

This year has been difficult for companies and for the employees who work for them. During times of company transitions such as layoffs, management realignment and downsizing, employees usually become fearful of what the changes may mean for their own job safety. With the economic climate continuing to deteriorate, it is important to keep employees motivated and feeling secure about their future with their employer.

Communication is key. When employees see and experience changes going on around them, but have no indication about what they mean or why they happen, their anxiety can run high and fear may set in. Working in this state can lead to lower productivity and employee morale. By communicating and keeping employees in the loop, they will feel like part of a team and it may help ease their tension and stress about the workplace.

Try to stay positive. Economic downturns and company slumps can take their toll on managers too. It's difficult to put on a happy face and stay positive when workers are losing their jobs. But attitudes and demeanors from managers trickle down to employees. Although the news may not be good, when communicating to employees, managers need to stay positive and encourage employees to continue on and do their best.

Provide a reassuring pat on the back. To ensure that employees stay motivated and reassured about their status at the company, managers should consistently give credit where credit is due. Recognize employees who are performing exceptionally well, and thank those employees who have taken on more work due to a downsized workforce. Additionally, if managers have been reassigned to a new team, they should take the time to introduce themselves to their new employees and be accessible to answer any questions regarding the direction of the company and specifically the team.

Be a resource for employees. An employee's greatest fear during down times is losing their job. When they see colleagues and other co-workers losing their jobs, it heightens their fear and anxiety. What's worse than the fear of losing a job is the fear of not finding a replacement. Companies that are facing downsizing and layoffs should work with employees who have lost their jobs and help them find new ones. Work with HR to provide resources for employees who need to find a new job and consider developing workshops that guide workers through the process of finding a new job - even helping with resume updating and networking.

Keep the workplace light. Similar to keeping a good attitude, it is also important to inject a little humor or happiness into the workplace and try to keep the environment light. It is hard to justify unnecessary spending on happy hours or dinners out, but planning workplace celebrations don't have to be expensive. Even purchasing an impromptu cake or cookies for a quick get-together during the day is a great way to keep up team spirit and show workers you care and are committed to making their day brighter.

The economic downturn has without doubt caused companies to tighten their belts and cut back on spending. Workers are feeling the crunch more and more everyday. Between failing investments and paychecks shrinking, they are also concerned about losing their jobs. To help relieve the strain of the current economic climate, employers can take small steps to ensure that workers stay motivated and feel more at ease while at work. Whether or not workers stay employed throughout this difficult time, they will walk away with a positive perception of the company, which will prove to be critical when the market turns around and companies' find themselves needing to rehire.

