

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

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supporting EAP professionals

Post-Layoff Effects...

...More than Ever, EQ Crucial in Today's Workplaces

By Travis Bradberry

When employers slash jobs, it's tempting to view them as selfish profiteers who, like Scrooge McDuck, wait out the storm sitting upon their mounds of gold. The reality for employers is that layoffs are a terrifying business proposition that is rife with risk.

In the 1990s, business analysts studied the productivity losses created by vague syndromes including "survivor guilt" after layoffs.

Today, our understanding of the business implications of layoffs are far more concrete. This article will examine a few of them.

Seagull Managers

"Seagull managers" are one clearly evident consequence of layoffs. Layoffs breed this type of manager like wildfire. Instead of taking the time to get the facts straight and work alongside staff to come up with a viable solution, seagull managers "swoop in" at the last minute, "squawk" at everybody, and deposit piles of formulaic advice before

abruptly "taking off" and leaving behind an even bigger mess than when they started.

"Seagulls" interact with employees only when there's a fire to put out. And even then, they move in and out so hastily — and put so little thought into their approach — that they make bad situations worse by frustrating and alienating the workers who need them the most.

Why are there so many seagull managers? As companies slash their workforces in response to the sluggish economy, they gut

management layers and leave behind managers with more autonomy, greater responsibility, and more people to manage. That means they have less time and less accountability for what is supposed to be the primary purpose of their jobs: managing people.

Employee-Manager Disconnect

But while it's easy for an employee to spot a seagull manager when you're on the receiving end of his or

"As companies slash their workforces...they gut management layers...they have less time...for what is supposed to be the primary purpose of their jobs: managing people."

...Coping with Job Loss isn't Easy

Chances are, employee assistance professionals aren't dealing with as many "employees" these days. Advice about how employees can go about getting a new job is readily available. However, the emotional, sometimes gut-wrenching aspects of being unemployed are often overlooked.

Let's face it; regardless of age, occupation, race, or gender, being out of work is difficult for most people. Like it or not, most of us tend to define people on the basis of "what

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her “airborne dumps,” the manager doing the swooping, squawking, and dumping is often unaware of the negative impact of his/her behavior.

According to a recent study published in *Human Resource Executive* magazine, one-third of American workers spend a minimum of 20 hours per month around the water cooler complaining about their boss. In fact, the Gallup Poll estimates that U.S. corporations lose \$360 billion annually due to lost productivity from employees who are dissatisfied with their boss. People join *companies*, but they will leave *bosses*.

Emotional Intelligence

Successful post-layoff work environments require an exceptional amount of emotional intelligence (EQ), especially if you manage people. EQ is that intangible “something” that enables us to manage behavior, navigate complex social situations, and make personal decisions that leads to positive results.

EQ has four pillars — self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management:

- **Self-awareness** involves understanding your emotions as they occur — and also knowing your tendencies (how you tend to respond to different situations and people).
- **Self-management** is what you do with the knowledge that comes from self-awareness, which often involves choosing a different course of action than you might expect.
- **Social awareness** refers to how well you understand the emotions and behavior of other people and why they do what they do.
- **Relationship management** involves how you use the first three skills as you interact with other people.

Managers who use their EQ tend to do five simple things that serve them well in overcoming their seagull tendencies:

- 1) **Don’t pass the buck:** When expectations are set for your staff, make sure *you’re* the one explaining what will be expected of them — don’t pass the buck to someone else.
- 2) **Check in everyday:** Make communication with your team frequent and sincere. You can’t help people get results if you don’t know what they’re doing.
- 3) **Block time to do your “real job”:** Schedule time each day in your calendar where you can get up and away from your desk, focusing solely on the needs of your team. Remember, a manager’s primary purpose is to manage people.
- 4) **Leave your door open:** Seagull managers lose touch partly because they’re not approachable.
- 5) **Show them the way:** When managing performance, balance praise with constructive criticism. Your team needs you to show them when they’re doing things right, as well as when they’re off track.

