
Guidelines for Best Practice in Restructure and Redeployment

Dr. Ray Glennon James Bywater

Foreword

Organisations change. Organisations need to change to survive and grow. A shift in organisational strategy to support business growth will have implications for your people and what you need from them. An economic downturn can have implications for not only the number of people you need, but also what you ask of them to secure the organisation's survival.

Our intent in writing this Best Practice Guide is to provide advice to clients undergoing significant organisational change, on how to redeploy their workforce in alignment with changing strategic demands. We focus in some detail on the role of HR in managing talent through change that involves restructure, redeployment and often redundancy. We also look to the post-restructure environment and discuss what organisations can do to ensure their survivors are looking to the future rather than over their shoulders.

The guide is designed to be pragmatic and accessible, making reference to best practice based on our varied past experiences working on redeployment projects.



Introduction

Survival is synonymous with change and evolution. Business reaction to the demands of recession is a good example:

- Contracting and outsourcing are considered as a pressure valve to reduce fixed costs in the face of declining customer activity and optimism.
- Companies cash-rich enough to afford it, look to mergers & acquisitions to capitalise on synergistic customer contact points in shrinking markets.
- Many businesses re-engineer their processes and restructure to enable leaner operations to service clients.

A common thread running through all these changes is the objective of cost-cutting and the need to demonstrate a robust return on investment for every unit spent. A consistent outcome from these kinds of changes can be the need for staff redeployment and redundancy. The challenge in this process is to quickly find the 'best place' for current talent and recognise that for some, the 'best place' may be outside the organisation.

The role of HR through this significant change is pivotal and HR departments tend to be competent in understanding the process of redeployment and redundancy. HR departments are typically good at:

- Ensuring high-quality stakeholder consultation and communication.
- Collating existing employee data on job performance and other relevant criteria (tenure, attendance, disciplinary information, etc).
- Supporting line manager and employee expectations through the change.
- Ensuring all aspects of the process are within the parameters of local legislation.
- Supporting the 'business as usual' imperative during redeployment projects.

As an umbrella to these core HR activities we consider the following to be the main stages that practitioners need to undertake to ensure a successful redeployment process:

1. Aligning Jobs and Behaviours to the Organisation's Strategy

HR has a role here both to input into the development of the strategy and to implement quickly the human capital requirements that result from the new direction.

When inputting to the strategy, HR has a role to play in making an explicit link between the human capital capacity of the organisation and the board's strategic options. Changing some of your call centres from inbound customer care functions to outbound sales may be the right thing to do to grow the customer base, but the success of this strategy will be impacted by the skills, experience and personality of the people currently in your business to deliver against this. HR can feed valuable information into the likely success of this strategy by knowing the capability of the current human capital to execute the plan. This involves highlighting the areas of deficit and creating awareness of the time and cost implications of redeployment, re-training and external recruitment to make the strategy a success.

Then when the strategy is set, HR needs to set about the task of defining the behaviours underpinning its success and ensure that they are understood by the board and the business. In many cases, old competency models built for a different age need review, overhaul or total redesign. Once the behaviours are defined, they need to be implemented in each critical people process. Often in this context the most urgent process is to assess the workforce redeployment.

2. Designing a Redeployment Assessment Process

Having defined the requirements for success, this step is about understanding what information you have on your employees, identifying what you don't have and deciding how you are going to fill the gaps. This is detailed and at times complex work that requires immense attention to detail to ensure it is carried out equitably. It involves considering current performance data in terms of coverage, consistency and defensibility. It also includes deciding to implement processes to obtain additional information on employees' potential to succeed in the new organisation.

The employee perspective also needs to be considered. This type of assessment process is different to most. The candidate knows the other applicants and the assessment process will be discussed widely. Moreover, the assessment outcomes are very visible and the immediate implications of failure are more impactful.

3. Assessing for the New Role: Operational Readiness

This 'ultra-high' stakes assessment process requires your HR and line management team to execute a quick, legal and painless assessment process, with minimal disruption to employees, customers and your brand. The resources required to roll-out a redeployment assessment process and manage stakeholder communications can be significant. In addition, pulling all the information together in a structured, accurate and objective way to arrive at a defensible selection decision requires a high level of attention to detail and a reasonable level of competence in data management.

4. Analytical Review

The decisions that you make in a redeployment project are more important than typical recruitment decisions. Consider:

- The visibility of the outcomes
- The psychological impact on employees (candidates)
- The need to meet legal obligations
- The likelihood of retribution

As such, we consider it good practice to have an 'Analytical Review' where the decisions you have arrived at are audited against a set of 'fairness' criteria (such as discrimination on the basis of gender or culture) and against operational business requirements (such as geographical or territory coverage).

5. Re-engagement

After the 'surgical' business of redeployment is complete and your business comes out of the restructure phase, the importance of employee 'aftercare' cannot be overstated. It is short-sighted to talk about redeployment projects as if they finish after decisions about people's future roles have been made.

In projects of this nature, a lot of time and care is needed to focus on how to ethically and sympathetically exit people from your business. In this context it is vital to remember that the people who remain are more important to ensuring the organisation's future success. The focus here should be on making sure you have an emergence strategy in place to re-motivate the business and minimise the impact of survivor syndrome.

Stage 1. Aligning Jobs and Behaviours to the Organisation's Strategy

The remainder of this best practice guide will expand on each of the above areas, offering insights, and guiding principles. It will also spend some time focusing on the process of redeployment from the employee perspective as this is something that warrants special consideration. This concludes with a brief overview of the legal framework within which restructure projects tend to operate and how CEB positions the role of assessment within this framework.

In some situations a redeployment project is borne from the need to downsize, where you simply need fewer people to do the work. In this case, the fundamentals of the organisation's strategy have usually remained unaltered and as such it is unlikely for changes to be required to job descriptions or the behaviours needed to carry out roles effectively.

In more cases however, the direction of the company has shifted and it is the role of HR to understand the implications of this for its Human Capital. It means defining new roles, activities, relationships and, possibly most importantly, defining the key behavioural requirements of the roles. Most typically it is useful to create a new set of competencies that accurately define the behaviours that the new organisational entity will need from its people to ensure survival or growth.

