



Roundtable Mentor,
Jennifer Campbell,
Marketing Strategy
Leader at United Way
Greater Toronto, shared
her perspective on how
to keep a team motivated
following lay-offs and cost
cutting.

Mentoring **MATTERS**



My company has just gone through some cost cutting, which included laying off a number of people. How do I keep my team motivated now that we have fewer people but the same targets to hit?

Let's face it. Being laid-off from a company sucks... but, sometimes it is harder for the people left behind. And, harder still for those who need to lead and motivate the "survivors". I have been in this situation more times than I care to remember, and learned a little more each time. Here are some of my key learnings:

First, check in with yourself.

Just like the airplane instructions, you need to pause for a moment and think about yourself, before you move on to the others. You probably lost some close colleagues, a boss, a friend from another department. Acknowledge that loss.

Then, consider if you have the messages and information you need to effectively represent the organization's vision and plans to move forward.

If not, get them. While you may not have all the answers, you do need to be consistent and credible with the information you will be relaying.

Now, it's time to be the leader.

Like most aspects of leadership, communication matters. **Honest, timely and frequent dialogue is critical** to working through the impact and uncertainty of what has happened, and how you will move forward - both as individuals, and as a team. Ensure that all members of the team hear the same messages about the vision, priorities, expectations and the opportunities ahead.

Say it, and repeat it in different ways over the course of the weeks following the changes. They say we need to hear a message 7 times before we remember it. And it's not just one-way communication. Encourage dialogue - with you, and amongst the team. But shut down the rumour mill as soon as it starts. I have seen even the highest performing teams go off course when gossip gets going.

Be authentic.

If that's already your leadership style, then you are ahead of the game. Acknowledge the loss, and that like any grieving process, everyone will deal with it differently.

Be accessible and visible.

I found this helped people who were hesitant to speak up in a group setting, and also helped assess the general "buzz" and sense of how people were coping. Now is not the time to lock yourself in your office. I frequently found myself as the unofficial go-to for members of other teams. This provided the benefit of insight into what's going on across the organization and how other groups, that interact with yours, are managing the change. And, it provides leadership to them too.

Take advantage of the changes as an opportunity to assess some of the work the team is doing.

In a number of instances, we identified projects and processes that were not moving the business forward, and wound them down immediately. In other cases, we were able to streamline initiatives, or push out deadlines. This gave the team confidence that they were not simply going to have more work piled on them. I have also used this as an opportunity to provide growth assignments to team members who I thought were up to the challenge (sometimes, even when they didn't think it themselves). With some support and encouragement, they took on the work and excelled.

Celebrate the successes.

Do this informally, and formally, as the team melds and bonds. (I highly recommend an axe-throwing outing). Continue to find new, more efficient ways to do the work. Continue the open dialogue. Say thank you. Often. And remember, in the long run, people won't remember what you said to them, but they will always remember how you made them feel.



Jennifer Campbell spent the past decade at Canada Post building and leading remarkable teams of experts who brought hands-on marketing knowledge to a wealth of customers, agencies and industry partners across the country. Jennifer and her team also developed business-building marketing initiatives to position Canada Post as a key eCommerce partner, and to show the art of “what is possible” when physical marketing is combined with digital, by creating and introducing Smartmail Marketing™ to the industry. She passionately shared research and case studies on stages at industry events in Canada and the US, and whenever possible, with the next generation of marketers. Jennifer has experienced the industry from all sides. In addition to American Express and Canada Post, she held senior marketing roles at TD Bank. She has worked on the agency side at Blitz (Cossette) and in database marketing consulting, at InfoWorks. Currently, she is putting her skills to work to support the nonprofit sector, by leading the marketing strategy and planning at United Way Toronto & York Region.



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.