



# CAREER MANAGEMENT *in* TURBULENT TIMES

ALERT   PREPARED   DIGNIFIED   SUPPORT   POISED   RE-CREATE

## Introduction

The mission of Executive Career Coaching is to partner with clients, so they successfully manage their careers in turbulent, volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous times.

To survive in a globally competitive environment, organisations are constantly looking to better position themselves. They take steps to improve their market offerings, change the way they build products or deliver services, and look to reduce costs. Such steps have implications for how business is conducted, and the number and types of positions required.

So, organisational change, restructuring and reengineering can be considered normal and a role redundancy event a high probability across an employee's career.

Dealing with the threat of potential role redundancy is an increasingly important career management capability. The purpose of this e-Book is to help executives, managers and professionals anticipate, prepare for, and (if necessary) deal with role redundancy and its threat to career stability and trajectory.



## 6 TIPS FOR COPING WITH REDUNDANCY

1. Be Alert
2. Be Prepared
3. Be Dignified
4. Accept or Seek Support
5. Become Poised
6. Re-Create

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# Section 1 : Be Alert

In this section, I reflect on the extent to which employees tend to anticipate and take career management actions in advance of organisational restructuring and resulting role redundancy. This article focuses on Being Alert to the risk of role redundancy.

## A Professional Reflection

When I meet with employees immediately after they have been notified of role redundancy, one of my early questions is whether they had anticipated the event. Their responses are depicted in the following graph:

### High Anticipation

- At one extreme, senior managers in an organisation may have been closely involved with restructuring planning. They have high anticipation of the role redundancy event, have made necessary emotional adjustments, and have taken a variety of career management steps to position themselves for the future (i.e. high anticipation and proactivity).

### Moderate Anticipation

Other employees report being well aware of trends that could potentially have affected their job security, and demonstrate moderate anticipation:

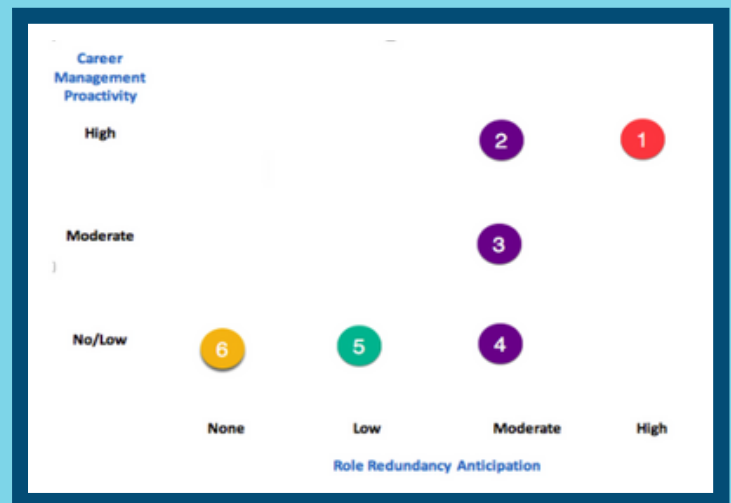
- Judging that their careers are at genuine risk, this group will take a range of career management actions designed to better position them in the event of organisational restructuring (e.g. update their resumes and LinkedIn profiles, re-establish contact with key recruiters, subscribe to job alerts). They exhibit high career management proactivity.
- Others armed with similar levels of awareness form a view that the trends are not of major concern and take a limited range of precautionary career management steps (e.g. update their resumes). They demonstrate moderate career management proactivity.
- Still another group will form a view that their own roles will not be affected, even if noticed trends play out. They demonstrate low or no career management proactivity in the circumstance.

### Low Anticipation

- Within the very same organisation, yet another employee group reports having noticed actions or communications that gave rise to momentary feelings or thoughts of job insecurity, but they either chose not to trust their instincts or simply returned to their day-to-day “busyness”. This group has a low level of role redundancy anticipation and demonstrates low or no career management proactivity.

### No Anticipation

- Finally, there is a group of employees which reports being totally blind-sided by the notification event. These employees are often distraught and shocked. They did not anticipate the role redundancy event at all and have taken no career management actions.



It is little wonder that emotional responses of employees on the actual day of notification vary so widely. Those who have been closely involved with an organisational restructure may have had months to prepare themselves for the event. By contrast, those who have been blind-sided are totally unprepared for the event.