Defining roles is the core of HR and is covered by our other Best Practice Guides (e.g. Guidelines for Best Practice in the use of Job Analysis Techniques; Best Practice Guide in Large Scale Assessment).

In the context of restructure projects a number of points are relevant:

Job Analysis:

Some level of Job Analysis is always required to fully understand the requirements of any role. Job Analysis and competency design is an important part of the process and if called to defend your decisions, demonstrating that you have followed a structured procedure here will be important.

Look Forward:

By definition, most new jobs that result from re-structure projects are at least partially new. Because of this, there is often limited data on what actually happens within them. As a result it will not be possible or necessary to become involved in lengthy data gathering processes with multiple line managers and job incumbents. This is advantageous for speed and sensitivity reasons but does not negate the need for due diligence in defining the expected requirements of the role. It will be most useful to spend time with the stakeholders in the business who are driving the restructure and understand their vision for the new role and translating this into tangible behavioural expectations.

Look Outward:

It can be useful to review information on similar roles in other organisations and to consider the behavioural requirements of those roles as indicative of the kinds of behaviours the new roles will need. The US job classification system O*NET may provide a useful starting point (Bartram, D., Brown, A., & Burnett, M., 2005).

Look Backward:

It is important to understand any new roles in the context of what has gone before. Systematically analyse the roles that will cease to exist in the future and understand what components of these roles will be carried over into the new structure. This comparative analysis will be important when it comes to working through what information you should have on employees and what information you will have to acquire through future-focussed assessment methods. The most effective time to do this analysis is at the same time you are defining the content of the new roles.

Use Quality Inputs:

As speed and defensibility is key in these projects it is advantageous in most cases to use a high-quality generic competency framework to facilitate this process. This involves asking stakeholders close to the role to project their expectations by reviewing the applicability of these pre-defined competencies. This expedites the competency design process considerably and provides you with robust and measurable competencies which lend themselves well to assessment. CEB's SHL UCF competency framework is such an example (Bartram, 2006).

Documentation:

As the selection criteria will rightly be subjected to rigorous review, it is important to document the outputs of these competency design stages, clearly highlighting the essential and desirable competencies for the role and the steps taken to agree them.

Outcomes

- Behaviours, most often in the form of competencies, linked to the new roles.
- A clear audit trail of how the new roles are related to the old roles.

Checklist

- Have you consulted with key stakeholders on the relevant aspects of the organisation's strategy and on the likely implications for the new roles?
 - Can you use an existing generic competency framework to expedite the process of competency definition for the new roles?
 - Have you documented your entire job analysis procedure and outputs?
-

Stage 2. Designing a Redeployment Assessment Process

Once you've defined the content of future roles, the next stage is to work out how you are going to assess these criteria in current employees. A useful way to work through the design of the assessment process is to consider again the nature of the roles designed in stage 1. As mentioned earlier, there are two typical scenarios:

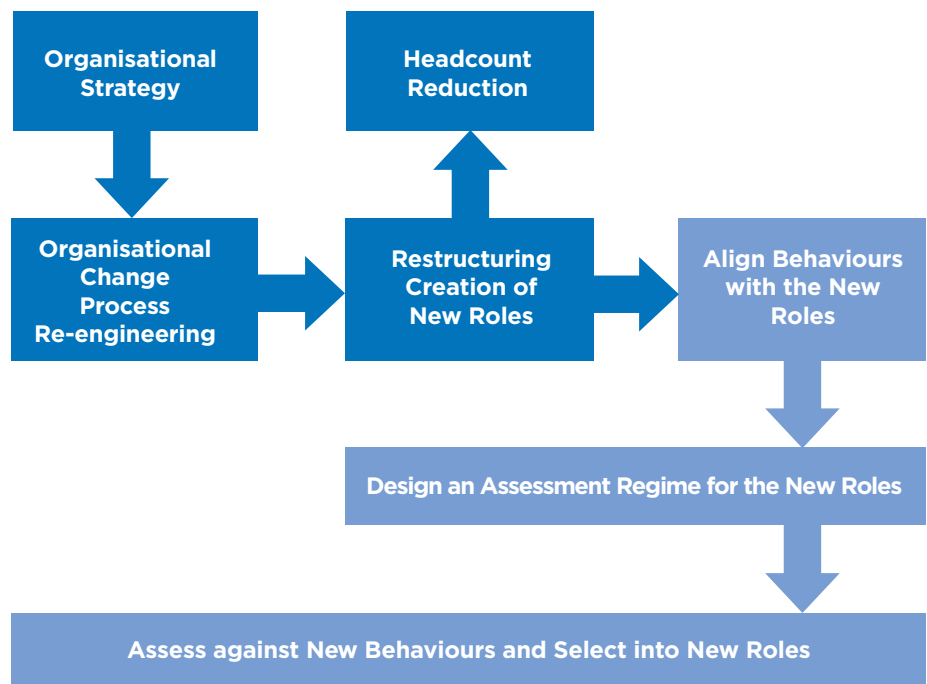
Roles are not changing. The organisation is downsizing. The nature of the roles are fundamentally unaffected and there is simply a requirement for fewer people to fill those roles. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Downsizing



Roles are changing. The organisation is restructuring. The roles are changing in a material fashion and it is likely that fewer people, or people with a different mix of skills, will be required in the future. (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Restructuring



This distinction has implications for the type of assessment process you will develop, as follows:

Roles Are Not Changing (Downsizing)

You need to reduce the number of workers from existing roles. For example, closing down one of two production lines in a factory, or by reducing the number of seats in a customer care call centre. If the roles are not going to be visibly different post restructure, then the organisation is well advised to concentrate on current job performance and skills. If, like many organisations, the current appraisal system does not lend itself to doing this reliably, then the organisation can refresh these assessments. They can be made more objective, behavioural and up to date at the same time.

