

The HR Manager's Ultimate Guide To Outplacement



Know The Pitfalls Of Change And How To Avoid Them



In an uncertain UK and international environment, organisations of all sizes face changing economic and market conditions. Prudent organisations recognise the need to do it right – to maintain productivity, accelerate the profitability drive and protect brand reputation after restructuring. How you prepare for future growth is directly impacted by how you treat departing employees. This is where outplacement comes in to help you.

What is outplacement?

OUTPLACEMENT IS PRACTICAL SUPPORT FROM PROFESSIONAL CAREER CONSULTANTS DESIGNED TO HELP PEOPLE WHO HAVE TO LEAVE YOUR COMPANY, WHETHER THROUGH REDUNDANCY OR SEVERANCE, MOVE TO THE NEXT STAGE IN THEIR CAREERS

Outplacement services are most often paid for by the employer but provided by third parties, and combine both psychological and emotional support with practical guidance and advice for improving employment prospects.

The career support helps your people through individual or large scale job redundancy, or significant corporate change. Typically, outplacement is either carried out one-to-one, or in group workshops and supported with online career tools.

All outplacement programmes are designed to help your people cope with the prospect of job change, and make positive moves forward.

Specialist career consultants help the individual to focus on the options available to them, and to make the right choices for their future.

Why outplacement for your people?

72%

of employers offer some form of outplacement benefits

OUTPLACEMENT IS A BENEFIT THAT MANY EMPLOYERS OFFER TO HELP LAID-OFF EMPLOYEES BEGIN SEARCHING FOR NEW EMPLOYMENT.

All companies face change, whether on a large scale or involving a few members of staff. How you handle that change can have a profound effect on your people's productivity, corporate image and employer brand.



- **ENHANCE REPUTATION**
- **RETAIN KEY EMPLOYEES**
- **IMPROVE MORALE & PRODUCTIVITY**
- **ENSURE FAIR & TRANSPARENT REDUNDANCY**
- **RETAINED PEOPLE FOCUSED & PRODUCING**

Offering outplacement is more than just the "right thing to do" for your employees. Given that your departing employees are about to become your newest alumni, it's likely you'll encounter them again as prospective customers, partners or competitors.

Using outplacement at times of change within your organisation can help to smooth the process for all those involved. You might even think of outplacement as an insurance policy that benefits both leavers and those retained.

RESEARCH INDICATES THAT COMPANIES THAT OFFER OUTPLACEMENT DURING A DOWNSIZING OBTAIN SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS BENEFITS COMPARED TO THOSE WHO DO NOT PROVIDE ANY CAREER TRANSITION SUPPORT. KEY ADVANTAGES INCLUDED INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY, PROFITABILITY, MORALE AND STOCK PRICE, WITH A DECREASE IN UNWANTED TURNOVER, SICK DAYS AND RECRUITING COSTS.

1. SPECIALIST CAREER SUPPORT FOR THOSE MOVING ON

Outplacement, which emerged as a business service in the late 1960s, was originally offered only by large organisations and only to the most senior executives. However outplacement has quickly become standard management practice in organisations of all sizes, and many organisations now provide it to all employee levels.

The support helps your people come to terms with the shock of losing their job, and guides them to move on quickly and positively to a new role. Outplacement helps people to choose their next direction and prepare themselves for the job market, and guides them through the process.

While no outplacement company can guarantee jobs for all of your exiting employees, outplacement puts your people in a far better position to find their next job quickly.

Turning the redundancy process into a positive move forward is beneficial for the individual, and helps your reputation as an employer among those moving on.