A potential role redundancy represents a genuine risk to career stability and its future trajectory. In order to better anticipate its occurrence:

## ***Be Alert!***

*Pay attention to political, economic, industry and organisational trends that could potentially affect your job security.*

## **Recommended Actions**

Pay attention to trends including:

- Decisions that affect the viability of your industry or field of employment (e.g. coronavirus restrictions)
- Major international political and/or financial events (e.g. global financial crisis)
- Pressures felt across your industry (e.g. increased automation, offshoring, increased competition, reduced prices secured for products/services)
- Increased merger and acquisition activity in your industry
- Financial pressures experienced by the organisation you work for

You owe it to yourself (and those who rely on you financially) to be alert. Make no assumptions about your professional indispensability!

## Section 2 : Be Prepared

In the previous section, you were encouraged to constantly scan your work environment (i.e. economy, industry, field, and business) for indications of organisational change and associated career risks.

The focus of this section is on the range of career actions that can be taken if you notice trends that could trigger organisational change, result in a role redundancy event, threaten your career stability and trajectory, and impact on your lifestyle.

### ***Be Prepared!***

*If you notice trends challenging the ongoing viability of your organisation, division, team or position, take action!*

### Recommended Actions

You can better position yourself by:

- Sharing your concerns, thoughts, and feelings confidentially with family members or close friends
- Auditing your financial situation and formulating budgetary or other strategies that could lessen any lifestyle impacts of sudden job loss (see also Section 4)
- Creating a high quality, up-to-date resume and aligned LinkedIn profile (see also Section 4)
- Increasing your professional visibility by attending physical or virtual industry and professional events and/or contributing to relevant LinkedIn special interest groups)
- Accelerating the rate at which you invite people to connect with you on relevant social media platforms (e.g. LinkedIn)
- Taking stock of all key relationships you have built as a consequence of your employment and making sure you know how to contact your network in future
- Reflecting on, and documenting, your achievements in your organisation (which are more easily recognised when still in that work environment)
- Remaining alert and receptive to all opportunities of potential career interest (including some internal opportunities that might be in safer areas of the organisation)
- Subscribing to job board (e.g. Seek) alerts

These career management steps allow you to act quickly to capitalise on internal or external opportunities. In addition, they fast-track actions that will otherwise need to be taken, should a role redundancy event actually occur.



# Section 3 : Be Dignified

In this section, factors considered by organisations in advance of notifying an employee of role redundancy are briefly outlined. Recommendations for employee conduct in a redundancy notification meeting are then presented.

The focus of this article is on Being Dignified in the event of role redundancy.

## Organisational Planning

It is beyond the scope of this e-Book to deal fully with how organisations prepare for meetings at which individuals are notified of organisational restructures and role redundancies. However, key planning considerations often include:

- Determining the organisational representatives to attend the meeting (e.g. notifying manager and HR representative)
- Scripting key messages to be delivered about the reasons for the restructure and resulting role redundancy
- Deciding when the notified employee is to leave the business (i.e. immediately or later)
- Protecting the organisation's reputation, intellectual property rights, physical property, and the remaining workforce
- Scheduling attendance of professional career transition (outplacement) coaches, and
- Arranging notification day availability of trained counsellors



## Notification Meetings

Experienced notifying managers and HR representatives understand that immediate notification day reactions of employees informed of role redundancy can be uncharacteristic and vary from exhilaration to devastation.

However, anticipated and actual behaviours can be significantly at odds. This is because the organisation only knows so much about the life circumstances and aspirations of its employees.

For example, a notified employee may have been hoping for a financial windfall from anticipated role redundancy for years and be exhilarated. Alternatively, a notified employee may be devastated because they have just committed to a significant financial obligation (e.g. mortgage) or already be coping with other challenges (e.g. major family illness).

So, as you read this e-Book you may think you know how you would react if notified of role redundancy, but your actual reaction may be different.

## ***Be Dignified***

*If you find yourself participating in a notification meeting, try to maintain your professional composure*

### **Recommended Approach**

- Pay attention (realising that you won't necessarily remember all that takes place and can usually ask for later clarification)
- Acknowledge that you're human and can expect to feel a range of emotions
- Avoid making adverse comments directed at organisational representatives or that threaten the broader organisation
- Recognise that you are likely to interact with the organisation and its people in future industry, business-to-business, and professional contexts (e.g. as a consultant, supplier, or even as a returning executive, manager or professional)
- Remember that if you depart on reasonable terms from the organisation (and, particularly, your Line Manager) you are more likely to secure positive referee support
- Understand that if your reaction is considered totally unreasonable, the organisation may withdraw intended options (e.g. exploration of cross-business redeployment, opportunity to work for a period before departure, provision of company-funded career transition coaching support)

# Section 4 : Accept or Seek Support

The focus of this section is on the importance of Accepting or Seeking out professional counselling, career coaching and financial advisory support services.