Line managers' ratings of performance on criteria directly related to Key Success Criteria (KPI's, KRA's and Competencies) can be obtained relatively easily and quickly in most organisations. However, you need to ensure the line managers conducting the rating understand the implications of not rating people objectively, fairly and to a standard that could be upheld in a tribunal.

Gathering such data does not take long but needs to be orchestrated with a strong communication process to raters around the importance of giving objective performance assessments. Highlighting the implications around legal recourse is an option. It is also useful to highlight that those who remain will still be managed by those doing the ratings. As such it is in their interest to make sure those that they select are the people who can excel in the new roles.

There is probably no place for future-oriented psychometric assessments in this kind of process. The onus lies on the organisation to make decisions on the basis of previous and current job performance and other relevant criteria (e.g. tenure, technical skills etc).

Roles Are Changing (Restructuring)

The organisation is changing its strategy in response to evolving market conditions.

Examples:

- A change in sales strategy means the 'hunter' previously successful in the role now needs to adapt to a 'farming' role.
 - An organisation is changing from manual paper-based to e-based order processing.
 - An organisation requires a broader variety of skills to be contained in one role, meaning a variety of different skills are now required in a previously 'one-dimensional' role.
 - An organisation moves from product selling to solutions selling, requiring a different set of skills and behaviours from the sales team.
-

Where the need for redeployment has been the result of a process re-engineering phase, it is likely that some elements of the new roles will be the same as before and some elements will be different.

Typically this means, some new and different skills are required in the business, other skills are no longer required and the mix of skills within any given job is likely to be different from how it was previously. As outlined in Figure 3., it is useful to break the conglomerate of old and new role tasks into three categories:

- **Old Job Tasks Discontinued** – It is important not to allow these performance measures to creep into your assessment as these tasks are not deemed relevant to the new role.
- **Old Job Tasks Continued in New Role** – Here you can look to historic **Performance** data (performance appraisal data) to understand the employee’s potential to succeed in the new role.
- **New Job Tasks Created in New Role** – Here is where future-oriented assessments of **Potential** such as personality measures (OPQ) and simulation exercises (role-plays) can play a part in the process.

Figure 3. Bywater & Thompson (2005)

| Decision to Restructure | Strategic job analysis determines future skills needed | Future job profile | Assessment design process | These skills assessed by historic data (e.g. old performance appraisal) | These skills not assessed (no longer relevant) | These skills assessed by future oriented methods (e.g. assessment centre) |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|--|---|
| New organisational structure and vision | ↗ | Old Job Tasks Discontinued | → | | X X X | |
| | → | Old Job Tasks Continued in New Role | → | ✓ ✓ ✓ | | |
| | ↘ | New Job Tasks Created in New Role | → | | | ✓ ✓ ✓ |

When designing a process to select people into new roles, the performance data you hold on that person is relevant only in so far as some of the role might be the same, or similar, to what they did in the past. This is where your analysis of the differences between old and new roles comes into play. Here you need to know what data you hold in relation to their performance on this aspect of the role and decide if it needs to be supplemented with a current assessment, most typically a line manager’s rating.

If a portion of the role is new you cannot predict from past performance data how they will operate in the new role. Nor are you likely to be legitimate in asking a line manager to predict how someone might behave in a role that they have never seen the person operate in. Here is where future-oriented assessment techniques, such as personality questionnaires, have an important role to play.

What should be abundantly clear at this stage is that you cannot design a defensible or equitable assessment process unless you have accurately defined the new roles and compared them to roles that have existed in the organisation prior to the restructure.

Assessing Applicants from Different Roles

In reality, applicants from different departments can be applying for the same roles. The practical implication is that applicants will have varying degrees of experience in performing different parts of the new role. This requires a careful mapping of the job components against existing performance data.

This will enable a picture to emerge of what performance data you need to obtain retrospectively, and what future-oriented information you need to acquire through your assessment process.

In these situations it is advisable to ensure your assessment process is a broad one, covering more rather than fewer components of the new role. By following this approach your process is less likely to disadvantage candidates with only partial experience in one aspect of the new role. Conversely, it ensures that those with broader experience in many aspects of the role have a greater opportunity to demonstrate their capability. A practical example here would be to ensure you have covered a broad range of competencies in an interview rather than focusing in on just a few of the key ones.

Most assessment regimes here will require some mix of relevant performance data from the last role and some elements of future-oriented assessment to predict some of the required behaviours in the next role. Both are important, but it is generally advisable to give more weight to the employee's performance data when looking at the overall fit of the candidate to the new role.

Above all else, when going through this process, ensure a clear audit trail is available that links the entire assessment process to the requirements of the job. It is also useful at this stage to put in place a clearly documented appeals procedure. It is likely to be required.

Assessment Inputs

As explained above, where there are new roles to be assessed for, the redeployment process is likely to involve combining measures of **performance** (from some form of appraisal data) and **potential** (from some form of future-oriented assessment).

It is well accepted that performance ratings by managers of employees contain a number of flaws (lack differentiation, contain bias) and the higher the stakes, the larger the problem these pose. In this context, where you are making judgements about current employees, the stakes can be considered as “ultra-high” for the person being assessed (Bywater, 2007). As such, it is vital that the process is fair, equitable and even handed. This reinforces the need for organisations to use both line manager ratings and some form of assessment processes.

The various stakeholders in the assessment process have different needs. As with any assessment regime, the content and format will be finalised through consideration of a number of factors, some of which will be very practical (e.g. cost, logistics) and some of which are more about ensuring the assessment will deliver useful results (e.g. instrument validity). When considering which assessment tools to incorporate into your process it is useful to review them against these ‘equitable assessment’ criteria (Bywater, Bartram & Thompson, 2005):

- Coverage of range. Together, do your assessments cover all of the relevant variables? Covering only some of the criteria may be inequitable.
- Accuracy. Is there sufficient evidence that the measures you are using are sufficiently reliable under ‘ultra-high’ stakes selection?
- Relevance. Is there sufficient evidence that the tools measure what they claim to measure?
- Freedom from bias. Your assessment tools should not introduce irrelevant sources of variance (for example, age, gender, culture).
- Acceptability. Are the tools seen as acceptable by those involved in their use? They must be seen as appropriate, fair and reasonable to use in this situation.
- Practicality. They should be fit for purpose in terms of cost, usability, time, and other constraints of the project.

