



Conducting Successful Employee Notifications

A Step-by-Step Guide



Talent
Solutions
Right Management
Florida/Caribbean



Effectively Prepare
your Organization
for Successful
Employee
Notifications

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INTRODUCTION



During today's uncertain business climate, dealing with the need to right size your workforce is a reality. These events, while unfortunate, must be handled with careful planning and preparation, and can have lasting effects on your organization's employment brand. Right Management has extensive experience consulting with companies on how to effectively manage an employee notification that results in:

- Highly prepared HR leaders and functional managers able to clearly articulate the business decision and manage employee reactions.
- A carefully thought-out action plan that may include notification training, role playing, logistics planning and rehearsal.
- Maintaining a positive employment brand with exiting employees.
- An experience that demonstrates respect for the exiting employee leaving them feeling like they were treated fairly and with dignity.

A

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



Notifier's Role

A successful notification meeting depends upon good management and, as a result, the employee begins to focus on the future and moving forward. Because of this, **the notified employee needs a clear understanding of his/her situation, as well as solid advice and clear direction on how to appropriately use the available resources to find a new position.** The process begins with the Notifier communicating the decision to the employee(s) and provides them some time to process the notification. The Notifier may personally deliver information on the separation package or introduce the HR professional who will share that information with the employee.

Human Resources' Role

Human Resources (HR) is heavily involved in this process from start to finish. Integral to the notification process is the support HR offers to both the employee and the manager before, during and after the notification meetings. They will provide benefit and severance policy information to the notified employees, develop a script with the notifying manager, assist with difficult situations and arrange for EAP, security, etc.

Right Management's Role

The Right Management Career Consultant is available onsite or virtually to immediately speak with the employee to help them begin thinking more positively regarding their next steps toward future employment. The Right Management Career Consultant spends time reviewing the outplacement services being provided to them as a component of their separation package, ensuring they are clear about next steps and how to get started.

B

PLANNING FOR EMPLOYEE NOTIFICATIONS



Preparing for the Notification Meeting

It is critical that there is a well-prepared script of the business rationale to reinforce the decision that includes the right tone, style, and is a reflection of company culture. Prior to the meeting, the Notifier should spend time preparing what will be said, how it will be said, and in what sequence.

Through careful preparation and planning, **the Notifier can clearly present the business reason for the separation, provide structure for the next steps, and reassure the employee that the company will provide a separation package, including outplacement services** to support them in their effort to secure their next job.

The Notifier should also anticipate a variety of reactions and be prepared with appropriate responses to them.

Time and Place

When groups of employees are affected, a reasonable yet flexible timetable should be built into the notification process. The notification meeting itself is usually brief, but enough time must be available to deal with all possible scenarios, especially unforeseen reactions.

The notification meeting should be held in a private location and, if held onsite, away from the employee's immediate work area to prevent any embarrassment. It is recommended that whenever possible, the Notifier, HR professional, and Right Management Career Consultant are located in close proximity to each other to avoid bottlenecks in the hallways when employees are being notified onsite in groups.

It is equally important that a notification meeting agenda is shared among Notifiers, HR professionals, and Right Management Career Consultants to manage the process effectively. Forethought around the remaining employees and how they will learn of the recent separations is an important component of preparation.

「 The Notifier should also anticipate a variety of reactions and be prepared with appropriate responses to them. 」

Rehearsal

What seems clear conceptually may sound quite different when said aloud. **The purpose of the notification meeting is to inform the employee in a sensitive, straightforward manner that their job is being eliminated and to give them genuine support and encouragement** as they begin the transition towards new employment. It is strongly recommended that the Notifier rehearse the script with someone — perhaps in role-play fashion or with written scripted language — to become more comfortable with the ideal flow of the notification meeting and the points that must be made.

Separation Package

HR professionals are experienced in assessing the requirements for the individual situation and ensuring the company policy is applied. **It is recommended that a letter clearly outlining the elements of the separation package be prepared in advance to be given to the employee at the time of being notified.** This usually includes the amount and terms of their severance pay, continuing benefits provided by the company, the services delivered by Right Management, and any other specific benefits provided by the company.