Business Drivers For Providing Outplacement:

RESTRUCTURING

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

LEADERSHIP CHANGE

PLANT CLOSINGS

COMPANY PERFORMANCE

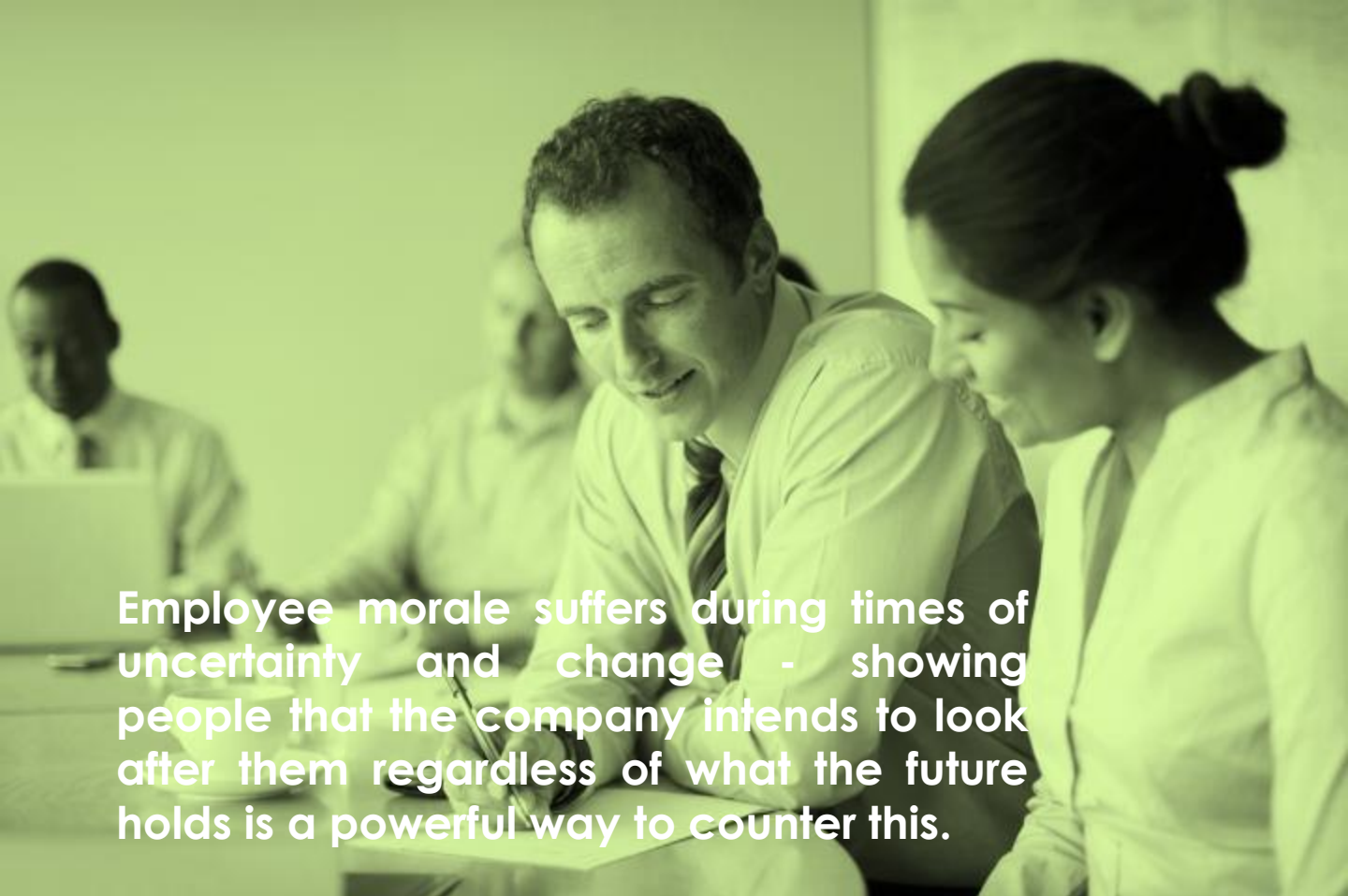
INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE

2. MANAGING CHANGE SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES WHO STAY

Change can be difficult for the ‘survivors’ too. One of the toughest jobs during a post-layoff is managing the survivors.

At a time when they’re feeling the lowest, middle management must perform at their best. Clearly this is a time when employees need specific directions and the resources to implement them. Having guidance lessens a survivor’s typical focus on loss of job security and begins the process of rebuilding their sense of purpose and worth.





Employee morale suffers during times of uncertainty and change - showing people that the company intends to look after them regardless of what the future holds is a powerful way to counter this.