Summary

There’s an old Chinese proverb that says, “*Give a man a pole, and he’ll catch a fish a week. Tell him what bait to use, and he’ll catch a fish a day. Show him how and where to fish, and he’ll have fish to eat for a lifetime.*” A high degree of emotional intelligence (EQ) is not something we’re born with — it has to be honed with knowledge and practice. Even though learning to use your EQ can feel a lot like fishing in an unfamiliar lake, what you catch can ensure your survival in any economy. ■

Dr. Travis Bradberry is the best-selling co-author of the “Emotional Intelligence Quick Book” and “Squawk! — How to Stop Making Noise and Start Getting Results.” He is also the president of TalentSmart, a leading provider of cutting-edge EQ assessments for personal development, leadership management, and corporate learning. For more information, visit www.talentsmart.com.

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Coping *continued from Page 1*

they do” rather than “who they are.” For instance, Jim is a mechanic, Sally is a nurse, Joe is a cook, etc. But when you’re unemployed, that focus shifts to the past tense. You *were* a waitress, truck driver, etc. Now, you *are* one thing — unemployed.

If it’s any consolation, the cold, hard fact is that in today’s tough economic climate, being out of work is seldom about poor job performance. That’s the good part. More importantly, with the reality of

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today's business climate, more and more of us will need a plan to cope with being out of work. (**Editor's note:** For more information, see also this month's *Brown Bagger*.)

The EAP may be asked to assist during the layoff (i.e. downsizing) process. The following are some recommendations from Gene Vander, CEAP, an account services manager assigned to the UAW-Ford account with Health Management Systems of America:

- ✓ **Examine employees' perception of the event.** This is a crucial point. Some employees may be fine with being laid off, while other people's trauma may be overwhelming. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross' stages of loss (i.e. denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) may be adapted to any individual going through loss. This includes workplace changes.
- ✓ **The EAP needs to understand what stage each employee is in at any given time during the layoff process.** A worker in the "denial stage" may not wish to discuss the layoffs at all, while a co-worker in the "acceptance" stage may want to talk about how he/she is looking forward to going back to school. It is important for the EAP to emphasize that everyone will have different perceptions of the same event.
- ✓ **Reaching out to family members is often overlooked.** Access may be difficult since the EAP is often solicited just to work with employees. However, spouses may be at more of an "acceptance" stage, and thus can be of practical assistance — if included.
- ✓ **Companies and EAPs often overlook employees' spiritual**



Editor's Notebook

There's a right and a wrong way of doing things — and that includes laying people off. I was once "canned" on a Friday night, and told to clear out my desk over the weekend. That's certainly one way of getting a full week's work out of you!

It's certainly tragic that so many layoffs are occurring in this day and age — but there's a compassionate way of doing it (i.e. *do unto others...*) that can allow an employer to retain its reputation — *and* there's a disrespectful way of giving people pink slips that's sure to drag down company trustworthiness, and employee morale and productivity, both for departing workers, and those remaining on the job.

However, the layoff is only the beginning — coping with being out of work, I think, is even more difficult. While it's certainly tough at the time, being let go *can* lead to a new, and better job that one probably wouldn't have pursued otherwise.

In fact, while I readily admit the workforce transitions taking place are difficult for many, I still believe that opportunities *DO* in fact lie ahead! (See article this issue on page 4.)

While layoff issues are, unfortunately, likely to linger in 2009, the "good" news is that the EAP is in a perfect position to help. Until next month. ■

Mike Jacquart, Editor

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or religious lives during this difficult time. Chaplains are not often considered during downsizings. This is unfortunate since chaplains can be of tremendous comfort to workers with spiritual or religious beliefs. Chaplains and EA professionals may work in a complementary manner, such as how support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and substance abuse counselors complement one another.

- ✓ **The earlier in the process the EAP is involved, the better.** All too often, the EAP is first contacted the day before a plant closure is to occur. This is too bad since, if consulted earlier, the EAP can provide on-site counseling before, during, and after the layoff process. Companies need to better see the merits in involving the EAP early on.
- ✓ **Downsizing increases the risk**

of employee suicide and workplace violence. In fact, substance abuse, marital problems, excessive gambling, and other destructive behaviors are also at high risk during this time. For this reason, it's recommended that suicide and workplace violence be included in any layoff/downsizing training.

