



Glain Roberts-McCabe sat down with Roundtable member Alison De Luisa, Associate Vice President, Student and Employee Development at Cambrian College, who shares her experience in making things go as smoothly as possible in the difficult situation of cost-cutting layoffs.

MENTORING MATTERS

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“Our company is in cost-cutting mode and I’ve been told I need to lay off three people on my team, each of whom has worked here for a long time. I’ve never done this kind of layoff before and am feeling pretty anxious about it. How can I make sure things go as smoothly as possible in this difficult situation?”

One of the most difficult jobs you will have as a leader in any organization is terminating or laying off employees. Unfortunately, in today's work environment this is something that most leaders will have to do during their career. There are a few best practices to keep in mind to make this process run as smoothly as possible.

Demonstrate Respect

*Offer a Fair Severance and
Termination Package*

Hire an Outplacement Consultant

Plan Communication

Prepare for Layoff Day

Keep Your Composure

DEMONSTRATE RESPECT

The person being laid off is one who has given their time and effort to your organization. Although you have made the decision that they are no longer a fit in your organization, they deserve the utmost respect. It is also always important to thank them for all they have done for the organization. People will remember if you don't thank them.

OFFER A FAIR SEVERANCE AND TERMINATION PACKAGE

Know the labour laws and the common law practice in your industry for severance packages. If you are not aware of these laws, it is advisable to contact a labour lawyer. This legal advice upfront is often worth the cost as it can avoid future legal costs related to the layoff.

HIRE AN OUTPLACEMENT CONSULTANT

It is a good best practice to hire an outplacement consultant. This consultant will help you on the actual day of the termination as well as provide ongoing support to the person affected by the layoff and will help them in the process of preparing their next steps. The advice they provide for their next job search is invaluable and will help them both practically and emotionally during this time of change.

PLAN COMMUNICATION

It is important to develop a communication plan ahead of the date of termination, particularly when multiple layoffs are occurring on the same day. Coordination of communication is critical, although even the best communication plan and the timing around notifications will need to be fluid. People's reactions can be unpredictable.

PREPARE FOR LAYOFF DAY

Select a location to meet with the employee that is private. This is often very emotional for the person who being laid off and they will need their privacy respected. The actual meeting is short and direct. It needs to be clearly communicated that the person is no longer employed at your organization and the details of the severance package are in the letter that should be provided to the employee at the meeting. This is not the time to get into the details of the reasons for the decision. However, if the decision was purely financial this can be clearly stated. Sometimes people want to debate the decision or negotiate. This is not a negotiation—the decision is final. At this meeting any keys, company computer, phones, or company property should be collected.

KEEP YOUR COMPOSURE

Although this is a very difficult job for you, it is much more difficult for the person who is receiving the news that they are no longer employed. Your composure matters.

It is important to remember that this is a pivotal moment for the person who is losing their job. How you treat them will be remembered and how you carry yourself is important. And, as a leader, this is probably one of the most difficult things you will need to do throughout your career. Taking these best practices into account will allow you to better plan so that this difficult day runs more smoothly.



Alison De Luisa is Associate Vice President, Student and Employee Development at Cambrian College in Sudbury, Ontario. Within this role she is accountable for Human Resources and Student Services at the College. She was Co-Chair for two years of the Ontario College Sector Human Resources Coordinating Committee and has held several progressively challenging human resources positions at Cambrian College and within the mining sector for Falconbridge Ltd and Xstrata Nickel (now known as Glencore Inc.). While working at the corporate office within Mining, she was a Manager, Leadership Development for global operations. Alison was also the Human Resources Manager, Global Projects, overseeing human resources plans and strategies for mining projects located in Tanzania, New Caledonia and the Dominican Republic.



Alison earned a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Industrial Relations from McGill University and a Master of Industrial Relations Degree from Queens University. She has also proudly been affiliated with The Roundtable for six years.



Glain Roberts-McCabe is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.