## Types of Support

During a role redundancy notification meeting, organisational representatives will typically outline the business case for organisational change, advise or negotiate a proposed departure date (i.e. immediate or deferred), provide information about financial entitlements, outline additional company-funded support (if any), and address departure logistics.

The types of company funded support that may be offered include:

### Counselling

Counsellors, to assist employees who are emotionally distraught. The Counsellor may belong to the Employee Assistance Program provider that has been available to the whole workforce on an ongoing basis. The provision of confidential counselling support is sometimes extended to the departing employee's family members.

### Career Coaching

Career Transition Coaches, to help affected employees move on to the next phases of their careers. A Career Coach may be available to briefly meet an employee straight after role redundancy notification. Typically, programs of support involve emotional, career direction, self-branding, and search strategy and execution support for specified periods (e.g. 1, 2, 3, or 6 months).

### Financial Advice

Irrespective of level of preparedness, role redundancy is often a financially complex, significant event. Initial considerations might include continuation insurance, tax treatment of received entitlements, and management of superannuation benefits and investments. Some organisations provide introductions to financial planners and fund specific services (e.g. preparation of an initial financial plan).





## ***Accept or Seek Professional Support***

*To manage the immediate role redundancy situation, engage with all relevant professional support services offered by the employer or seek out and privately pay for similar services. They can support emotional adjustment, important financial decision-making, and development and attainment of your new career agenda.*

### **Recommended Actions**

#### **Employer Funded Services**

Organisations sponsoring Counselling, Career Coaching and/or Financial Advice are presenting impacted employees with an opportunity to manage the immediate situation and transition towards a new future. So, it makes sense to take advantage of what are, from the employee perspective, free services:

- Accept any opportunity offered immediately after the notification meeting to speak confidentially with an onsite Counsellor, especially if overwhelmed or distraught
- Meet briefly with any onsite Career Coach after the notification meeting to learn about the scope and length of the offered career program and to schedule an initial coaching session
- Speak with any named Financial Advisor in the days immediately following notification to determine the scope of employer support, especially if the financial impact of role redundancy is high or the amounts involved are significant. A decision can then be made on the relevance of the offered services after taking into account existing financial advisory relationships
- Access offered confidential counsellor support in the following days and weeks if struggling to cope with the new circumstances
- Engage fully in any offered career program across the following weeks and months

#### **Private Services**

Not all organisations offer Counselling, Career Coaching, and/or Financial Advice services to employees affected by role redundancy. However, the needs of affected employees are unchanged!

So, be prepared to privately invest in these services. By doing so, emotional adjustment and positive career transition outcomes can be accelerated.



# Section 5 : Become Poised

In this section, the phenomenon of being nervously employed is introduced. Senses of loss commonly associated with role redundancy are then outlined. Finally, a scripting framework for communicating with people after role redundancy is presented.

The focus of this section is on Becoming Poised after role redundancy.

Role redundancy is just one way of leaving a business. One of its distinctive features is that the organisation triggers departure, sometimes without advance notice. Another is that the employee will seldom seamlessly move into a new role.

## Nervous Employment

Executives, managers and professionals are increasingly buffeted by organisational change:

- Large, international private sector businesses routinely execute organisational change as they reengineer the way they offer products and services
- Job security in the public (government) sector was traditionally very high, but cost and tax base pressures at Federal, State, and Local government levels have progressively eroded public service job security
- Even mission-focused not for profit sector organisations, which often rely on Government, philanthropic and public donation funding, are now more inclined to implement role redundancies

The point is that role redundancy is a relatively normal, predictable event to experience at least once during an employed career, irrespective of levels of professional capability.

*Recognise that organisational restructures are a feature of the modern economy and that role redundancy events are usually beyond your control.*

## Senses of Loss

In Section 3 (Be Dignified), it was noted that immediate emotional reactions of impacted employees on the day of role redundancy notification vary widely.