In this section we outline various assessment methods and highlight the pro’s and con’s of these when used in high-stakes projects:

Existing Performance Management Data

| + | - |
|--|---|
| It already exists and doesn’t require a data gathering exercise. | Often patchy, incomplete and of variable quality. |
| Quick and painless to obtain. | Doesn’t usually differentiate enough between people. |
| It is seen as being relevant. | It is not typically behaviourally rich, making it difficult to draw conclusions from. |
| | Its usefulness is limited to how much it overlaps with the new role. |

Practical Message:

Can be a useful ready source of information but, as it is usually of poor quality, often needs to be supplemented with other information.

| Line Manager Performance Ratings | |
|---|---|
| + | - |
| It is a current relevant measure of performance. | Should be based only on the visible elements of the current role. |
| Easy and quick to do. | Can be prone to some line manager bias in 'ultra-high' stakes situations. |
| It provides a firm audit trail in the form of numbers and graphs. | Need to ensure line managers are well briefed on the importance of objectivity. |
| A reasonably face-valid measure that candidates can see the relevance of. | |
| Practical Message: | |
| Use when performance data is of poor quality. Ensure line managers are briefed on the importance of fairness and objectivity and ensure it is only based on elements of the role on which the line manager will have an evidence-based opinion. | |

| Competency Based / Behavioural Interview | |
|---|---|
| + | - |
| Expected as part of an assessment process. | Time consuming, resource intensive. |
| Line managers can participate in the process and be supported by objective external parties. | Requires up-skilling line managers to do this effectively and fairly. |
| Can be seen as creating a level playing field for all applicants. | Can be stressful for the employee and potentially for the line manager (interviewer). |
| Can be enhanced through use of interview guides and competency-based personality reports. | |
| Empowers the employee with the opportunity to explain why they should get the new job. | |
| Practical Message: | |
| An important and useful part of the process, which empowers the candidate but which must be carried out skilfully. Can be supported by the use of interview guides and personality reports to provide greater structure, focus and objectivity. | |

Personality Measures (OPQ) Linked to Competencies

| + | - |
|---|---|
| Some, like OPQ, have been used widely in redeployment projects and as such can be defended as value-add tools. | You can expect some attempts to skew responses. It is likely that the 'lie-scales' in questionnaires will not entirely solve this problem. |
| Personality measures have no past relationship with the job incumbent (unlike manager ratings). | You can expect some candidates to react negatively when asked to justify their suitability for a role when job performance data is available. |
| The gender, age, and culture biases of good personality measures are usually minimal, published and understood. | Some personality questionnaires can be easily faked and may not be suitable for use in these high-stakes situations. Forced-choice measures (like the OPQ32) are a more robust format in this setting because they counteract the tendency for applicants to 'guess' the 'right' profile. |
| Good personality measures can uncover hidden strengths that are not known by existing line managers. | Because of the above, any questionnaire will show some deterioration in high-stakes decision making scenarios |
| It is easy to feedback to candidates and decision makers. | |
| It provides a firm audit trail in the form of numbers, graphs and other scientific data. | |
| An up-to-date personality measure looks professional to candidates. | |
| It gives candidates some control by asking them what they are like. | |
| OPQ remains a valid measure of potential in high-stakes decision making. It is very useful for new roles where no performance data exists and when some applicants have less experience in aspects of the role than other applicants. | |
| <p>Practical Message: You can use personality measures such as OPQ when you are assessing people for roles where they have not previously had the opportunity to gain experience. Results should be checked at an interview and a larger margin of error than normal should be borne in mind when making decisions. For further information on the role of personality assessments in high stakes decision making, see Bywater & Thompson (2005).</p> | |

Simulation Exercises

| + | - |
|--|---|
| When combined with the above measures, they can provide the most well-rounded assessment of a candidate's suitability. | Group Exercises can be counterproductive in high-stakes assessments and are not advised. Many candidates are likely to be known to each other and have existing relationships inside and outside of work. Moreover the overt requirement of having to 'compete' in a group setting with colleagues and friends to avoid redundancy is likely to create unnecessary levels of tension over and above those normally experienced in such an exercise. |
| | These exercises can be resource hungry to design and assess. |

Practical Message:

Useful to implement when resources and time are available to do so. More likely to be used as part of an on-going change project when genuine behavioural change is the most important outcome.

Pertinent Employee Data: Technical Skills, Qualifications, Tenure, Attendance, Sick Leave, Disciplinary Record, etc

| + | - |
|---|--|
| It is usually defensible to include some of these methods to ensure that you have a broad set of decision making criteria. | It is usually dangerous to over-weight some of these over and above relevant job performance data. |
| Employee Stakeholder Groups and Trade Unions tend to approve of including some of these tangible measures of organisational commitment. | Some of these measures have the potential to result in unfair/biased decisions (e.g. sick leave). |

Practical Message:

It is sensible to include some of these measures in your process. However, be careful not to overweight these over and above more relevant and defensible measures that are more clearly linked to future success on the job. It is usually ill-advised to use these measures as the only decision-making criteria.

Sample Assessment Regimes

Two examples of assessment regime are given here for contrast. An Assessment-Rich and an Assessment-Light project are presented.

Example 1. An Assessment-Rich Project in the Technology Sector.

This project involved the significant restructure of a sales function within an IT organisation. The organisation was transforming itself from selling hardware to being a complete IT solutions provider incorporating consultancy, service, finance and support components. This change of emphasis placed different demands on the sales force and the goal of the project was to support the change process through identifying those most able to succeed in the new roles. The exercises included:

- Two role-plays of customer conversations
- Interview based on the new competency framework
- Personality questionnaire (OPQ) linked to Sales Competencies

Verbal and numerical ability tests

This data was aligned with sales performance data and line manager ratings. This project was part of a long-term change project. There were a small number of redundancies resulting from the project but the overall ethos of the project was one of organisational change. An assessment-rich project was appropriate given these circumstances.