In some instances, individuals will be asked to sign a notice that they received the separation information; in other instances, he/she will be required to sign a release of claims. It is the HR professional's job to point

out these requirements, and they should allow the newly notified individual(s) time to review the contents before signing an agreement. In many cases, people will not be in the right frame of mind to fully comprehend the agreement at the time of notification. This is why **we recommend that time be allowed for the separated employee to process his/her current emotions first, and then revisit the paperwork soon thereafter.**

Companies have different policies regarding when a newly separated employee can start their Right Management outplacement services — primarily because these policies are related to “release of claims.” Therefore, prior to the date of notification, Notifiers and HR professionals should be aware of these governing policies and instruct the newly notified employees accordingly.

Transition of Work

If the employee is separating immediately, the Notifier needs to be aware of the work responsibilities that will be transitioned to another employee and determine how to best make that transition. **It is important that the Notifier is clear with the separating employee about how their responsibilities will be transitioned.**

Provisions should also be made for the separating employee to return at an appropriate time to collect his/her belongings from their

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workspace. It may be helpful to allow the employee to do this after hours, since during these first few hours, he/she may feel particularly vulnerable to comments and reactions from co-workers or may disrupt, without wanting to do so, the office's normal routine.

If the employee is staying on for a specified period of time, **the Notifier must clearly communicate the expectations around work requirements in addition to when and how to initiate their outplacement services.**

A well-managed notification meeting will:

- **Be the result of thorough preparations.** Have a clear, well-rehearsed focus and purpose and provide facts in a direct, yet sensitive manner.
- **Communicate a decision.** Follow the plan and show good judgment during the meeting. It is important to respond appropriately to the employee's questions but still accomplish the purpose of the meeting.
- **Demonstrate compassion and respect.** Willingness to be of help during the transition can go a long way towards minimizing the hurt of separation.



C

NOTIFICATION DAY



By preparing a script of what to communicate, and by rehearsing and refining the content, the Notifier can conduct the meeting with confidence. The following seven-step outline is suggested but should be adapted to meet cultural, individual, and unique situations.

1. Set the Tone

Whether the employee suspects the purpose of the meeting or not, the Notifier must set the proper tone as appropriate to the relationship.

For in-person meetings, close the door and have the employee sit facing you. Best practice is to select a meeting area without barriers between you and the employee, such as a desk. For virtual notifications, ensure the Notifier is in a quiet location, free from any possible disruptions.

For in-person as well as virtual meetings, start the discussion as soon as possible to avoid unnecessary tension and possible introduction of inappropriate topics by the employee.

Offer support, but not in terms of reversing a decision.

2. Explain the Business Case

Express your knowledge about the current business situation. Some specifics on the business case will provide a helpful context. For example:

“As you know, our company is under a great deal of pressure, particularly given recent economic conditions. Leadership has taken a good look at our present situation and has made some decisions around business needs.”

There are circumstances that require a separation because of performance-related issues. It is usually best to approach the situation simply and in a straightforward manner. Reciting a litany of poor performance to the notified employee is counter-productive and likely to provoke a discussion that could easily lead to an argument.

The employee is presumably aware of their performance problems, and the Notifier should avoid embarrassing him/her any further by detailing their deficiencies. The Notifier should simply state the company’s decision and explain the next steps of the separation process.

In these cases, it is useful for the Right Management Career Consultant to know the cause for separation so that he/she can appropriately share this information with the assigned or primary career consultant. The Right Management Career Consultant can be better

prepared to work with this employee when they know what the employee's challenges are so that they can address them specifically during the career transition process.

3. Communicate the Decision

Define the separation clearly and succinctly. Present the company's reasoning for their decision in a way that can be both clearly understood and remembered. Be sure to show compassion in what is said and how it is said.

“As a result of this reorganization, your job has been eliminated. Therefore, today will be your last day of work.”

4. Explain Separation Benefits and Outplacement Support

These normally include severance pay, continuing benefits or stay/retention bonuses according to company policy, and special help that may be available from the company during this period. Express your personal offer of help when possible (know your boundaries around this area).

“We have put together a separation package that addresses continuing benefits. You're eligible to receive severance payments for up to six months. Normal benefits (health, life insurance, etc.) will continue during this period.”

“An HR professional will provide you with an overview of the basic elements in your separation package. The company has also included outplacement services, and I will introduce you to a Right Management Career Consultant to learn more about this service and how to get started.”

A letter outlining the specifics of the separation package is then provided to the employee, either through the Notifier or during a subsequent meeting with an HR professional. The notified employee may or may not be able to comprehend the elements of the package at this time. Therefore, it is important to provide future contact information to ensure the separation package and transition information are understood.

5. Offer Support

Offer support, but not in terms of reversing a decision.