Summary

The change in status from being gainfully employed to being out of work is one of the most personal and devastating experiences many of us face. It's natural to be angry, fearful, or anxious. But remember that this period won't last forever — even if it seems like it!

Let go of your emotions, and then move on. That isn't easy for many of us. Fortunately, EA professionals are among those in a position to help. ■

Additional source: Karen Okulicz, author of "Try! A Survival Guide to Unemployment," "Decide! How to Make Any Decision," and "Attitude For Your Best Lived Life," visit www.okulicz.com.

Job Trends to Watch in '09

The bad news is all the layoffs, especially in the particularly hard-hit manufacturing sector. The good news is that other professions are likely to grow as a result of President Barack Obama's economic stimulus policies.

According to Jobfox, the most wanted new jobs, listed by major Obama initiatives, will include:

Infrastructure Initiative: Key Jobs:

1. Construction managers;
2. Project managers;
3. Civil engineers;
4. Computer-aided drafting specialists; and
5. Telecommunications engineers.

Financial Initiative: Key Jobs:

1. Compliance accountants;
2. Internal auditors;
3. Tax accountants; and
4. Government regulators.

Energy Initiative: Key Jobs:

1. Electrical engineers;
2. Mechanical engineers;
3. Power grid managers;

4. Biofuels chemists; and
5. Sales and marketing.

Healthcare Initiative & Modernization: Key Jobs:

1. Nurses;
2. Information technology specialists;
3. Bioinformatics specialists;
4. Information security specialists; and
5. Software developers.

Community Involvement Initiative: Key Jobs:

1. Social workers;
2. Administrators; and
3. Translators.

"Epic changes are ahead throughout the professional landscape," said Rob McGovern, CEO of Jobfox. "It's just like 1991, when we didn't know the Internet was coming. New job titles will emerge, many of which haven't even been invented yet. Savvy professionals will be prepared to take advantage of new opportunities." ■

Source: Jobfox (www.jobfox.com).

Even in Current Economy, Retention is a Top Concern

Even in today's economy, employers are most concerned about keeping good employees and bringing in new ones, according to a recent survey from Robert Half International, a leading staffing service. Nearly four in 10 senior executives interviewed cited employee retention as their greatest staffing concern.

"Many firms are operating with lean teams in which every staff member plays a key role in the business, making retention a greater concern," said Max Messmer, chairman and CEO of Robert Half International and author of *Human Resources Kit For Dummies*®, 2nd Edition (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.). "Companies that lose top performers may not only experience declines in productivity but also incur significant costs in replacing these professionals."

Messmer added that within a few specialties, recruiting in-demand skills remains a challenge. "There continues to be a shortage of skilled job candidates for positions such as credit and collections specialists and staff and senior accountants, and companies may not be able to offer generous perks and incentives to attract them." ■

Source: Robert Half International (www.rhi.com).

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Why Bailouts are Dangerous

By Gary Foreman

Let's start with a disclaimer. I don't like to see any company fail. And I don't like to see anyone lose their job or their home. But, just because I don't like it, that doesn't mean that it won't happen. Let's face it. There are some things (like death and taxes) that I don't like, but are very much a part of reality.

That's my concern with government bailouts. Often they don't seem to have much to do with reality. And rarely do they do anything about the root causes of the problem. The end result is that they make a bad situation even worse.

Take the banking/housing bailout. A recent government study reported that 53% of homeowners who received restructured home

loans were in default again. What about taking this money and giving these folks job training so that they can earn a better income? Show them how to build credit by paying off credit card balances every month and staying current with auto loans. Explain how borrowing money that they can't repay will make their lives harder. If you really want to help people, those are the steps to take.

The line up for bailouts is beginning to resemble the ticket window for a hit Broadway show. Each time, the failed industry (whatever it is) will show how much human suffering will happen if they are allowed to go under. The stories will be compelling.

But remember this — if the bailout (whatever the industry) does not address the root causes of

the problem, it will not solve it. It will only delay the inevitable and make a bad situation worse.

