

get on and get ahead

## How to... keep outgoing employees happy

by Ali Gill

Many workers are extremely loyal to their companies, and for some this loyalty can be formed or cemented at the point of exit. In a market where today's redundant staff may be tomorrow's talent, employers should be keen to strengthen employee loyalty during redundancy.

### Say goodbye

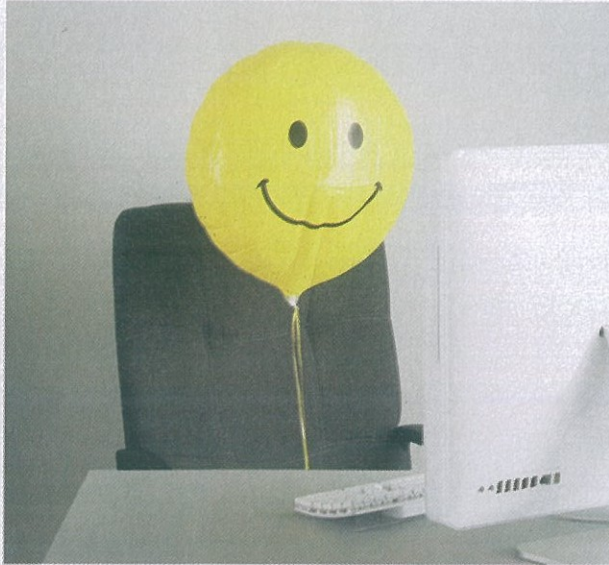
After a redundancy is announced, make a point of arranging a goodbye event.

When I was made redundant from a company I had worked with for 12 months, my manager picked a modest but inspiring venue to mark my departure.

A mixture of suppliers, close team colleagues and key people from other parts of the business came along and my manager made it clear he felt it important these people attended.

He then led a discussion about each of us, clearly articulated the value each person had added, and talked briefly about his feelings about the departure. It was a positive experience that enhanced my view of the company.

More than 70% of managers report feelings of guilt when making employees



**HAPPY GOODBYES...** Make sure outgoing workers leave on good terms.

redundant, and will mistakenly often avoid the ending celebration that normally happens when people change jobs.

An endpoint 'ceremony', with both affirmation and reflection, will help people to work through the typical feelings of loss that accompany endings, and will leave both employer and employee in a better state of mental wellbeing.

### Coach the transition

Transitions typically need new skills, perspectives and ways of looking at things. A skilled coach can provide the space and structure for individuals to think through their needs, wants and goals.

One-to-one meetings with departing team members, involving an HR representative and manager, can help staff plan their next step.

Using a coaching approach to explore useful themes, such as how to manage finances or pointing out helpful resources and support available, can help the employee to devise their own plan.

Setting time aside to think through the issues and challenges and explore options helps transition. Keeping meetings punctual with a firm start and finish time is important as this containment helps to develop the feelings of being in control, vital during times of transitional change.

Social networks exist in every family, organisation and institution. Leaving an organisation, particularly one which the employee has been part of for a number of years, changes the dynamic.

As a parting gesture, why not invite the exiting employee to join a 'think

tank' network of ex- and current employees? Over time, this connecting group can prove useful through external relationships built outside the organisation, as well as maintaining contact with those within.

### Open door

When a person leaves an organisation, voluntarily or otherwise, the best gift an employer can give is an open door to a new and more relevant network. And this need not be a time-intensive, face-to-face process – 65% of middle management appointments are now estimated to be transacted with some influence from social networking technology such as Facebook and MySpace.

Loyalty is a multi-layered concept that involves a sense of belonging to something bigger and better than oneself. Through their actions, employers can either create advocates who will sing their praises, or enemies determined to build networks with others who feel the same sense of injustice.

*Ali Gill is chief executive of change management consultancy Crelos.*

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Book**  
*Redundancy and managing change*  
Helen Clarke, Jaluch, £7.20,  
ISBN: 0955426421

**Article**  
*How to take staff through redundancy*  
→ [personneltoday.com/47975.article](http://personneltoday.com/47975.article)

## expert's view... Keeping them sweet



**Jane Sunley**  
Managing director,  
TalentToolbox

### What are the biggest challenges?

Redundancy is highly traumatic – for the employee being made redundant, for colleagues, and for the business itself. It is the business leader's job to manage this process, to minimise the stress and discomfort of the employee, the negative impact on the remaining workforce, the loss of knowledge to the business, and the potential impact on customers. Managing departures transparently is difficult, so clear communication is vital. The ideal outcome would be for the leaver to come out with their head held high, and feeling that the employer has done everything they can to make the transition as painless as possible. This can be achieved with careful planning and sensitivity.

### What should you avoid?

Avoid a hasty or slapdash approach. Make sure you follow procedure with proper consultation, considering all the options. Look for voluntary redundancies first and make sure no-one can accuse you of dismissing people unfairly. You need to be fair and impartial. Avoid upsetting the leaver's colleagues as far as possible – make sure they understand the reasoning behind the decisions.

### Top tips

- Be honest – communicate throughout, consulting rather than telling.
- Show you care and will put the effort in to make the best of a bad situation.
- Manage those left behind and ensure the transition is well managed.

## if you only do 5 things

- 1 Be impartial
- 2 Be sensitive
- 3 Follow a process
- 4 Communicate
- 5 Don't burn bridges

## your quick guide to blogging

- To post comments on our Work Clinic blog, visit [www.personneltoday.com/wcblog](http://www.personneltoday.com/wcblog)

Just go to the comments box within a posting and follow the instructions to register. Please fill in your e-mail address (this remains hidden when your comment is published). If you want to attach a live link, fill in the URL field. If you want to post anonymously, create an alias in the name section.

- If you want to be featured as a guest expert and have an idea for an interesting posting, e-mail Tara Craig at → [workclinic@personneltoday.com](mailto:workclinic@personneltoday.com)

*All sensitive e-mails sent to the Work Clinic will be treated in confidence.*