Example 2. An Assessment-Light Project: Royal Mail

This project was based in the context of significant and very public organisational change.

In one of a number of discrete projects, 800 people were being assessed in a scenario where 25% would not be appointed and would face redundancy. The assessments in the process included:

- Interviews based around new managerial competencies
- A personality questionnaire (OPQ) linked to these competencies

Job performance data and CV data was also fed into the decision making process. Further information on the context of this project and the process that was implemented can be found in Bywater & Thompson (2005).

Candidate Care and the Psychological Contract

A feature of any external recruitment process is that the candidate can decide to withdraw in favour of a different or more suitable opportunity. This voluntary withdrawal usually has a minimal immediate impact on the candidate's self-esteem or economic well-being. The candidate is often already in employment elsewhere and as such can afford to be somewhat selective as they are not facing immediate loss of earnings.

This dynamic does not exist in the redeployment assessment process. The candidate's livelihood is at stake, withdrawal from the redeployment assessment process may be less optional and failure at assessment is highly visible to colleagues and friends.

Clearly this kind of process fundamentally changes the economic and psychological contract between employer and employee. This uncertainty can be a significant source of stress for the employee and places an onus on the employer to provide as much clarity and support as is feasible. Practically, this situation calls for an alternative ‘social contract’ to be put in place between the employee and the organisation. This should be drawn up with consultation and input from employee representative groups, and should outline:

- The changes that the company is about to make
- The rationale behind these changes
- What groups are affected and what consultation has taken place
- The ensuing redeployment process
- Reference to any relevant labour force legislation
- The role of assessment in the redeployment process
- How best to prepare for the assessment and where to get further information on this
- The support that is being provided for employees now, during and after the change.

This kind of detailed communication, supported by a process for questions and answers, will help to address concerns about the justice and fairness of the assessment which might otherwise affect their motivation to perform to their best.

Outcome: A Best Practice assessment regime for the new roles

Checklist

- Does your assessment regime cover the breadth of the role requirements?
 - Have you analysed the quality of performance data to ensure it is fit-for-purpose?
 - Have you considered using some assessment methods that will make candidates feel empowered in the process?
 - Have you consulted with employee representatives on the process?
 - Have you drawn up an alternative ‘social contract’ for employees with input from employee stakeholder groups?
 - Have you ensured there is a strong weighting attached to past performance data?
 - What have you done to ensure the assessment regime gives as equal an opportunity as possible to applicants who are currently performing a variety of different roles?
 - Is your final assessment process fit for purpose?
-

Stage 3. Assessing for the New Roles: Operational Readiness

Guiding Principles

Carrying out redeployment assessment is detailed and skilled work that needs to be done very accurately and usually quickly. There are many reasons to ensure the assessment process is a swift one. The organisational imperative to move on with the process and focus on the post-restructure environment is strong. The individual's desire to know their fate is another driver for speed.

It should be fully expected that in a large scale retrenchment, there will be objections, questions and possibly a legal recourse. The HR representation in the process is likely to be a key driver for getting the right balance between speed and accuracy. Underpinning the redeployment project should be recognition that due diligence in documenting the process and double checking the detail is vital.

Running an 'Ultra-High' Stakes Assessment Process

For more general information on the detailed procedure behind running a high-quality Assessment Process, please refer to our 'Best Practice Guide in the use of Assessment and Development Centres'.

Assessment in the context of redeployment, however, needs to be considered as somewhat different given redundancy may be one of the outcomes. As such it can be considered an 'ultra-high' stakes assessment for the candidate and can be characterised by a particular set of circumstances (Bywater, 2006):

Applicants may be applying for jobs they know well – Unlike recruitment where job descriptions can be quite opaque to outsiders, here candidates often feel ideally qualified to do the role. They may research the role with untypical thoroughness. Candidates are thus unlikely to be convinced by the same platitudes that can work in recruitment such as 'You did well but there was a better qualified candidate...'

Applicants may know the other applicants – These assessments share an element of community, with the applicants often knowing each other either personally or by reputation. There may be a huge competitive element in these assessments, both perceived and real.

Applicants may have a high level of psychological involvement with the organisation – This means that failure to secure a role may require them to rethink their own long standing career plans. They may also have few other alternative roles 'in the pipeline'. This means that the assessment can trigger an uncomfortable period of transition and change for them as they rethink their career plans.

Applicants may have a wide social network surrounding the organisation – It is quite likely that assessments of this kind will have been communicated widely to friends, colleagues and relatives, which means that any 'failure' will be very visible.

These circumstances necessitate a different approach to managing the assessment process:

Manage Your Assessment Team

- Ensure internal interviewers and assessors have a good track record in interviewing and are provided with refresher training.
- Provide all assessors with a detailed briefing.
- Employ external assessment experts to facilitate the assessment sessions and to partner with you in conducting them.
- Host regular 'de-brief' sessions with the assessor team. This will quickly identify any issues with the process and allow assessors to share their experiences, benchmark their assessment ratings and de-brief with their colleagues during what is a stressful process.
- Provide the interviewers with structured interview guides and scoring instructions.

Manage the Anxiety Level of Candidates

- Take action to communicate the process to candidates in advance and base this communication around a core script to ensure consistency.
- Explain the rationale over and over again.
- Offer the opportunity to sit sample assessments.
- Internal candidates are likely to be less practised recipients of assessments than external ones.

Manage the Amount of 'Deviant Behaviour' in the Assessments

- Assess in small groups.
- Assess off site.
- Mix up people from different departments/team.
- Consider using experienced external consultants as assessors.

Manage the Level of Cheating, Wild Guessing and Other Forms of Distortion

- Communicate the importance of good security.
- Guard the content of the assessment.
- Use external assessors for the assessments.
- Use parallel or randomised versions of assessments.
- Ensure line manager assessors sign confidentiality agreements.
- Refuse to disclose content even when pressed under pseudo legal grounds (data protection, freedom of information etc).

