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## Restructuring Is Tough, but It Can Be Managed

**By Properly Handling Your Employees, You Can Start Getting Your Business Back on Track**

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It's the end of an era. You joined this agency because the names on the door also ran the accounts. But the new owner's name reads like somebody's monogram. Suddenly you have 16 sister offices and one of them is down the street. It's clear this town isn't going to be big enough for the both of you.

The executive team announces a freeze on hiring and rumors are flying about potential layoffs. An "efficiency expert" moves in down the hall. You're under the gun to keep the business you have, and it's a lonely battle -- your boss is distracted by spreadsheets and management meetings; creative sessions fall flat as they morph into gossip about the latest departures.

Weeks later, you're packing boxes but at least you've been invited to take an office down the block. However, empty desks are stark reminders of departed colleagues. Hushed conversations of twos and threes speculate about the future. The survivors are down support people, have reduced budgets and, although relieved to have made it through the layoffs, feel guilty at the same time.

But wait -- it gets worse. You are their manager, charged with motivating the troops to embrace the new leadership, "do more with less" and grow the business.

You're not alone. Managers in agencies and all over corporate America are faced with motivating less-loyal employees, and asking them to do more with fewer resources. Employees have less loyalty

because they have watched their colleagues lose their jobs. They fear it could happen again -- to them. And they're right.

But there are ways to re-engage and motivate staff. Here are five tips:

**Continue to communicate, even when you don't have all the information.** Have senior management provide information about the "big picture" of the organization, then direct supervisors to give employees more personal information about what the reorganization means to their jobs. You can prepare them for this role by providing them with talking points.

**Highlight the positive.** Reorganization can inject enthusiasm into the new organization and open up new opportunities for employees. If positions are eliminated, employees may gain new responsibilities that used to be available only at a more senior position.

**Listen to employees.** Ask for input regarding information needs and how they're feeling about the changes. Ask what resources they feel they need in the short and long term. By the way, your own staff members are not an appropriate choice for doing the interviews about a sensitive subject such as layoffs. Consider how honest you'd be if you feared losing your job and your boss asked how you felt about the organization right now.

**Honestly address issues.** If you ask for employee input, summarize key findings and have senior management announce how concerns will be addressed. Be willing to deal honestly with the issues and with your own employees to make improvements.

**Ensure that all supervisors are making it a priority to both listen to and talk to employees.** Remember, an employee's most trusted information source is his or her immediate supervisor. It's critical that supervisors know that communications are a priority. While it's a well-known fact that managers often get promoted for business reasons that don't always include communication skills, that's not an excuse for things to stay that way. You'll pay for it in lost productivity among frustrated workers.

While managing post-reorganization teams can seem daunting initially, there's never been a more critical time to engage employees. Beyond employees' primary functions, they also serve another vital role: They represent the agency to clients and other important audiences. Re-engaging your employees will lead to getting the business back on track.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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