

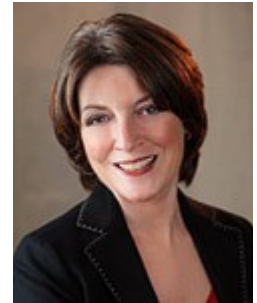
Regaining Confidence Amid Layoffs

By Beverly Flaxington

July 3, 2012

Beverly Flaxington is a practice management consultant. She answers questions from advisors facing human resource issues. To submit yours, email us [here](#).

Advisor Perspectives welcomes guest contributions. The views presented here do not necessarily represent those of Advisor Perspectives.



Dear Bev:

We had to lay off a couple of people in our investment firm. We'd grown to over 60 people, but the market difficulties of the last few years have squeezed our margins and we could no longer afford the level of staff we had. I believe we chose wisely but the result is that morale is very low. People say they are worried about "when the next shoe will drop" and they have lost confidence in the firm's ability to meet and beat goals and keep everyone employed. As the founder and leader of the firm, this upsets me but I don't know what to do to give everyone confidence that I don't feel myself. Can you give me some tips about how to minimize the fear without being dishonest? I really don't know what will happen over the next couple of years.

Mike M., New Orleans LA

Dear Mike,

I give you credit for being honest! Some CEOs are overly optimistic or overly pessimistic, but you sound like you are trying to be very realistic. With this realism in mind, is it just the layoffs that have the rest of the team losing confidence? –Or is there anything you've done, or are doing that could be contributing to their lack of confidence? In fact, you say you aren't feeling confident – maybe this is the place to start. Why is your confidence waning? First step is do whatever necessary to feel and act more confidently. Balance proactive communication with honesty. You can't tell your staff that you don't know what the future holds without giving them some facts and data without upsetting your employees. But you can tell them that they control a great deal of the future. Get staff more involved. Have regular meetings where you share results against goals. Celebrate "wins" and diagnose losses. Create a team that is pulling together in the right direction. And, alongside this figure out what you need to do to bolster your own confidence. No matter what you say, they will read what you are not saying! Good luck.



Dear Bev:

We spent a great deal of time last year constructing new job descriptions for portfolio managers in our firm. We wanted people who could manage money but could also sell effectively. We passed the job descriptions out to our existing portfolio team to show them what we expected of them and what we were hiring for in the future. This caused so much disruption! Our investment professionals don't think they should also be salespeople, but we need them to grow the firm. What do we do?

Garry B., Topeka KS

Dear Garry,

You are keying on a very common occurrence in the financial advisory industry today. Most CFAs, CFPs and the like don't get their credentials because they want to become salespeople! So, when you gave out the new job descriptions, did you just pass them around and that was it? Did you tell them exactly what you expect? Do you really believe they can act in a sales role, or were you just hoping that in giving the job descriptions they would miraculously gain these skills? What do they really need to do to make this shift? Do they need training or support? Can they do it and is it really the right move for the firm to make? If you decide yes, then be sure you are supporting and encouraging them. You may see less resistance and more willingness to be active participants in the change you need to make if they feel like you are behind them and giving them your support.

Beverly Flaxington co-founded [The Collaborative](#), a consulting firm devoted to business building for the financial services industry in 1995; in 2008 she co-founded Advisors Trusted Advisor to offer dedicated practice management resources to advisors, planners and wealth managers. She is currently an adjunct professor at Suffolk University teaching undergraduate students Leadership & Social Responsibility. Beverly is a Certified Professional Behavioral Analyst (CPBA) and Certified Professional Values Analyst (CPVA).

She has spent over 25 years in the investment industry and has been featured in Selling Power Magazine and quoted in hundreds of media outlets, including the Wall Street Journal, MSNBC.com, Investment News and Solutions Magazine for the FPA. She speaks frequently at investment industry conferences and is a speaker for the CFA Institute.

www.advisorperspectives.com

For a free subscription to the Advisor Perspectives newsletter, visit:

<http://www.advisorperspectives.com/subscribers/subscribe.php>