As downsizing continues to become an increasingly normal business practice, managers need to find ways to improve their ability to manage the change. This includes motivating traumatised employees and getting operations back on track. It means addressing the drama of the situation, not denying it. Can-do attitudes are needed and understandable goals must be spelled out. However nothing promises post-downsizing success like the practice of open, honest communications.

3. AVOID THE PITFALLS OF MANAGING REDUNDANCY

When you involve an outplacement specialist in the redundancy process early on, they can help guide you through the practicalities. This will relieve pressure from you and your HR team, and help avoid costly mistakes. Findings show employees receiving outplacement support are often less likely to seek redress against your organisation.



what does outplacement include?

OUTPLACEMENT INVOLVES A PROFESSIONAL CAREER CONSULTANT WORKING WITH AN INDIVIDUAL OR A GROUP TO HELP THEM PREPARE FOR THE TASK OF FINDING A NEW JOB

Most people's first thought is usually "Is my CV in good shape?" but it's better to start from "Where am I now and where do I want to be?" - outplacement should provide your people with the opportunity to reflect a little and look at all the options available.

Candidates then move on to work on CVs, look at how to find opportunities, application letters and working with recruiters as a general guide.

Outplacement also helps with planning for and handling interviews – anything involved in the job finding process from marketing your skills and selling yourself at interview is part of the outplacement programme.

It's not only about finding the next job. Many candidates decide to set up their own business, return to study or see more of the world. Outplacement companies should provide support and advice no matter which direction an individual may choose.

Outplacement doesn't give any guarantees of a new job - but it will equip candidates to look for the right jobs, in the right areas, and be confident that they can present themselves well, both on paper and at interview.

Typical areas of career skills capability outplacement will cover:

- ✓ Managing Change & Coming To Terms With Change
- ✓ Taking Stock & Looking Ahead
- ✓ Marketing Yourself – CV, Visible & Invisible Job Market, Job Search Letters
- ✓ Personal Branding & Executive Presence
- ✓ Interview, Communication, presentation & Influencing Skills
- ✓ Recruitment Agencies, Networking, Online Job Search
- ✓ Financial Planning, Interim Management & Starting Your Own Business
- ✓ Head-hunter introductions, Recruiter Introductions

**DO
WHAT
YOU
LOVE
EVERY
DAY!**

● outplacement programme fundamentals

The outplacement support provided can cover a wide range of topics, but skilled career consultants will make every effort to ensure that it is always tailored to what matters most for each individual. The fundamentals of a typical approach are:



● support levels

YOU WILL WANT TO OFFER DIFFERENT LEVELS OF SUPPORT TO DIFFERENT JOB ROLES

The most flexible outplacement providers will offer tailored options which involve a mixture of individual one-to-one coaching support, group workshops and online career tools. For example, you might choose to support employees via a group workshop supported by online career modules, followed up by individual surgery sessions with an outplacement consultant or on-site drop-in career shops.

Typically, most group workshop programmes will offer individual follow-up support by telephone and/or email, to allow the candidate to benefit from personal support.

Many providers will also offer online tools and skills modules through a career development portal. This virtual support can be invaluable in helping candidates to make a quick start to their job search. They provide interactive and engaging employability skills modules and useful simulation tools which allow the candidate to make progress remotely and in between meetings with their career consultant.



2 TYPICAL FACTORS FOR DECIDING ON THE LEVEL OF OUTPLACEMENT SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS

1. SENIORITY

Most companies provide senior employees with executive or one-to-one support, and more junior staff being supported via group workshops and online career portal.

2. LENGTH OF SERVICE

Those with long-term service will benefit from greater support as they won't have recent experience of preparing CVs, interviews and job searching.

Steps to managing the process

1. Plan Early For Outplacement

Similar to all HR projects the programme needs to be properly planned in advance.

Should preparation be absent, 'at risk' employees can quickly become disenchanted, stop producing and in some cases cause disruption. The company's motives may be misinterpreted and resented, resulting in dissatisfaction for employees and impacting the general morale of your organisation.

