Layoffs on the Rise: 6 Ways to Make Them Easier on Everyone

HR Morning | Michele McGovern | April 28, 2026



With layoffs on the rise, employees everywhere are on edge.

Some of the numbers in the headlines are staggering: Amazon cut about 30,000 jobs in a matter of months. Block eliminated 40% of its workforce. Snap plans to lay off 16% of its workforce. Meta will cut 10%. On Wall Street, which saw record earnings, more than 7,000 people were laid off from jobs at Wells Fargo & Co., Citigroup and Bank of America.

But the layoffs don't stop at the big-name companies. Nearly 60% of companies say they'd likely lay off employees in 2026, according to a Resume.org survey. Ten percent implemented a hiring freeze and about 40% have cut back on hiring.

Why Are Layoffs on the Rise?

While you might have your own reasons for layoffs this year, the Resume.org researchers found these are the most common reasons companies will let employees go:

- Economic uncertainty (55%)
- Profitability pressures (42%)
- Tariffs/trade policy uncertainty (39%)
- Declining revenue (37%)
- High interest rates (36%), and
- AI adoption (35%).

Those are legitimate business reasons to reduce the workforce. But it's still difficult for HR pros, who usually have to shoulder the difficult task of letting people go, managers, who have to

decide which people to lay off, and the employees, who are on the receiving end of the termination.

Regardless of the size of the company or reasons for layoffs, HR pros and company leaders want to reduce the workforce with compassion.

Here are seven tips to help make layoffs easier for everyone involved — those who leave and those who stay.

1. Be Very Clear About 'Why'

First, being clear and transparent about the reasons behind layoffs will help you avoid legal issues. Tell employees exactly why you must reduce the workforce and how you decided which roles would be eliminated.

Even better is transparency all the time. When employees know there's trouble or potential for employment changes, they might be better prepared when something happens. They're more resilient when they understand how outside forces might impact their job, profession, industry and company.

Try to get all leadership levels in on the announcement and/or discussion, delivering a consistent, clear and effective message that allows for employee feedback.

2. Provide Resources

Very few things can make layoffs better. But one thing is proven to help: Give employees resources to get back on their feet quickly.

Some things best-in-class companies do include:

- Adequate time for employees to get all the information they'll need to move on, gather their personal belongings and say goodbyes
- A severance package that includes as many extended health benefits as you can provide
- Help obtaining services such as unemployment and COBRA benefits, and
- Written and verbal references ready to go.

3. Offer Transition Help

More than 75% of employees who've been let go and received transition assistance felt the experience was positive, according to a survey from Keystone Partners. Even better, 65% of employees who survived a layoff and knew their laid-off colleagues got career transition services viewed their employer in a positive light.

Those services and assistance might include helping laid-off employees:

- Create resumes and cover letters
- Access career counseling and coaching
- Sign up for job training or degree and certification programs, and

- Meet other local employers who are hiring.

4. Follow Up on Layoffs

We can give you many reasons for following up with employees who are laid off: It's human kindness. You create a network. Your company's reputation stands tall. All employees see you in a positive light.

But most of all, you maintain a relationship with people you might not have wanted to leave — and who might come back someday.

So try to schedule intervals after layoffs to:

- Check in on the well-being of employees, their families and situations
- Give tips or updates on job connections you might have made with other employers
- Update them on the resources that were made available, and
- Let them know what's going on in your organization as far as callbacks, restructuring and/or attrition that might affect them.

5. Support Remaining Employees

Employees who keep their jobs suffer, too. They might be overwhelmed with the work that remains, upset at the departure of friends or suffer from survivor's guilt.

"Layoffs are a huge trust killer. They just are," says Harvard Business School professor Sandra Sucher on the HBR on Leadership podcast. "You're worried about the people who you let go, and a bigger concern is actually the attitude and engagement of the people who are still there."

You'll likely want to engage and support them more than before layoffs. Some ways:

- Talk regularly about how the company is helping — and will continue to help — those laid off. When possible, let them know when their former colleagues landed new jobs or have landed on their feet differently, perhaps schooling or retirement.
- Give employees space and time in meetings to talk about how they're coping with the bad news and the departure of friends.
- Ask about and ensure the remaining employees have the resources they need to get the extra work they inherited done. Many of them may be putting in longer hours to fill gaps.
- Remind your remaining employees about resources, such as Employee Assistance Programs and Employee Resource Groups where they can share and process their experiences.
- Consider taking some extra measures. You might set up one-on-one meetings or make personal calls to every employee to see how they're doing and what they need to support their career and well-being.

6. Reconsider Layoffs

This final point is if there's still a chance you can avoid layoffs. It's important because layoffs hurt businesses, not just people.

In her research, Sucher found layoffs lead to reduced engagement, work quality and safety. It also reduces innovation, product development and sales.

Bottom line: Companies that go through layoffs underperform companies that don't. The cost-cutting almost always results in internal failures that hurt company growth and success.