“I want you to know that we will be glad to help you in your outplacement efforts. I'd like for you to meet with a Right Management Career Consultant.”

It is a good practice to determine how employee references are handled prior to the notification meeting. If the company's policy is limited and allows only a confirmation of work and dates of employment, you will need to abide by that policy.

6. Discuss Logistics and Work Transition

This may include:

- Transferring responsibilities
- Personal belongings
- Company property (e.g., computers, keys, cell phones, laptops, etc.)
- ID card (if this must be returned due to security regulations)

Make arrangements to discuss these things, if deemed appropriate.

“After lunch, let’s meet to discuss the transition of your work assignments. I’ll be here until 5:30 PM to give you a chance to collect your personal belongings. Since your work is in a sensitive area, security regulations require that you turn in your badge and keys at the end of the day.”

7. Right Management Career Consultant

Introduce the notified employee to the Right Management Career Consultant.

“The most important thing to focus on during the upcoming days and weeks are your next steps. I want you to be able to make a good career move. That’s why I want you to speak with the Right Management Career Consultant right away.”

Keep the separation meeting to no longer than 10-15 minutes. A longer meeting can be more difficult.

Virtual Notifications

There may be circumstances where you are not able to notify an impacted employee in person, and therefore the notification will be virtual.

In these instances, it is important to recognize that all of your notification planning and preparation remains the same: a well thought-out script to guide the Notifier, clear communication of the message that reflects the tone, style, and culture of the organization as well as a focus on next steps for the employee.

It is important that you do not introduce new and/or unfamiliar technology to communicate with the impacted employee; it could compound the level of stress for all involved. If communication between the Notifier and the employee has been predominately via video conferencing, then you may wish to continue with this modality. However, best practice would indicate that telephone is preferred rather than introducing an untested communication process.

The Right Management Career Consultant is available to assist in preparing the Notifying Manager to ensure that the process is as seamless as possible.

Guidelines for Virtual Notification Meetings

- **Schedule the meeting in advance** for when the employee is at their home office rather than on the road visiting clients or in the field for their work activities. This typically means scheduling the call at the beginning of their work day or shift.
- Ensure that you **have the separation paperwork available** in soft copy as well as hard copy. Provide the soft copy to the employee ONCE you have connected.
- Use a **tested and common-practice communication vehicle**.
- **Ensure that the Notifier is in a quiet location**, free from any possible disruptions.
- **Check in with the employee** to be sure that he/she is able to devote undivided attention.
- Ensure that you **budget enough time** to deliver the message.
- **Be patient** and allow sufficient time for the employee to absorb and understand the information shared.
- **Introduce the concept of Right Management support**, confirm the employee's personal phone number(s), and receive permission for a Right Management Career Consultant to contact the employee by phone within the time frame agreed upon with Right Management.

Follow-Up for Virtual Notification Meetings

- **Courier the hard copy information** once the employee has been notified. Be sure to confirm the current address.
- **Coordinate with your IT Team** – Notifying virtual employees requires an increase in coordination with your IT team. Discontinue any services in a respectful manner while protecting company email and other proprietary information.
- **Arrange for the Transfer of Equipment** – Provide the employee with shipping packages/containers and labels for the return of any company property. Be very clear on what material must be returned, the expected condition, and timing.
- **Follow-Up with Coworkers** – Communicate to the impacted employee's coworkers that the notified employee has left the organization and, if appropriate, how work will be redistributed.

Connecting to Right Management

The Right Management Career Consultant will offer the same level of support and guidance to the employee; however, they will also provide this support virtually. Once the notification has been completed, HR or the Notifying Manager should confirm with Right Management that the notification has taken place, allowing for time-sensitive telephone outreach to the employee.



D

MANAGING DIFFERENT EMOTIONAL RESPONSES



The inherent difficulty with the separation meeting is the emotional response generated by the sudden loss of a job. Even if the employee suspects he/she may be impacted by the organization's restructuring, emotions including fear, anger, shock, frustration and the feeling of rejection are all normal responses to the news of losing a job.

It is common for the Notifier to experience anxiety because they see themselves as the catalyst for these emotions. Notifier anxiety before delivering this news is a normal reaction under these circumstances. However, understanding the typical range of reactions a newly notified employee may experience must be the Notifier's main focus so that they can carefully monitor the employee's reactions during the separation meeting to ensure a successful employee notification.

