

[A LETTER FROM VAL]

Downsizing and Layoff Tips For Harried HR Professionals

Dear Friends:

So far this year, total U.S. payrolls have shrunk by 84,000 jobs; unemployment has reached 6.1% and is at a five-year high; and more than a half-million people have lost their jobs. HP, located five minutes from our offices over in Palo Alto, just announced that it's laying off 24,000 employees—about 7.5% of its workforce. Eventually business will pick up, revenues will rise, and employers will open more reqs. But for now, many organizations are being forced to restructure, reduce, and right-size. Keeping your job (if you have one) or getting a job (if you don't) is what is on everyone's mind. It's like the joke about the difference between a recession and a depression: "It's a recession when your neighbor loses his job; it's a depression when you lose yours."

CEOs, CFOs, and HR professionals at companies of all sizes are having to deal with laying off wonderful, valued employees whom they have recruited, hired, trained, and counted on. This is heartbreaking and unprofitable enough, but trying to figure out the best way to do it, and how to best support these employees, makes it all the worse. This month I wanted to give you something simple and of particular value in these trying times: Ideas and tips around the sad but necessary subject of layoffs.

Why me? I started Valerie Frederickson & Company as an outplacement firm—after I sold another outplacement and career management firm, Career Campaigns—with the mission of making a lasting difference in people's lives. I'm a licensed Career Counselor and was made a Member of the Outplacement Institute in 1995. Our first clients were a Who's Who list of software, hardware, and biotech employers that, although large in size, cared tremendously about the careers, futures, and feelings of every single employee they had to let go—for any reason. These employers would confer with me about each person they fired, telling me in detail about what went wrong and how I could best help that individual. Our outplacement work was successful because we balanced a supportive, therapeutic approach with a heavy emphasis on career development: a perfect cocktail for helping people land better new jobs faster. Even though the bulk of our business now comes from placing HR executives in full-time and contract roles, we still have a vibrant and active outplacement practice, with many resources to offer any employer having to go through a reduction-in-force.

Here are some resources if you find yourself having to downsize your staff:

1. For a copy of our Do-It-Yourself Outplacement Kit, [click here](#). This kit includes information on how to counsel yourself and others; self-assessment; real headhunter resume samples; and an up-to-date list of my personal recommended resources.
2. The NCHRA (SHRM for Northern California) has asked us to conduct a day-long seminar on Reductions-In-Force this October. This info-packed event will delve into numerous topics including compensation, benefits, compliance, legal issues, best practices, trends, communication, Web tools, and outplacement resources.
3. PIHRA (SHRM for Southern California) has arranged for my business partner, James Holland, to share his knowledge of global corporate best practices for Reductions-In-Force at its annual conference in Long Beach this October.

4. Free Consultations: Before you plan your RIF, consult with one of our experienced and detail-oriented HR consultants on how to do it right and how to prevent the Six Ps (you know what I mean). The better planned, structured, and communicated the layoff, the lower the risk of rumors, litigation, and leaving survivors feeling insecure and uncertain. Reductions-in-force are disruptive to everyone, and there are many important considerations (i.e., those who are over 40 will be affected differently than their younger colleagues, etc.).
5. If you want to offer outplacement but you are on a tight budget, you're welcome to purchase copies of my book, *Folio: The Most Comprehensive Career Transition Manual*, directly from us. It has everything your employees need to kick-start their career transition. For a very small additional amount, you can give them access to our online system, which is a wonderful addition.
6. If you want to provide "boutique" outplacement services to your employees, come visit our facility and chat with our staff. Our outplacement consultants have worked for VF&Co for an average of 10 years each, and all have advanced degrees in related fields. They are the nicest, yet most effectively aggressive group of career transition consultants I've ever seen, even better than when I was with the big outplacement firms back in the early 1990s.
7. If you've had to lay off your HR staff, or lost your reqs but still need work done, you can get an experienced, cost-effective, and ready-to-start HR contractor from us. They are already vetted and managed by us personally.

For more information, contact our Outplacement Team at outplacement@vfindco.com.

This month, I'd like to thank Lori Ganzer for her referral to a local mobile phone software company. Thank you Lori!

Take care,
Valerie Frederickson

Ask Valerie

Dear Valerie:

It seems that all the HR conferences are bunched together this fall, and things are really tight at my company. Is it worthwhile going to some of these?
- Tight on \$\$

Dear Tight:

If there's any way to swing it, do—but choose carefully. Bio HR in San Diego is the best for networking. SHRM Arizona has great presentations. NCHRA is very good for getting to know their leadership, who can add value in so many ways. The HR Star Conferences are a lot of fun.

Dear Valerie:

I've just been notified today that I've got to reduce our workforce by 20% by the end of September. I've never done more than a couple of individual performance-based terminations at once, and I'm in a panic. Where do I start?
- Am I next?

Dear Next:

Don't panic. Per the letter above, there are lots of resources and lots of providers willing to help you learn. You can contact us or almost any of your colleagues about the steps you should take. Conduct your research; determine your budget; plan your communications. (P.S.: James says, "Now would be a great time for her to make her free call to us.")

