

It is never easy to tell employees that restructuring or budget cuts or other changing business needs require elimination of positions in your organization. These hard-to-hold conversations can be done with dignity and compassion when supervisors plan for them and make every effort to provide employees with relevant, useful information about this difficult change in circumstances. This document provides ideas for preparing and having these conversations.

Human Resources Consulting Services and HR@AHSC provide consulting services to assist managers and supervisors with best practices in applying University policies to meet strategic needs.

BEFORE | the Meeting

Consult with Human Resources to review policies related to layoff or contract nonrenewal and request advice about delivering the news.

The loss of employment can be the cause of an enormous amount of stress for the employee. Delivering this news can be stressful as well. Advance preparation will help to lessen your own anxiety.

Acknowledging your own discomfort is an important first step. **The conversation will be less stressful if you:**

- Write down the key points of what you want to say. This will ensure that you provide all the information the employee needs at this time and that you have not failed to address any important items.
- Prepare written documents before the meeting.
- Develop a specific transition plan for the employee indicating duties and expectations.
- Develop a plan for making an announcement to the affected employee's colleagues.
- Prepare to discuss the specific reason for layoff or contract nonrenewal in a manner that is consistent with the reason as it is understood by your department/division and the reason provided in the notification letter.
- Decide where and when the meeting will occur. Hold the meeting in your office or some other private place where you will not be interrupted.
- Plan enough time for the employee to review the written documents and ask any questions he or she may have.

AT | the Meeting

Meet with the affected employee personally to discuss the impending layoff or nonrenewal. An employee should never receive this type of information by e-mail or memo. If there are multiple people to be told, each person should be told individually.

Having the discussion early in the day is best. It is also better to give the news earlier in the week. The employee should have time to process the information and access services before the weekend.

Get right to the issue at hand. Make the employee feel comfortable, but avoid small talk such as "how are you?" and other niceties. Be empathetic and understanding without being apologetic. Convey the business reasons for the decision.

Provide the employee with a copy of the layoff or nonrenewal notification letter and resource materials. Give the employee an opportunity to review the notice and ask questions. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. Do not make a guess.

Avoid offering any false hopes about the decision being reversed if financial issues change or other employees leave.

Prepare to identify resources on issues such as unemployment compensation, benefits, and services available to the employee. Employees can call Employee and Career Advising to schedule an appointment to sort through options.

Discuss what will be expected of the employee before the official end date and develop a plan for announcing the decision. The employee may wish to delay the announcement. Negotiate a plan that works for both parties.

Offer the employee another meeting to follow-up on details, the transition plan or other issues.

AFTER | the Meeting

Provide the employee the opportunity to ask questions that may have emerged since the notification meeting.

Provide encouragement to the employee about resources available to him or her and discuss any job seeking assistance that you or the department could provide.

If the employee has not obtained another University position before the last day of employment, **complete the Termination Report**, indicating that the employee has been laid off or nonrenewed and forward it to Systems Control.

On the employee's last day of work, schedule a brief meeting with the employee. Let the employee know in advance the purpose of the meeting is:

to collect any University property the employee may have in his or her possession,

to follow up with the employee, and,

to ensure that you are providing as much assistance as you are able.

Employee Assistance Counseling/Consultation

UA Life & Work Connections offers free, voluntary and confidential services to help employees address a range of personal and work-related concerns, such as stress associated with change and transitions, and job and career difficulties. Employees can call 621-2493 to arrange an appointment.

Resources

HR Consulting Services 621-7701
www.hr.arizona.edu/aboutHRCS.php

HR@AHSC 626-2600
www.ahsc.arizona.edu/hr/

UA Life & Work Connections 621-2493
<http://lifework.arizona.edu>

Employee & Career Advising 626-0850