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to the news of losing a job. └

Understanding Common Reactions

News of the loss of a job affects people in different ways, sometimes in very surprising and unexpected ways. Remain calm and in control. It is always best to acknowledge the notified employee's feelings and to help them understand the business case behind the decision.

Give the employee time to process, react and ask questions. Pay attention to their body language and maintain eye contact to show you are listening. Handle the reaction with appropriate understanding but anchor your discussion in the next steps in the separation process.

The most common reactions employees will have when notified of a job loss may include:

- **Acceptance**
- **Anger**
- **Distress**
- **Resistance**
- **Shock**
- **Denial**

ACCEPTANCE

The employee expresses feelings verbally and/or non-verbally but is realistic about the situation.

“Yes...I saw the writing on the wall.”

“Well...I guess I was expecting it.”

“So...what do I do next?”

The employee may not say anything or be completely unresponsive.

Suggested Response:

“You seem to have anticipated the situation.”

Best Practices:

- Listen with empathy
- Tell them there is a Right Management Career Consultant available to provide details of their outplacement services
- Explain the next steps

ANGER

The employee is upset about the situation and may express anger toward the organization or the Notifier directly.

“Why me? Why not...?”

“The company can’t do this to me.”

“This is all your fault! You didn’t stand up for me and you’re going to be sorry.”

“I am going to file a lawsuit.”

Suggested Responses:

“I can see that you are upset” or

“I can see this came as a surprise to you.”

“I’m afraid we’re past the point of looking at alternatives. The decision is made, and it is final.”

“This is not a decision based on your performance. The decision was based on business objectives and competencies necessary for the future of this company.”

“Speak with a Right Management Career Consultant. They regularly support others who have been through outplacement.”

Best Practices:

- Acknowledge the employee’s feelings
- Remain calm; maintain a steady tone of voice and avoid defensive language
- Allow the impacted employee time to process information
- Do not engage in a discussion of the separation selection criteria
- Do not attempt to calm the angry employee
- Call Security if employee behavior becomes threatening and aggressive

A Note on Anger

The best response to the angry employee is often to repeat the statements that describe the situation, the decision and the support the company is prepared to offer the employee during their transition to new employment. At this point — and these are rare occasions — there is no need to respond to the employee. Their reaction is inappropriate and needs to be diffused. Often, the entrance of another individual, such as a Security Guard or an EAP specialist can easily diffuse an out-of-control reaction.

DISTRESS

The employee may become emotional: crying, fearful, or embarrassed.

“What will I do now?”

“How am I supposed to support myself / my family?”

Suggested Responses:

“News like this can be a shock.”

“It’s a lot for anybody to handle, but I believe you will land on your feet.”

“I think it would be a good idea for you to speak with a Right Management Career Consultant. They’ve helped many people get over this hurdle successfully.”

Best Practices:

- Display patience and understanding
- Acknowledge impacted employee’s feelings and stick to the script.
- Remain in control of meeting and offer them your understanding
- If crying becomes prolonged or out of control, the Notifier should suggest a short (few minutes) break before continuing
- Make sure that you have tissues/water available
- Allow the impacted employee to gather their thoughts and time to process the information
- Ask if there is someone they need to call—refer to EAP resources

RESISTANCE

The employee may attempt to play on perceived weaknesses of the Notifier in an effort to reverse the decision.

“There must be someone else I can talk to about this.”

“What can I do to convince you to keep me?”

“I’m working on a project that I have to complete.”

“If I just had the chance to talk to somebody about it, I’m sure they’ll change their minds.”

Suggested Responses:

“This is a final decision that has no bearing on anything that happened recently, other than a change in business direction.”

“I think it would be a good idea for you to speak with a Right Management Career Consultant. They’ve helped many people get over this hurdle successfully.”

Best Practices:

- Remain calm
- Repeat facts as necessary and the finality of the decision
- Do not engage in bargaining conversation to justify the company’s decision
- Ensure the impacted employee understands situation
- Offer the next steps

SHOCK

“I can’t handle this.”

“I don’t believe this is happening.”

“This can’t be true.”

Best Practices:

- Allow the impacted employee to share feelings
- Listen with intensity and do not interrupt
- Offer EAP; explain next steps

Suggested Responses:

“News like this can be a shock.”

“This is a lot for anybody to handle, but I believe you will land on your feet.”

“I think it would be a good idea for you to speak with a Right Management Career Consultant. They’ve helped many people get over this hurdle successfully.”

DENIAL

The employee’s words may be positive, but their voice may be tight, controlled, and they could potentially avoid eye contact.