Choices have consequences. We can choose to bail out those who made poor choices and attempt to reduce their consequences — but bailouts will not make consequences go away. They only spread the suffering around.

Worst of all, bailouts leave the people who made the bad choices no wiser for their next decision. They will have been denied the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. That makes us all poorer in the end. ■

*Gary Foreman is the editor of The Dollar Stretcher website (www.stretcher.com) and newsletters that contain thousands of articles on ways to save money, and a forum where people share their dollar-stretching ideas. **Editor's note:** Money Matters is a new feature in EAR in response to reader requests for additional financial advice and money-saving tips.*

Resources

🔑 *Money Management*

International offers scores of tips about credit, bankruptcy counseling, interactive financial education, and much more. Visit www.moneymanagement.org.

🔑 *Ingenix* has launched a suite of resources for health care industry stakeholders impacted by the need to implement new code sets and comply with updated electronic transaction standards. For more information, visit www.ingenix.com.

🔑 *Toxic People: Decontaminate People — Without Using Weapons or Duct Tape* by Marsha Petrie Sue, John Wiley & Sons,

www.wiley.com. The author provides lessons for dealing with difficult people using personal vignettes, real-life situations, and a no-nonsense approach.

🔑 *Unleashing Microsoft Outlook: 104 Ways to Make it Work For You*, \$99, .pdf download, PBP Executive Reports, (800) 220-5000, www.pbpxecutive.com. Fed up with an out of control inbox? Ever sent an email you wish you could take back? This resource can help.

📖 *Hidden Truths*, by Brenda Youngerman, \$14.95, AEG Publishing Group, www.brendayoungerman.com. This book follows the lives of four children who are exposed to abusive family

lives. Readers see the world of abuse through a child's eyes.

📖 *The Baby Thief*, by Barbara Bisantz Raymond, \$12.95, Union Square Press, an imprint of Sterling Publishing, www.sterlingpublishing.com. Part social history, part detective story, and part exposé reverberates today, when most states still mandate closed adoptions.

📖 *The Connected Child*, by Drs. Karyn Purvis, David Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine, \$16.95, McGraw-Hill, www.books.mcgraw-hill.com. This book offers practical, hope-filled strategies, not only for adoptive parents, but all families striving to correct and connect with their children. ■

The Leadership Vacuum: What We May Lose with the Next Generation

The mass exodus of Baby Boomers from the workplace has begun. According to the US Office of Personnel Management, between now and 2010 Boomer retirement will have robbed American companies of nearly 290,000 full-time experienced employees!

While the financial crisis has forced some to postpone retirement for a few extra years, this is only delaying the inevitable.

Boomers presently hold the majority of major leadership roles in the workplace, and their retirement creates a leadership gap that must be filled by upcoming generations. The question is whether their successors will be up to the challenge.

According to TalentSmart researchers, emotional intelligence (EQ) — the ability to recognize and manage your emotions and those of other people — is the single most important skill of a successful leader. When it comes to managing their emotions, Baby Boomers reign supreme. Essentially, they are much less prone to fly off the handle when things don't go their way than are younger generations.

While not quite as numerous as Boomers, at 70 million strong Millennials (also known as Generation Y) are just 6 million shy of Boomers and they dwarf the 46 million Gen X-ers. So, there would appear to be enough Millennials to serve as future leaders. What about the quality of their leadership?

Cultural Differences

Culturally, the distinctions between Boomers and Millennials can hardly be overestimated. Coming of age watching cable tele-

vision during its infancy versus growing up watching TV on cell phones is just one small difference that has helped shape two vastly different outlooks on work and life. In the workplace, Baby Boomers are used to a structured work environment with planned face-to-face meetings, overtime, and the occasional weekend at the office.

Generation Y, on the other hand, has never lived in a world without telecommuting, business via BlackBerries, and text messages crafted with code words that stump even the most tech savvy among older generations.

Actually, when you consider how knowledgeable and technically proficient they are, Millennials might have a leg up on their predecessors in the Information Age. Their results-only attitude might finally break us free of the mind-numbing *Office Space* environment where workers are measured mostly by the hours they spend staring at their computer, instead of how efficiently they produce results.