Outplacement should be taken into account from the very beginning of your restructuring discussions. Early decisions on which employees will be offered outplacement, at what level and what budget is available, will make the process simpler to implement as you move through the period of change.

2. A Partnering Process

Everything should be in place by the time your selection process is complete. So engage your outplacement provider from the start and agree a joint roll-out process, view them as a partner in the journey.

- Decide on levels of outplacement support for who as early in the process as possible
- Agree in advance an introductory communication explaining what outplacement is and how it will help. Issue this to all affected employees during their initial discussion
- Ensure your managers are trained and briefed, not only on how to manage the initial meeting with the employee, but on how to explain outplacement, why it is being offered and how it can help
- Nominate a single HR point of contact to work with your nominated outplacement provider
- Agree how and when the outplacement provider will make contact with employees – early contact with a skilled career consultant will greatly ease the process at a difficult time.

CAREER



3. Progress Reporting & Feedback Loop

A professional outplacement provider should relieve you of the necessity to be involved on a day to day basis, allowing you to devote your time to handling the other issues within the business at a stressful time. However, many HR managers ask for regular reports from their provider, which might include:

- **Update on candidate progress** – weekly, monthly, quarterly.
- **Candidate feedback statistics** – feedback on the support they're receiving from their career consultant

It's vital that outplacement providers keep their individual work with candidates confidential. You should however expect them to provide general updates on the progress of candidates, so you know, and the business has visibility on, the progress of your exiting people.



what to ask an outplacement provider

CHOOSING THE RIGHT OUTPLACEMENT PARTNER IS IMPORTANT. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF KEY QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK.

- What is your track record in outplacement?
- What services do you provide? What services don't you provide?
- What geographical coverage in the UK do you have?
- What international support can you provide?
- Do you offer counselling services?
- How do you help employees find new jobs?
- What other services do you offer employees?
- What are your qualifications as an outplacement solution?
- What kind of flexibility do you offer?
- How long does the outplacement support last?
- What does an outplacement solution cost?
- What is my return on investment?
- How are you positioned to handle a large volume of candidates?
- Do you have experience of working with people in our industry?
- Are you able to demonstrate the competency and experience of your consultants?
- Do you have online support available as well as face to face time?
- Do you have offices that employees will travel to or will your consultants come to us?
- Are you prepared to tailor your solution so that it fits exactly what we want?
- Can you provide references from previous satisfied customers?
- How do you monitor quality standards and candidate feedback?



how to look after survivors

REDUNDANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS ARE DEPRESSINGLY REGULAR IN THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE AND IT IS NATURAL FOR EMPLOYERS TO BE PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH THOSE LOSING THEIR JOBS.

How you handle this difficult time will affect how quickly the “survivors” are able to move on in a positive way.

Those who remain will have lost friends as well as colleagues, and will be worried about what the future holds for them. Neglecting those who have made it through a reorganisation poses its own risks.

Although they still have their jobs, the “survivors” of redundancy may experience greater pressures from changed work patterns and increased workloads. Morale may dip, too, if employees have lost colleagues. This kind of “survivor syndrome” may be cultivated by the businesses accidentally.

After losing a number of staff through redundancies, keeping hold of the key staff who remain becomes even more important. Make sure that you:

- Ensure proper communication with all staff during the redundancy consultation process is an important starter to easing anxiety
- Ensure everyone understands why the redundancies were necessary and that your selection procedure was fair
- Train managers to look for signs of stress and ensure they have the skills to manage the remaining employees in a supportive manner throughout the reorganisation period
- Monitor absences closely and use occupational health input
- Consider what retraining needs employees will have after a reorganisation. Some will be doing a new job and may require a transition period
- Have a “survivors’ strategy” in place. Line management should have regular discussions with staff to ensure they feel supported in their new roles or new reporting structures
- This can be an ideal time to introduce new career development and training programmes for those who remain – support to ensure they feel supported and secure

Organisational change is difficult but with the right help and support it is possible to create a positive outcome for everyone.

We support clients and individuals through the outplacement process.

Should you wish to find out more about how we can support you, please contact us.

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