Multicultural Sales & Service Team with MetLife Auto & Home, a division of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (www.metlife.com). When done right, recognition encourages employees to repeat the behaviors you want, he adds.

Each office is given a recognition budget and the discretion to decide who will be recognized and how, according to Hayes-Brown. "It's all left to the individual office. What we did not want is a big mandate" from the corporate office.

Associate involvement in the recognition process is critical, he says. "It has to be driven by the associates and modeled by the leaders. Then you know it becomes part of your culture."

Three Tiers of Recognition

Following the "rebirth" of its employee recognition programs 6 years ago, with help from Recognition Professionals International (RPI), MetLife Auto & Home started offering three tiers of employee recognition:

Day-to-Day Recognition

"The day-to-day recognition is probably the most important," says Hayes-Brown. "It allows you to give employees the constant feedback and encourage them to repeat that behavior." He likens day-to-day recognition to catching a child in the act of doing something positive.

Day-to-day recognition includes a pat on the back for a job well done, leaving a thank-you note on an associate's desk, or giving someone a roll of LifeSavers™ candy for helping out and being a "life saver," he says.

Associates also can nominate a co-worker for recognition on a third-party vendor website, where they can describe what the associate did and identify a category the behavior falls into, he says.

The categories are tied to the company's core values. This year's categories are innovation, learning, caring, and collaboration, according to Hayes-Brown.

After receiving an e-mail about nominations involving associates in their office, local recognition committees—comprising local peers—review the nominations and decide the level of award. An e-mail is sent to eligible employees, directing them to a website where they have access to a certain level of merchandise from which to choose. Although management reviews the nominations, the committee's decisions are rarely changed, according to Hayes-Brown.

Informal Recognition

This type of recognition includes celebrations of service milestones as well as team-oriented accomplishments. Associates and management determine what accomplishments are worthy of celebration and plan appropriate activities. In some cases, they have themed parties, managers may wash associates' cars, or the office may do volunteer work together, he says.

Formal Recognition

Toward the end of each year, the company accepts nominations for formal recognition. Associates visit the vendor website, select a category, and provide more detailed information about why a particular co-worker deserves to be recognized. A corporate recognition team, with representatives from every division, reviews the nominations and picks "the best of the best," Hayes-Brown says. Only about 2 percent to 5 percent of the employee population is selected.

Those employees are invited to a gathering where they meet the company president, attend "elegant dinners," and participate in teambuilding activities and focus groups, he says. "Not only are they recognized for what they did back home, but they are asked to help us move forward."

Tips to Consider

At MetLife Auto & Home, recognition has helped build strong employee morale and retention, according to Hayes-Brown. When employees are recognized and feel valued, that translates into happy employees, which leads to happy customers and increased profits, he says. "It creates a better working environment, which then creates a better customer experience, which creates more opportunities for us in the marketplace."

Here are a few tips to help strengthen employee recognition programs:

- **Be strategic.** Reinforce employees for behaviors that are consistent with your core values and/or your mission statement.
- **Tap available resources.** Hayes-Brown recommends visiting the website for RPI (www.recognition.org) to access information on best practices, research, and new ideas.
- **Get employees involved in the recognition process.** "It shouldn't be an HR program, or it shouldn't be a management program," he says. "Everybody should own it. Everybody should have a piece of it. That's how you build it into your culture."

HR Tool Box

10 Tips to Lead in a Tough Economy

As the economy declines, organizational leaders and HR managers face tough questions and difficult choices. How deeply can costs be cut without creating unintended negative consequences? What about layoffs? Ed Boswell, CEO of The Forum Corp. (www.forum.com), suggests these 10 points to consider that could make "the difference between success and failure" in these times.

1. **Move quickly to reduce costs and control spending by narrowing focus.** Winners in a downturn focus on a few critical priorities.
2. **Refrain from across-the-board cutbacks.** Be sure to preserve areas that customers value most, and don't damage the ability to sell and deliver these products and services.
3. **Consider alternatives to layoffs.** Downsizing may bolster the bottom line and stock price in the short term, but often creates long-term negative repercussions. Alternative strategies include cutting management bonuses, freezing salaries, and reducing compensation options. Clearly communicate the rationale and impact behind decisions to employees.
4. **Invest in opportunity.** A bad economy presents bargains, both in new assets and in new talent, but investing in working capital, manufacturing, and administration doesn't pay off as well.
5. **Retain and develop top talent.** High-impact workers are often more susceptible to being poached by a competitor in a downturn. Companies that provide development experiences and rotational assignments have better employee retention rates.
6. **Make sure everyone's on the same page.** When alignment on key goals is absent, performance suffers. Ineffective leaders let interoffice politics fester and hidden agendas dominate.
7. **Encourage questions from employees.** Leaders who admit they don't have all the answers and who ask employees for input empower their people.
8. **Manage the heat.** Don't make unilateral decisions that lack a broad base of support.
9. **Communicate authentically.** Strong leaders acknowledge the challenges they struggle with and, by doing so, build trust among followers.
10. **Create a positive vision and attitude that acknowledge reality.** When leaders exercise discipline and focus by mobilizing employees to respond to customers' interests, they come out on top.