But there is a lot more to leadership than being a walking Wikipedia. TalentSmart research shows that emotional intelligence accounts for as much as 58% of job performance in supervisors through CEOs. In other words, while brilliant accountants or engineers are definitely a bonus, their technical prowess has virtually nothing to do with good leadership.

The Leadership Vacuum

An increasingly downtrodden economy and shaky future mandates that we determine why our future leaders lag in such a critical skill. One possibility seemed to be that

coming of age with too many video games, instantaneous Internet gratification, and adoring parents have created a generation of self-indulgent young workers who can't help but wear their emotions on their sleeve in tense situations.

However, it isn't that simple. Self management skills appear to *increase steadily with age* — 60-year-olds in the TalentSmart study scored higher than 50-year-olds who scored higher than 40-year-olds, and so on. That means the younger generation's deficient self-management skills have little to do with things like the effects of growing up in the age of iPods and MySpace.

Basically, Gen Xers and Millennials simply haven't had as many life experiences in which to practice managing their emotions. That's good news because practice is something older workers can provide — while a change in their upbringing is not.

Summary

It's imperative that older workers accelerate the younger generations' development of core leadership skills. Today's fast-paced global marketplace won't afford the time to wait for the aging process to run its course.

Despite the slumping economy, most Boomers will retire sooner rather than later. We must prepare talented twentysomethings for leadership roles today. If we don't teach them how to manage themselves, is it reasonable to expect them to lead us toward a prosperous future? ■

Sources: Nick Tasler, Eric Thomas, and Lac D. Su, who are all affiliated with TalentSmart, a leading provider of cutting-edge psychological assessments. For more information, visit www.talentsmart.com.

Impact of 'EFCA' Could be Substantial

As the nation undergoes the transition into a new presidential administration, many people are focused on one specific piece of proposed legislation — the *Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA)* — a bill that would make it easier for employees to organize unions in the workplace.

After decades of declining union membership, proponents regard the bill as a top priority that would provide for easier unionization of workers.

However, among other concerns, opponents contest that the *EFCA* would violate an employee's right to a private ballot vote. Foley Hoag employment lawyer Jonathan Keselenko notes that the *EFCA* proposes three key changes to current law:

- ✓ The first, a **card check**, would allow a union to be certified by the National Labor Relations Board as employees' bargaining representative simply by a show of majority union authorization cards to the NLRB, abolishing the current so-called "secret election" required to recognize a union.
- ✓ The second is **mandatory arbitration**, in which if the union and employer cannot come to their first collective bargaining contract within 90 days, either party can request federal mediation. If an agreement still cannot be

reached after 30 days of mediation, the matter would then be referred to binding arbitration.

- ✓ The third change is **increased penalties** against employers that interfere with unionization activities — liquidated damages amounting to three times back pay for wrongful termination of union employees, as well as a \$20,000 fine for each willful or repetitive violation of the *EFCA*.

"If passed, ... the formation and official recognition of labor unions would now be possible within a matter of days," said Keselenko. "Also, parties to collective bargaining agreements will be forced to reckon with the clock, now that arbitration can be easily and swiftly demanded if parties are at an impasse. Furthermore, as seen with the proposed penalties, employers' missteps will be costly.

"Businesses will have to take a hard look at how they approach this and other challenges in the collective bargaining process, as the *EFCA* could propel unions and employers to arbitrate within a period of just four months," Keselenko added. ■

Jonathan Keselenko, an employment lawyer with the Boston-based Foley Hoag LLP, has an extensive traditional labor law practice. Editor's note: Do you feel this proposed legislation would help — or hurt — your EAP? EAR would be happy to publish additional articles (pro or con) on the "EFCA." Contact us at mikej@impact-publications.com.

On the Job

Resolve Personality Conflicts Once & for All

By Theresa Rose

Do you find yourself running for cover whenever a certain person enters the room?

Like most of us caught in similar situations, you have undoubtedly wrestled with your negative feelings for far too long. Getting angry hasn't helped, and ignoring the situation hasn't worked either. What *can* you do to resolve an unhealthy personality conflict?