As affected employees adjust to their new circumstances across the following weeks, they may experience a range of emotions associated with loss. Typically, the greatest senses of loss are strongly related to aspects of work they most value. For example, role redundancy may trigger emotions and concerns associated with:

- A lowered standard of living
- Loss of career control, positional power, social prestige, or expert status
- Lack of opportunities to make meaningful, or creative, contributions
- Severed social relationships and networks
- Shattered perceptions of mutual employer-employee loyalty, and of job security

For example, an employee who invested time and effort into developing a strong social network at work may feel a keen sense of loss associated with severed social relationships. Another employee, driven to secure a very high income, may feel dread at the prospect of lowered living standards.

Each employee can experience multiple senses of loss of varying intensity.

*Understand that individual reactions to role redundancy are often linked to the loss of valued aspects of work.*

## Communicating New Circumstances

A critical career management task for an employee affected by role redundancy is to focus on the future as quickly as possible. Accessing professional counselling and career coaching support can be very helpful in this regard.

It is also a reality that an affected employee must communicate the role redundancy event to a variety of people.

Immediately after notification, such conversations are typically held with spouses / partners and close friends with whom the affected employee feels they can confidentially share their feelings, thoughts, fears and concerns. Beyond that intimate group, however, it helps if an employee affected by role redundancy has a simple, structured script for such conversations and communications.

It is also recommended that employees affected by role redundancy make a point of shifting conversations with people to the future if a conversation begins to dwell unhelpfully on the past. Often well-meaning ex-colleagues will want to engage in an analysis of circumstances leading up to the role redundancy. Such conversations do not tend to serve either party to the conversation well and, at worst, become “pity parties”.

*Avoid saying  
'I was made redundant'  
as it has a negative tone and  
personalises the event.*

If you experience a role redundancy event, it is critical that you are poised and present yourself professionally beyond your immediate circle of family, close friends and intimates (e.g. to wider business and professional networks, head-hunters and recruitment consultants, and potential employers):



## ***Become Poised***

*When describing your new circumstances, be positive, apply the following '3-F' script, factually outline the organisational change that led to role redundancy, then focus with energy on your new career agenda.*

### **3-F Script**

- Fact 1:** Outline the nature of the organisational change and the way it impacted the overall global, regional, Australian or local business
- Fact 2:** Describe the impact on your area of the business and state neutrally that it led to role redundancy
- Future:** Paint a rich picture of work environments in which you thrive and to which you are strongly motivated to contribute

In delivering this messaging, outline the facts quickly and succinctly in a business-like manner. By contrast, demonstrate expansive enthusiasm, energy and passion when addressing your future.

So, what does this look like in practice?

*The organisation restructured globally, with significant impacts on the Australian business. All procurement functions were centralised to a global hub in Singapore, which led to redundancy of my position. I am now seeking executive or senior management opportunities, probably in the A, B, or C industries, which leverage my experience / expertise in X, Y, and Z*

Development of wording for the first two facts incorporated in the 3-F script is normally quite straightforward.

Framing the compelling, future-oriented statement is more challenging. It needs to be authentic, demonstrate leadership and capability self-awareness (i.e. in selecting X, Y, and Z), and reflect the outcome of structured deliberations on career direction (i.e. in presenting A, B, and C).

Such self-awareness and career direction decision-making can be either self-directed or an outcome of partnering with a professional Career Coach (see Section 4).



## Section 6 : Re-Create

In this section, the potential benefits of Re-creation to nourish body, mind and spirit, before and/or during career exploration and search activity, are emphasised.

At the time, role redundancies can loom large emotionally.

Many affected employees seek their next opportunity in the same industry and professional field. Others take time to reflect on their career and life circumstances, determine what they wish to offer society through work, and then spend their subsequent search efforts in alignment with a new career agenda. Neither approach is right, nor wrong and practical circumstances sometimes dictate a short-term focus on income generation.

