



FLEISHMANHILLARD



REDUCTION IN FORCE

Communications Checklist

Handling communications for a Reduction in Force (RIF) is a critical — and sensitive — job. Done well, it can lessen the anxiety, productivity and retention issues endemic to these tough decisions. It's imperative to communicate in a clear, thoughtful way to ensure employees feel respected and supported during this challenging time. How you communicate with impacted employees is important to everyone — whether they remain with the company or not. It sends a clear message about how the company treats its employees.

The following checklist can help guide companies experiencing a RIF. Each step ensures communications teams and key stakeholders are aligned, enabling a smoother transition.

1 KEEP IT UNDER THE TENT

Before beginning discussions about an upcoming RIF, confirm that appropriate leaders and stakeholders have nondisclosure agreements, if appropriate. Do not assume everyone is “under the tent.”

2 UNDERSTAND THE BUSINESS RATIONALE AND TIMING

It’s important to know what is happening, when, how and why. This information will provide the foundation for messaging.

3 GET A LAY OF THE LAND

With an understanding of the business reasons for the RIF, learn more about the reduction itself. Some questions to consider:

- Will there be facilities or offices closing? If so, what do those locations do? Where will those functions be shifting?
- Will the reduction happen immediately? If not, what is the timing or the phasing for the reductions being announced?
- Have other reductions happened recently? If so, what have those entailed?
- What percent of the workforce will be impacted?

4 ASSESS THE IMPACT

Partner with Human Resources or the initiative lead and Legal to identify the impact of the RIF and understand applicable regulations. It’s also vital to learn about other factors that might affect your notification, including requirements to communicate with labor unions or works councils. You might consider conducting a full stakeholder analysis to clearly outline what information each audience requires.

Overview of Employee Impact (including number of employees affected, where applicable)

- ☐ By region
- ☐ By site
- ☐ By business and function
- ☐ Full-Time/Salaried
- ☐ Hourly
- ☐ Contractors
- ☐ Eligibility for severance and other benefits (rehiring services, retirement, insurance, etc.?)
- ☐ Is RIF permanent or are employees subject to recall?
- ☐ Demographics of impacted employees?

Understand Local and Global Implications and Considerations

- ☐ Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act implications – both federal and state.
- ☐ Labor or works council issues
- ☐ Local community implications
- ☐ Other events/issues happening internally or externally that might influence the decision
- ☐ Timing

5 DEFINE CORE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Announcing a RIF requires partnership with several key internal stakeholders. The following demonstrates how the communications function partners with various key company stakeholders.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Business Units

Human Resources and Employee Relations

Media Relations

Customer Communications after Media

Investor and Government Relations

Legal

Supplier Communications

6 ENSURE ALIGNMENT AND INFORMATION SHARING

Setting up a cadence of regular meetings with the core team helps ensure alignment throughout the process. The following checklist will help determine who should be included in regular meetings.

Alignment

- ☐ Kick-off call
- ☐ Business Partners/Internal Communications/Media Relations
- ☐ Head of Communications and team
- ☐ Corporate Communications, Human Resources, Legal, Business Units, Government and Investor Relations, impacted site leadership

Planning

- ☐ Business Partners
- ☐ Employee Relations (as necessary)
- ☐ Labor Relations (as appropriate)

Preparation

- ☐ Kick-off call with relevant leaders to agree on communications strategy
- ☐ SME and leader input/approval of communications materials
- ☐ Leader prep/training for announcements, as necessary

7 PROVIDE ADVANCE NOTICE TO KEY PLAYERS

It's often necessary to pull in other functions and leaders outside of the core team prior to the announcement. Below are several stakeholders that might require notice (and/or training) for the announcement.

Advance Notice

- ☐ Corporate Communications
- ☐ Investor Relations
- ☐ Government Affairs
- ☐ Other Business Unit leaders
- ☐ Regional and country leaders
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ Impacted site leadership
- ☐ Union or works council leaders

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DEVELOP STRATEGIC PLAN
AND DELIVERABLES

Create a comprehensive communications strategy to ensure you have a thoughtful, aligned approach that follows all relevant labor laws and draft all necessary communications materials. Be sure to think through the specific communications needs for impacted and non-impacted employees, as well as external stakeholders. Consider that this may receive media attention and prepare for their questions. The below checklist can be used to determine the communications tools required for a specific announcement.

Key Deliverables

- ☐ Communication strategy
- ☐ Implementation timeline
 - Incorporate leadership schedules to ensure they are not vulnerable to unexpected media inquiries, for example at a conference.
- ☐ Key messages/talking points
 - Impacted teams
 - Non-impacted teams
 - Customers (if needed)
 - Supplier, distributor, contractor or other business third parties (as needed)
- ☐ Leader “playbook” (for executives, site leaders and supervisors) [includes feedback process]
- ☐ Leader memo
- ☐ All employee memo (if appropriate)
- ☐ Manager email templates (if appropriate)
- ☐ Guidance on handling the media onsite and fielding media requests
- ☐ Media statement and/or press release, specifically targeted to:
 - Investors (if public)

- Public officials
- Community leaders

- ☐ Social media protocols/communications for company channels

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SECURE THE NECESSARY
REVIEWS AND APPROVALS

Make sure to secure required approvals before making the announcement. Use the following checklist to identify approvers.

List of Reviewers

- ☐ Subject Matter Experts - including HR (two weeks before announcement)
- ☐ Communications leadership/team
- ☐ Business Unit/Region/Functional leader (week before announcement)
- ☐ Legal/External Communications (five days before announcement)
- ☐ Final review by C-Suite, Business Unit/Region/Functional leader and Head of Communications (four days before announcement)

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TAKE THE PULSE,
ADAPT AND DEBRIEF

Following the announcement, use a pulse survey or focus group(s) to determine the prevailing sentiment and quickly surface any issues to address. Failure to understand or address concerns can lead to a productivity dip and/or talent retention issues both at the impacted site and across the broader organization.

Once you’ve completed the announcement, host a post-mortem with key stakeholders. It is also beneficial to create a formal after-action report to identify process strengths and opportunities to improve moving forward.