

# CHOICES

September 2008

The BRIGHTON GROUP

 OI Partners Inc.

The Brighton Group/OI Partners Inc. is a locally owned and managed consulting firm specializing in career and organizational transition services. In-depth, one-on-one consulting is the core of our distinctive approach.

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Faced with serious financial challenges or dramatic course corrections in a company's business strategy may require the company to change the composition of its workforce through layoffs. Layoffs present any organization with some tough choices in deciding who stays and who will be asked to leave. Ultimately, these personnel issues must be dealt with, and the choices made as a result can have a significant lasting impact on the health of the business, workforce morale, and bottom-line productivity. From our experience, senior management considers four paths of action.

**Deal head-on with poor performers.** The existence of problem individuals is a constant burr under the saddle of companies. These previous annoyances now become blaring irritants when faced with a layoff. Even if the culture has historically not been great at holding these managers, units, or plants accountable, now is the opportunity to address the issues directly and specifically – the underperformers and those who aren't making the grade. Laying-off the good performers, while retaining known slackers, doesn't sell.

**Reengineer what isn't working.** When times aren't so lean, organizations tend to have more tolerance for processes not running as smooth as desired. When times get tight, the tolerance disappears. Strategically planning the layoff process provides an excellent platform for evaluating and addressing units with known inefficiencies. Reengineering structures, processes, and practices will lead to greater clarity in the layoff and positively influence the attitudes and behaviors of those remaining.

**Leading by example.** Model departments have cross-functional players, and they demonstrate the ability to align with organizational goals, meet budgets, and communicate well. They will perceive this as an opportunity to lead by example. By taking a pole position in the layoff process, these leaders and teams send messages to the rest of the company that the pending moves are critically important, call for forward leaning behaviors, and challenge all parties to be part of the solution.

**Across-the-board cuts. Everyone shares in the pain.** There are times when across-the-board cuts are seen as the most viable option resulting in cuts based on a percentage of budget or a reduction in headcount. These one-off, organization-wide cuts can often be counter-productive to maintaining an engaged workforce because of the perceived tolerance for inefficiencies, poor performance or lack of accountability. When this strategy is taken in isolation of others, those striving for excellence in their performance often see leadership as "taking the easy way out."



There is no way to fully extinguish the significance of a layoff in the life of an organization. Executive management that scrutinizes its options and makes choices that undertake a long-view approach create a culture that speaks volumes about its commitment to leading by example, a culture of accountability, and a demonstrated investment in the people who remain working for the company.

*"A better human experience...for a better business outcome"*

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