Manage the Amount of Feedback and the Timing of It After the Event

- Feedback is an important aspect of the process and should be scheduled well after the final assessment has taken place and once all assessments have been run.
- Avoid detailed discussions of the 'correct answer'.
- Concentrate on the development aspects relevant to the role itself rather than the assessment

Decision Making: Weighting the Assessment Data and Performance Measures

The aim of this session is to ensure that all the assessment information gathered on each participant is brought together and discussed objectively. This stage should be carried out with ample time and freshness of mind rather than be rushed at the end of a long day of assessment. The stakes are high and the implications of a mistake are heavy. Here are some guiding principles underpinning thorough and fair data integration:

- The discussion should be based on the behavioural evidence gathered throughout the assessment centre.
- It is important to ensure weightings of particular competencies or assessments are also taken into consideration at this stage and decisions are derived solely on the basis of this evidence.
- The facilitator should be experienced in integrating assessment data and capable of 'keeping people honest' by challenging them to support their assessment ratings with behavioural evidence when requested.
- Create very clearly defined standards of performance against which to assess the individuals and integrate the information.
- Try to have the Chair of the integration session present at each assessment session to increase consistency.

With regard to managing the integration of a complex set of data points, we suggest following this process:

1. **List all measures:** this will include the job performance data and the performance measures.
2. **Weight all measures:** Each measure should be weighted. Typically job performance data will be weighted higher than potential measures.
3. **Identify any minimum qualifications:** For example it is important to ensure that anyone meets minimum standards of adequacy on any essential competencies. Weighted scoring systems can sometimes produce anomalies where someone who fails to meet some essential criterion nevertheless gets a higher score than someone who does. It is important to build checks into the system for such eventualities.
4. **Create an overall score:** Use a spreadsheet or Talent Management system to apply the weights and combine the different measures to create one overall score per candidate.
5. **Quality and reality check:** Enter dummy data into the system to ensure it is operating as you expect. Create some 'test cases' and see if the outcomes are as you would envisage.
6. **Enter real data:** As soon as some real data is available after day one of the assessment process, enter it into the system to reality-check it. Avoid making decisions about people until after all the assessments are completed and all the data is entered into the system.

7. **Review results:** Do not be dogmatic about the cut-off point. Consider the measurement error in your scores. Look at the people who have scored slightly lower than the cut-score and understand why they have not made the cut. Look at how much they have missed out by and question whether it is reasonable to exclude them for this reason.
8. **Pool the candidates:** Create a pool of redeployees based on the above process.

This, like every other stage of the process, should be clearly documented.

Outcome: Accurate and quick selection decisions on candidates for the new roles

Checklist

- What steps have you taken to manage the assessment process to minimise the impact of the ‘ultra-high’ stakes. E.g. take steps to minimise stress and cheating?
 - Have you ensured the assessors are trained adequately for the task at hand?
 - Have you set aside sufficient time for the integration of data?
 - Have you put a plan in place for timing and communication of decisions and for assessment feedback?
-

Stage 4. Analytical Review

The Search for ‘Unintended Consequences’

As in any form of recruitment, there are ways of directly and indirectly discriminating against different groups. Before you make any final decisions on the basis of your assessments, it is advisable to ensure your collective redeployment and redundancy decisions are not unfairly biasing different groups on the basis of criteria such as age, sex, race, disability, trade union membership or as a result of pregnancy/ childbirth consequences.

It is advisable to have a clear audit trail detailing your approach and ensuring compliance. It is useful to get an external party to support reviewing the decisions, creating an audit trail of the decision making criteria and recording how they were applied. The analysis of the assessment decisions made can uncover any trends that you hadn’t considered. For example, indirectly discriminating against younger workers by weighting tenure or experience too heavily over performance in the role.

In addition, it is useful to review the decisions you are about to make with a view to understanding their impact on operational management of the business. An assessment process based on skills and potential will provide you with a merit list of the best people to support you in achieving the organisational strategic goals. However, this poses practical problems if your assessments have highlighted that your best employees for the tasks ahead are all based in Osaka, when, from an operational perspective, you need coverage in Gothenburg and Dublin.

It can be useful to review decisions just above and below your cut-off point to ensure that it is as fair and equitable as possible. Look at the people just below the cut-off point and understand the reasons why they have fallen below this point. Then look at the people just above the cut-off point and consider if there is a significant enough difference between these two groups such that you can justify this cut-off point.

If you find you need to perform corrections to your criteria then this should be implemented at a group level and not to ensure a specific individual gets through the process. The rationale for the amendments should be documented and applied consistently throughout the process.

It is worth considering any action that could mitigate the impact for those people just below the cut-off point. For example, can they be placed into a redeployment pool in another part of the business? It may also be advisable to create a group of reserves as it is possible that during the process, some of the people above the cut-off point may leave the company voluntarily.

Reviewing your decisions and overlaying them with criteria around operational practicality and selection discrimination will ensure that the final decisions you make are both fair and fit for purpose. This checking process can be a quick one but should not be overlooked. Mistakes at this stage can be costly and difficult to reverse.

Outcome: Audit of selection decisions to identify ‘unintended consequences’

Checklist

- Have you communicated to the internal stakeholders the importance of carrying out an analytical review?
 - Have you set time aside for an analytical review? Be prepared to make amendments to your selection criteria to ensure your decisions are fit for purpose.
 - Are you clear on the relevant equal opportunities legislation that needs to be upheld?
 - What operational criteria need to be taken into account (e.g. geographical requirements)?
-

Stage 5. Re-engage the Survivors

The focus on redeployment exercises is to achieve better organisational performance. You cannot achieve this objective by solely focusing on the ‘surgical’ removal of people from the organisation. The ‘aftercare’ of those who remain should be considered and planned for as part of the broader redeployment project.

