



Retool Your Layoff Process Now to Improve Hiring Later

By Stacey Randall

By retooling the way layoffs are managed now, you may boost your future recruitment, particularly of Millennials.

The movie *Up in the Air*, in which George Clooney plays a consultant hired to fire people, has done little to enhance the image of employers. And the truth is that layoffs may still be necessary in the short term, not only because some industries remain in the doldrums, but also because mergers and acquisitions are expected to pick up steam as the economy recovers. By retooling the way layoffs are managed now, you may boost your future recruitment, particularly of Millennials.

It is not unusual to hear HR executives complain about the lack of loyalty among Millennials, who are defined as the generation of workers that are 30 or younger. They're said to stick with an employer as long as times are good and leave when hardship strikes or they get bored. But to hear the Millennials talk, they're the ones who have been forced to look out for themselves.

As one participant in a survey by SBR Consulting stated, "Loyalty means nothing.... A company expects its employees to be loyal to them, but they don't seem to care. You are only a number ... and replaceable by cheaper labor."

Ensuring that your layoff process is respectful contributes significantly to reducing negative feelings of these young workers you will need in the future. For example, early warning of impending layoffs appears to ease their concerns about downsizing, particularly in regard to satisfaction with severance packages.

In the SBR Consulting survey, 64 percent of laid-off Millennials who said they had no formal warning thought they should have received more severance. Given Millennials' propensity to share their lives via Twitter and Facebook, that's a lot of fingers potentially tapping out discontent on smart phones to family, friends and the world.

HR executives also need to be aware of how the treatment of laid-off colleagues affects the morale of those left behind. The survey of laid-off Millennials found that of those same 64 percent who were not formally warned, only 12 percent felt that the company was sincere, compared with 34 percent of those receiving advance warning, who felt the company was very sincere throughout the process.

One can hardly expect workers to demonstrate commitment and loyalty if they perceive their employer negatively. A kinder and gentler layoff process often results in a more productive workplace. That benefits the entire company and will help you attract the young talent you will need as the economy improves.