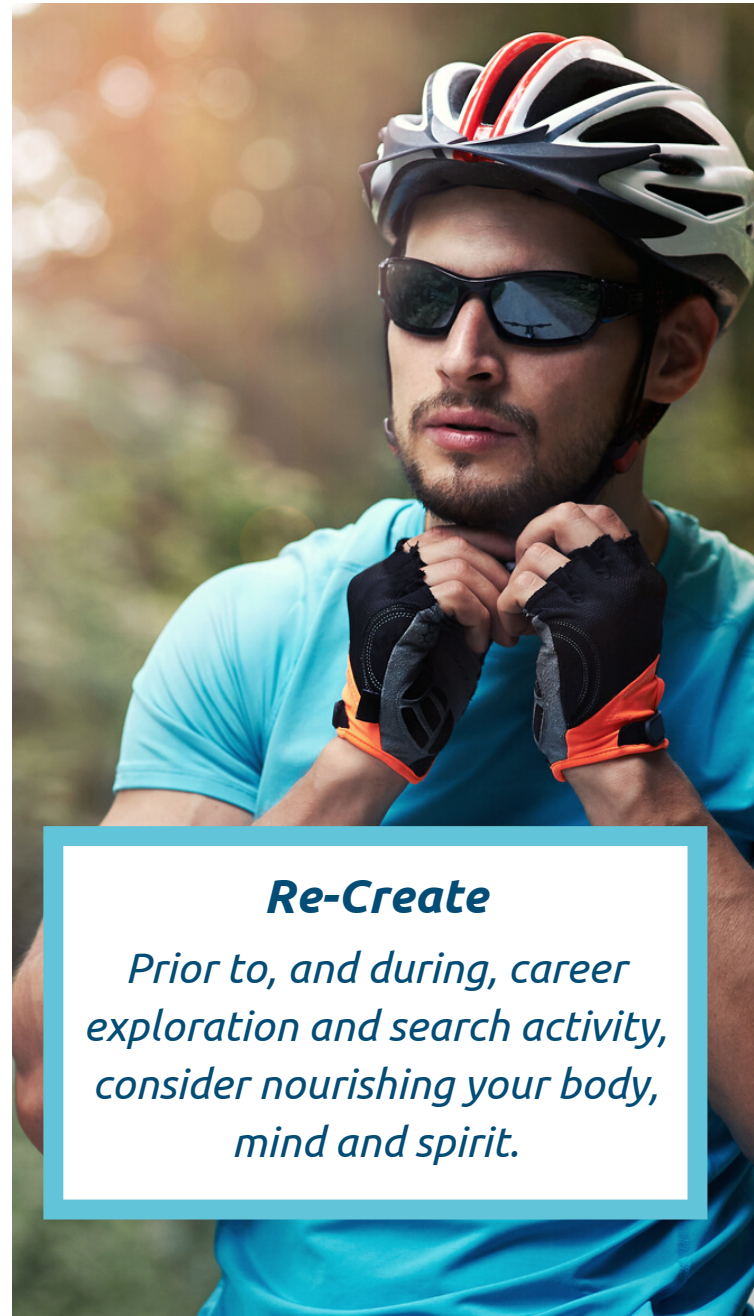
A person trying to identify and research viable future career options can find it quite alien and stressful to take the time necessary to reflect on their career experiences, complete career assessments, and commit to research new career directions. Such activity can often seem a luxury that can't be afforded and at odds with the pace at which life had been conducted before role redundancy.

If a person has invested a significant amount of time in a potential advertised employment opportunity (i.e. put in an application, attended an interview, and undertaken psychometric assessment) it will be disappointing if they are not the ultimately appointed candidate. Such disappointment is natural. However, it is important to quickly regain emotional equilibrium, maintain search momentum, and persist in search activity.

So, until a new opportunity is secured, emotions can vary widely. Irrespective of whether the career agenda is focused on immediate opportunity search or a period of career self-reflection, a key question is whether taking a break/holiday will enhance performance.

### Recommended Actions

- Take a brief holiday or break from work routines, particularly before beginning career exploration and the energetic task of search activity
- Blend regular and ad hoc recreational activities into your scheduled career-related activities



### **Re-Create**

*Prior to, and during, career exploration and search activity, consider nourishing your body, mind and spirit.*



# Conclusion

At a time of accelerated pace of change, potential role redundancy is increasingly a threat to the stability and trajectory of careers. High quality performance in a current role may, or may not, guarantee ongoing employment. In this e-Book you have been encouraged to:

- remain alert to the possibility of role redundancy
- take steps to prepare for potential role redundancy
- be dignified, if notified of role redundancy
- accept or seek out relevant, professional counselling, career coaching and/or financial advisory support after notification of a role redundancy
- present in a poised, professional manner after a role redundancy, and
- consider nourishing body, mind and spirit before and/or in parallel with career exploration and search activities

By following the recommendations included in this e-Book, executives, managers, and professionals actually affected by role redundancy are likely to adjust better emotionally, be well placed to conduct effective career exploration and search activities and accelerate their future career success.

## Our Services

We partner with executives, managers and professionals who are looking to:

- Navigate their careers in turbulent times
- Manage transitions to senior positions
- Progress within their organisations
- Secure new opportunities after departing organisations
- Change careers
- Determine their next career steps
- Re-enter the workforce after career breaks



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