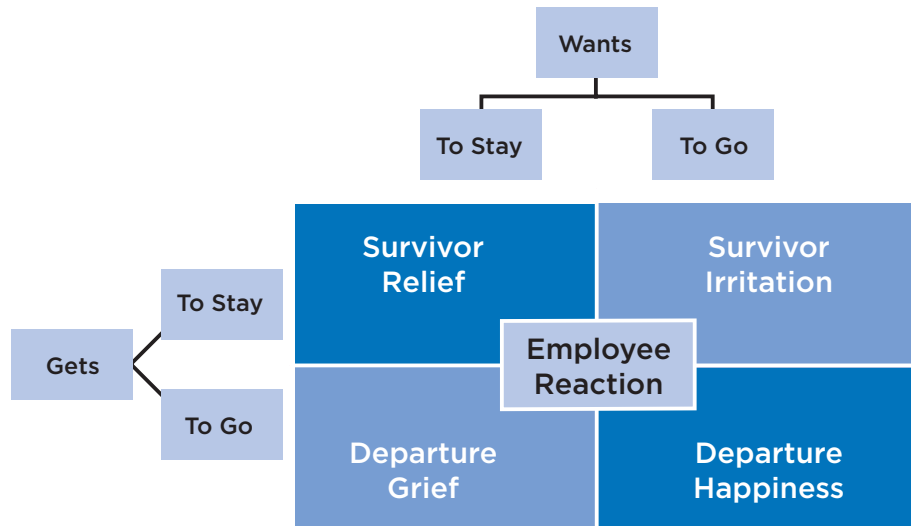
If not managed correctly, the impact of redeployment on the surviving workforce is likely to have a detrimental short-term effect. Absenteeism can increase, levels of employee engagement will fall, productivity and levels of customer service will suffer and the employer brand can be tarnished. In addition, the employee’s organisational commitment can be affected and they may be the first to leave voluntarily when they can find somewhere better to go.

Only by ensuring these people are clear on their new roles, managed to deliver against them and motivated to work in the restructured organisation will the benefits of the project, i.e. organisational effectiveness, be realised.

The Employee Perspective on Redundancy

In the main, we tend to think only about those people who are made redundant, their plight being more visible and tangible. However it is likely that some are happy to leave, relieved to be moving on and excited by the potential of new challenges. There are other parties and perspectives to consider and it is useful to look at the impact of redundancy from all angles. (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. Employee Perspectives on Redundancy



Departure Grief

For most people who are made redundant, the obvious loss of earnings can be a stressful and real pain. Add to this the loss of other benefits such as pension plan and health insurance, combine that with the loss of daily routine and an enforced shift in lifestyle and it is easy to see why redundancy is a de-motivating and stressful time for most. Furthermore, the feelings of rejection and lowering of self-esteem that can result after you have lost your job as part of a redeployment process can take some time to heal. All these reasons perhaps point to why we tend to focus on the leavers when we think about the impact of redundancy.

Survivor Relief

Likewise, when we think of those who remain, we tend to assume they are somewhat relieved to remain in the company, even if their role has changed. If the proposed redundancies are driven by an economic downturn, being able to avoid a difficult job market will be seen as a distinct benefit.

When redeployment has been a competitive process and the employee has had to go through an assessment for the role, then remaining in employment can be quite empowering. The vindication of being selected into the position on the basis of one's past performance and potential to succeed can feel rewarding. A competitive assessment process provides legitimacy to the decision which can support the person to feel deserving of their continued employment.

Survivor Irritation

Don't assume, however, that it is everyone's wish to stay or that those who remain will automatically be motivated to perform.

There is a long list of reasons why those who remain should not be overlooked:

- The restructure may now mean that their opportunities and timescales for career advancement are limited.
- Working hours may have been cut and some terms of employment may be worse than before.
- For some, there may have been a desire to get a financial pay-out from the organisation and use this to kick-start a change in career.
- Redeployment into a new role by its nature means learning new skills, working in a new environment with new colleagues. This enforced change along with its learning requirements may be viewed as an unwanted challenge to some, particularly when the new role is not one that aligns well with their longer term career goals.
- Staying behind to do their own work as well as the work of those who have been let go is not, on the face of it, a motivating situation. Whilst the reality might not be that straightforward, this perception can be demotivating.
- Employees may not agree with the decision made about their friends' redundancies and this can provoke some ill-feeling towards the organisation.
- The concern that, whilst they may have survived the first round of job cuts, a second cut may not be that far away can be very real and this continued job insecurity is not a foundation for a happy and motivated worker.

So, assuming that those who remain in the organisation are automatically relieved and happy to be there is unlikely to be a sensible perspective to adopt. Being aware of these motivational drivers, addressing them with remaining staff and being honest and open about the challenges ahead will be well received.

Departure Happiness

Likewise, don't assume that everyone who has to leave will be disappointed at the prospect of leaving. Interestingly, in an assessment context, this means you may have a scenario where some of the participants are not motivated to perform to their best. There may be some 'faking-bad' in order to get the result they really want.

For some this could be the acceleration of a planned career change and when combined with some outplacement support, can provide the impetus for pushing ahead with new challenges in new areas.

For those who needed the push, the immediate disappointment may quickly give way to the excitement of a new career challenge. Consider also those who had already decided to leave and are now happy to be rewarded financially for doing so.

Practical Message

Most organisations make some reasonable recompense for those who have to leave. Some level of financial reward linked with tenure, and potentially the offer of some outplacement support services, seems to be reasonably standard practice.

Whilst many organisations are aware that those who remain do not have an 'easy lot', they tend not to devote much management effort or budget to addressing this situation. The reality is however, that there is a need to focus on this smaller mass of human capital to ensure that their contribution is maximised and that the remaining few are not the first to leave when the right opportunity comes along. Specifically, it is well advised to invest time and energy in understanding not just overall levels of motivation and engagement (you can be guaranteed the average level of engagement is lower than it was pre-restructure) but, more importantly, each person's individual motivational drivers.

Everybody is driven by a subtly different set of motivators. Making broad assumptions about how to turn a group from being 'disengaged' into 'driven' will be as successful as any other generalist assumption based on the principle of 'one size fits all'. Line managers should be encouraged to spend time with each survivor and to explore how they have coped with the preceding redeployment process, how they feel about the challenges ahead and what fundamentally motivates them as individuals. This can be supported by the use of motivational assessments such as SHL's Motivation Questionnaire and can be integrated into existing development discussions to ensure these efforts are aligned with the organisation's processes.