Dear Valerie:

With such a hot topic as the first African-American running for U.S. President, we're finding that lots of people want to discuss politics in the office. Our lone Republican doesn't like it, and thinks that we shouldn't. What are the general rules for evolved offices regarding discussing politics on the job?

- Worried about gaffes

Dear Gaffes:

I asked our resident Republican what you should do. He had two things to say: 1) keep your mouths shut and don't discuss politics on the job; and 2) wait until the Republicans win.

- Valerie

[VF&Co HR On Demand](#)

Would you like to have access to an at-a-glance feature of HR professionals who are pre-screened, pre-interviewed, highly motivated, and ready to go? VF&Co's new HR On Demand is an executive placement service offering access to the best HR professionals we've found worldwide. Check our website for updated profiles on a variety of candidates from Human Resource Managers and Vice Presidents of Human Resources to specialists in the areas of compensation, benefits, and M&A. [Click here](#) to view this month's featured candidates.

[Human Resources Executive Searches](#)

HR Executive Search Positions

Vice President of Human Resources (East Bay, CA)

High profile, alternative energy company in rapid growth is seeking their first top HR executive. Prefer outward-facing profile with solid OD, strategic planning, and Total Rewards expertise. Email your resumé in MS Word format to valerie@vfandco.com.

Vice President of Human Resources (San Jose, CA)

Publicly traded microprocessor company is upgrading their global human resources function and needs change management, strategic planning, talent acquisition, etc. Email your resumé in MS Word format to valerie@vfandco.com.

Head of Human Resources (San Francisco, CA)

A fast growing pre-IPO software company is looking for their number one HR person. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

Human Resources Senior Director (Boston, MA or Philadelphia, PA)

A leader in IT solutions for the growing health care industry is searching for an HR Senior Director to work out of Boston or Philadelphia. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

Director of Environmental Health and Safety (San Carlos, CA)

Considered one of the hottest pre-IPO companies in the United States and at the forefront of the alternative energy industry, our client is seeking a Director of Environmental Safety and Health to join their world-renowned team headquartered in San Carlos, CA. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

Human Resources Business Partners (Sunnyvale and Santa Clara, CA)

A global leader in semiconductors for wired and wireless communications in rapid expansion mode is looking for several highly sophisticated HR Business Partners. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

Human Resources Manager (Livermore, CA)

An automotive supply company is looking for an HR leader for their Livermore plant. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

Compensation Search Opportunities

Director of Compensation/Chief of Staff, Americas (San Jose, CA)

A global, leading provider of Electronics Manufacturing Services (EMS), is seeking a Director of Compensation for the Americas with worldwide responsibilities. This person will provide strategic and tactical execution for the Americas, in addition to leadership, planning, and supervision to the Compensation Managers in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

Compensation and HRIS Analyst (San Jose, CA)

Fast growing, huge, global hardware company. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

Executive Compensation Manager (San Francisco, CA)

Successful growing software and programming company seeking experienced Manager of Executive Compensation. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

Senior Compensation Analyst (San Francisco, CA)

Technically savvy, Senior Compensation Analyst needed for this 3,000 employee, growing global software company. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

Human Resources Contracting Roles

HR Director Contracting (Boston, MA)

Currently searching for a Human Resources Director level contractor to fill a 6-9 month, 40 hours per week maternity leave. The client is a leader in IT solutions for the growing health care industry and is seeking a HR Senior Director to work out of Boston, MA. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

HR Manager Contracting (Santa Clara, CA)

Global, high tech company needs HR Manager contractor with heavy performance management and light compensation expertise. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

Compensation Consultant (Fremont, CA)

Global semiconductor company needs a compensation consultant who specializes in Radford matching and compensation ladder creating and implementation. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

HR Business Partners (Silicon Valley, CA)

Fast growth public tech company needs some sophisticated folks for at least a few months to handle heavy M&A, compensation, performance management, and change management issues. Email your resumé in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

Industry Events

2008 PIHRA Annual Conference

October 6th to October 8th, 2008 – Long Beach, California

Valerie Frederickson will present The Emerging Role of the HR Business Partner and discuss this role including the background and experience required to succeed as well as consulting processes that should be part of your tool kit. Also, James Holland, Partner of VF&Co will present on the topic of RIFs and raise questions like: what resources can help you through the process? How do you deal with emotional fall-out among survivors? The theme of this year's PIHRA conference is "Advancing the Business of HR," and will focus on a balance between compliance and strategy.

NCHRA "The Nuts & Bolts of Reductions-In-Force"

October 23rd, 2008 – Santa Clara, California

What resources can help you through the process? How do you calculate severance packages? How can you reduce the risk of litigation? How do you deal with emotional fall-out among survivors? In this highly participatory session, Valerie Frederickson and a team of specialized consultants will discuss best practices for managing workforce reductions.

BIO 2008 Human Resources Conference

October 26th to October 28th, 2008 – San Diego, California

Valerie Frederickson will present Your Strategic HR Career at this awesome conference for biotech HR professionals. The focus of this year's conference is "Taking Care of Business, Taking Care of People: Maximizing HR's Effectiveness." Sessions at the conference will examine the HR expertise required in this industry to effectively meet new expectations and address HR issues and challenges specific to the biotechnology industry.