

**How to Put Outplacement Services to Good Use — Tips on Using a Reduction in Force in a Positive Manner**

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Just been laid off? Soon–to–be–ex employees who receive an outplacement package should be sure to use it to their best advantage.

The Academy Award nominated movie, Up in the Air, is all about reductions in force (among other things). The lead character, an outplacement consultant played by George Clooney, spends his days flying all over the country advising employees that they are being downsized. Naturally the people he speaks with do not have a good reaction to the news.

While losing a job because an employer eliminates it is an unpleasant experience, getting assistance from a high–quality outplacement firm can offer many displaced employees a lifeline. And more and more employers agree. According to a survey for The Wall Street Journal conducted by the American Management Association and Institute for Corporate Productivity, over two–thirds of 265 U.S. employers with layoffs during the prior two years have offered outplacement. The average cost has been over $3,500 per employee.

**Keep a Positive Outlook After Being Laid Off**

While it is perfectly okay to go through a temporary mourning period, it is important not to wallow in misery for too long. Otherwise, what may happen is that downsized employees who are in a state of shock or are feeling hurt and angry may resist moving forward. This can manifest itself in one of two ways. They are either reluctant to start a job search or are too unsure of themselves to do it very well.

Those who fail to begin their job search immediately lose valuable time, which is likely to result in a longer unemployment period. And since unemployment benefits and any severance package that displaced employees receive from their employer are for a limited time only, waiting too long to begin a new job search could result in financial hardship down the line.

On the other hand, laid off employees who are unsure of themselves may wind up being unsuccessful in their job search because they present themselves poorly. They either submit a weak resume or present themselves ineffectively over the phone or in person. “The good news,” according to outplacement coach Valerie Frederickson, “is that one can be coached to come across very differently.”

**Accept the Outplacement Services Provided**

As difficult as it might be ... laid off workers to reconcile the fact that they need to go out and find a new job, it is probably even more difficult to accept the assistance of the organization that placed them in this position to begin with. However, it is important for displaced employees to take advantage of the outplacement services their employer provides.

While friends and family can be a good source of comfort during this period , outplacement counselors can provide emotional support as well as professional guidance. Outplacement counselors are experts in coaching displaced workers on how to look for a new employment opportunity and in preparing them to return to the workforce. Services can include career placement tests, skills and values assessments, job interview pointers, career coaching, resume and cover letter creation, job development and general down–to–earth advice.

In addition, outplacement firms can be a great resource for networking. Not only do displaced employees have the chance to meet those who work in the outplacement firm they can network with other employees who have been laid off. Sometimes the result may be to find a new friend or to get a job lead. It could even present a great opportunity for someone who is looking to change careers.

The whole idea is that as tough as it is to be laid off, it is even more important to utilize whatever tools are available to regain employment. And that includes keeping a positive outlook and putting outplacement services to good use.