Outcome: A Workforce Looking Ahead Rather Than Over its Shoulder

Checklist

- Consider which of the quadrants each redeployee falls into – will they be happy to be asked to leave? Will they be disappointed to have to stay? Consider if this has implications for how you organise people in your assessments.
 - Organisational survival will be decided more by the people who stay than by the people who leave. Is your business aware of the need to invest time and effort into re-motivating the workforce? Is this built into your redeployment budget?
 - Do your re-engagement initiatives allow the individual motivational drivers of each person to be taken into account?
 - What diagnostics have you got in place to support line managers to understand what drives their team members?
 - Are your line managers capable of having motivation-focussed conversations and of developing team and individual employee strategies to increase engagement? What support and training do they need to improve their skills here?
-

Legal Context

Guiding Principles

Whilst not intended to be a comprehensive or international legal advisory document, it should be observed that good practice, the academic literature and most Country/State/Federal law generally encourage the following:

- The appointment procedure must be explained in good time, before employment ends.
- An appeals procedure should be clearly communicated.
- Organisations should use a process that is as consistent, objective and free from bias as possible.
- Selection criteria generally must not discriminate on the grounds of age, sex, race, disability, trade union membership or pregnancy/ childbirth.

From these we conclude that employers appear to be within their rights to choose the method to identify workers for redundancy that best suits their business, so long as they act fairly, reasonably and check the implications.

Psychometrics in Redundancy

We first created a policy statement on the use of assessment methods in redundancy and redeployment situations in 1992, and it still remains just as relevant today.

Policy Statement

“There is a fundamental difference in using tests for selection decisions for recruitment, promotion and development, as opposed to redundancy. Properly constructed and appropriate Psychometric tests are valid predictors of likely success in a role. Properly used they form a vital aid to the selection process, providing a wealth of information on candidates where very little is known about their previous performance, particularly in a recruitment situation. In the redundancy situation the candidate will be working for the organisation. As such their track record should be known to the organisation and decisions made on the basis of actual job performance. Therefore the use of tests would be inappropriate.

Where there is substantial reorganisation to allow the same amount of work to be done by fewer staff, job descriptions may change substantially, and it is necessary to select those best able from the workforce to take on the new roles. Tests are likely to be used as one input in assessing new skills or abilities required in the new roles. As with any application of tests, job analysis is imperative in order to justify test choice, and the organisation should only use the tests if there is clearly insufficient evidence based on past performance to assess potential for new positions. Tests are about predicting, rather than looking at current situations.”

Conclusion

The law in most countries appears flexible enough to allow an organisation to implement an assessment process that it sees as ‘fit for purpose’ to support making decisions about redeployment. Legal and union consultation, detailed documentation of the process and of the diligence with which it is carried out along with evidence of the transparency of your decision-making will all be invaluable if your process is challenged.

Checklist

- Consult relevant legal specialists & ensure your understanding of the law is up to date.
- Put together a scoring matrix in the knowledge that a legal team will scrutinise it to ensure it is “reasonable”.
- Keep detailed notes. Legal challenges can take a long time to assemble and your memory will fail in that time.
- Document everything.

Final Thoughts

Restructuring and Redeployment is a legitimate business problem and the role of objective assessment is as relevant here as it is in any strategic talent management initiative. The common goal is always to identify the best people for a particular set of organisational challenges.

The difference with this application of assessment is the impact of the decision on those being assessed. The ‘ultra-high’ stakes of the decision on the candidates mean that every aspect of the process needs to be even more considered, detailed, objective and fair than a standard recruitment assessment. Balancing the principles of ‘equitable assessment’ in your process will ensure that you go some way towards the fulfilment of corporate responsibility for employee well-being.

Be prepared to seek out advice in this area as it is constantly changing and evolving. For example, while the role of assessment in redeployment is reasonably well-defined in most countries, an area requiring further clarification is how the outcomes from redeployment assessments should be evaluated in the context of disabilities legislation (Bywater, 2009).

Finally, bear in mind that every participant in this process is a consumer of your employer brand and a valued employee. These participants increasingly have the ability to complain directly to you and other customers or audiences with increasing speed, ease and scale (Bywater & Bard, 2009). The ethical and reasoned treatment of all parties involved in the assessment, and the extension of this consideration beyond the initial assessment to the ‘aftercare’ of those who remain in the organisation, will be the hallmark of those who execute these projects well.

References

- i. Bartram, D. (2006). The SHL Universal Competency Framework. White Paper. Available at www.ceb.shl.com
- ii. Bartram, D., Brown, A., & Burnett, M. (2005). Generating competency profiles from O*NET job descriptions. Paper presented at the Association of Test Publishers Conference, Scottsdale Arizona, February 2005.
- iii. Bywater, J. (2006). Ultra High-Stakes recruitment. British Psychological Society, Selection and Development Review, 22 (3). 2006.
- iv. Bywater, J. (2009). Ten thoughts on restructure in 2009. British Psychological Society, Assessment and Development Review, In Press.
- v. Bywater, J. & Bard, E. (2009). Carcinogenic Assessment: Passive aggression in the assessment relationship. British Psychological Society, Assessment and Development Review, 1 (1). 2009.
- vi. Bywater, J., Bartram, D., & Thompson, D. (2005). When the cold wind blows: Workshop on objective assessment in restructure/redundancy projects. Paper presented at the BPS Division of Occupational Psychology Conference, Warwickshire, January 2005.
- vii. Bywater, J. & Thompson, D. (2005). Personality questionnaires in a redundancy/restructuring setting: What do we know now? British Psychological Society, Selection and Development Review, 21 (1). 2005.
- viii. SHL Guidelines for Best Practice in the use of Assessment and Development Centres. Available at www.ceb.shl.com
- ix. SHL Guidelines for Best Practice in the use of Job Analysis techniques. Available at www.ceb.shl.com
- x. SHL Guidelines for Best Practice Large Scale Assessment. Available at www.ceb.shl.com

Contact Us to Learn More

 info@shl.com

 www.ceb.shl.com