The following are a few helpful hints on how to see Joe (or Jill) in a new light, transforming your "oil-and-water" relationship into one that resembles two peas in a pod.

1. Identify what drives you nuts. Name the characteristics that make you want to pitch a fit. Is Joe/Jill always late for meetings? Does he/she blame others for his/her own mistakes? Does he/she think he/she is better than everyone else? Is he/she a whiny baby?

2. Look at hidden concerns. What do you think scares this person the most? Is he/she afraid people don't respect him/her? Does he/she fear losing his job and not being able to find another one?

3. Examine your own worries. What is it *really* about Joe's/Jill's choices that makes you upset? Maybe his/her poor performance

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puts more pressure on you, and you don't think you'll be able to handle the workload.

4. **Recognize your similarities.**

While your personalities may be worlds apart, you share many things in common. You both want to be successful. You both want to be appreciated. You both experience fear every once in a while. When it comes right down to it, you and Joe/Jill aren't that different after all!

5. Perceive your adversary through a new lens. When you become aware that underneath those obnoxious choices lies a person who is struggling just like you are, those things that used to drive you crazy will lose their power. You will see this person as someone who

deserves your compassion and understanding.

Summary

When we act from a place of compassion instead of judgment, relationships shift from acrimony to harmony. We begin to see ourselves in the other person's eyes, and our anger melts away. If you employ these techniques, you will realize Joe/Jill isn't out to get you or misbehaving to spite you.

By working to resolve negative feelings, you will not only improve relationships, but you will be healthier and happier because of it. Joe/Jill may even start making better choices. ■

Theresa Rose is an inspirational speaker, author of "Opening the Kimono", and founder of Serious Mojo Publications. For more information, visit www.theresarose.net

The Cost of Conflict is High

- 85% of employees have to deal with conflict, and 29% do so "always" or "frequently."
- U.S. employees spend nearly 3 hours each week dealing with conflict, translating into approximately \$359 billion in paid hours in 2008.
- Perhaps most alarming — the majority of employees have never received conflict management training.

Source: "Workplace Conflict and How Businesses Can Harness it to Thrive," reprinted with permission of Employee Assistance Professionals Association (www.eapassn.org).

Workplace Wellness

Reducing the Risk of Communicable Illnesses

As if flu outbreaks aren't enough to be concerned about this time of year, cases of avian flu, staph, and Methicillin-resistant staph (MRSA) are also on the rise.

In 2007, there were 72 new human cases of avian flu. Of those cases, 48 people died, which translates to a devastating mortality rate of 67%. Humans cannot pass avian flu to each other, but it is still considered communicable because it is passed from animal to human.

Staph is a type of bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the noses of healthy people. It can cause serious infections and pneumonia. MRSA refers to types of staph that are resistant to the antibiotic Methicillin as well as some other antibiotics and drugs.

The following are some steps that

every employer can take to help stop the spread of germs:

- ✓ **Develop a sick leave policy that does not penalize sick employees**, thereby encouraging employees who have influenza-related symptoms (e.g., fever, headache, cough, sore throat, etc.) to stay home so that they do not infect other employees. Recognize that employees with ill family members may need to stay home to care for them.
- ✓ **Provide resources and a work environment that promotes good personal hygiene** (such as frequently washing one's hands). For example, provide tissues, hand sanitizer, disinfectants and disposable towels for employees to clean work surfaces.
- ✓ **Provide employees with up-to-date education and training** on

influenza risk factors, and protective behaviors (such as cough etiquette). The EAP can help.

- ✓ **If flu symptoms appear to be spreading among employees, minimize situations where groups of people are crowded together, such as in a meeting.** Use email, phones, and text messages to communicate with each other. When meetings are necessary, stay at least 6 feet apart, whenever possible, and assure that there is proper ventilation in the meeting room.
- ✓ **Promote healthy lifestyles** that include plenty of sleep, exercise, good nutrition, stress management, etc. Overall health can affect the ability to fight off, or recover from, an infectious disease. Again, the EAP can help. ■

Source: American Industrial Hygiene Association (www.aiha.org).