“I saw this coming. I’ll be fine.”

“I’ve got possibilities lined up in other divisions.”

“I know a lot of people in the company who need me.”

Best Practices:

- Encourage impacted employee to use the Right Management outplacement benefit the company is offering
- Do not engage in conversation that creates false hope of rehire — stick to the script
- Offer the next steps

Suggested Responses:

“News like this can be a shock.”

“I think it would be a good idea for you to speak with a Right Management Career Consultant. They’ve helped many people get over this hurdle successfully.”



Communicating with the Remaining Employees

Following the notifications, engage your team with intentional conversations. Communicate actionable steps to reconvene workflow, emphasizing a forward focus on the new work structure.

- What happened?
- Am I next?
- How is my job affected?
- What do we do next?
- Who was affected?
- Where will the work go?
- What do I say?

Allow remaining employees to express their feelings and anxiety about what has happened. It's important that you set the stage for re-engagement by focusing on the future and what is next for the organization and the team. It's important for leaders to be very visible during the days immediately following a notification event so remaining employees can ask questions as they begin to process the changes.

Possible Talking Points for Remaining Employees

- *“As you are aware, we are in the process of making changes to our business model and organizational structure to better adapt to the current market conditions. Realigning this organization to successfully compete in the marketplace requires that we make reductions in staff.”*
- *“Your services are required in the new organizational structure, and we do not foresee any more changes.”*
- *“This was a difficult decision because these individuals have contributed to the success of our company. I want to stress that this is a business decision, not a personal one.”*
- *“Please be considerate in the coming days, as our staff reduction is difficult for everyone. We are planning a transition meeting later this week to provide more details regarding our new structure and strategy.”*

Moving Forward with the Remaining Employees

- **Ensure** your words and actions respect the dignity and privacy of those who are leaving the organization.
- **Plan** for frequent, effective, and honest communication.
- **Balance** the need for time to “grieve” with the realities of “moving on.”
- **Recognize** when guilt, anger, and resistance are unproductive messages within your team.

F

MANAGING A WORKFORCE REDUCTION CHECKLIST



As you are preparing for notification meetings, ask yourself these key questions to ensure you have all the details required to effectively manage the event.

1. Do I have the facts of the situation?

- Name, contact information, etc. of each employee being notified?
- Length of their service and in what capacity?
- Reason for separation?

2. Is the meeting time set?

- With each employee being notified?
- With the Right Management Career Consultant who will speak with you briefly before the notification meeting(s) and with each notified employee following their meeting?

3. Has an appropriate location been selected for in-person notifications, and/or has a suitable communication method been chosen for virtual notifications?

4. Do I understand my role as the Notifier?

5. Have I prepared:

- A script announcing the separation?
- A statement which gives the reasons for the notification, one which can be clearly understood by the impacted employee(s)?
- A statement and a letter which describes the benefits of the separation package?

6. Am I prepared to offer personal support?

- What are my boundaries regarding how much I can offer?
- What is the company's policy on references?

Managing A Workforce Reduction Checklist

7. Do I understand how the work transition is meant to take place?
8. Have I set up provisions for each impacted employee to clean out their workspace at an appropriate time or made arrangements to have their personal belongings returned to them?
9. Do I know the name of the Right Management Career Consultant?
10. Do I understand how to handle a difficult response?
11. Has an impacted employee ever filed a complaint with a governmental agency or commission for any reason? If yes, check with Legal Counsel.
12. Do any of the impacted employees have a history of strong emotional reactions?
13. Can or should EAP and/or Security be available on the day of notification(s) and, if so, how should they be contacted if needed?
14. Have I arranged for a contingency plan for impacted employees who are on vacation, sick leave, etc. on the day of notification?
15. Have I scheduled a department meeting to help all remaining employees deal with the changes and return to productivity?
16. Have I written an internal communication for the remaining employees and determined its time of release?
17. If necessary, have I scheduled a debrief meeting with HR and Right Management?



About Right Management

Right Management is a global leader in talent and career management workforce solutions within ManpowerGroup. We design and deliver solutions to align talent strategy with business strategy. Expertise spans Talent Assessment, Leader Development, Organizational Effectiveness, Employee Engagement, and Workforce Transition and Outplacement. With offices in over 70 countries, Right Management partners with companies of all sizes – including more than 80% of the Fortune 500 – to help grow and engage their talent, increase productivity and optimize business performance.

