



THE 2025/26 REDUNDANCY PLAYBOOK FOR HR LEADERS

How to plan, communicate, and
execute layoffs while protecting
people, culture, and employer brand

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ABOUT THIS PLAYBOOK

2025 and 2026 continue to bring economic uncertainty, rapid automation, AI-driven restructuring, and new cost pressures across industries. For HR leaders, this means one thing: workforce transitions must be planned with more precision, empathy, and transparency than ever before.

This playbook gives you everything you need to manage redundancies responsibly, including:

- ✓ **A 30/60/90-day workforce planning framework**
- ✓ **An employer brand-risk score checklist**
- ✓ **A legal risk cheat sheet**
- ✓ **Scripts for every touchpoint**

Use this guide to help your people move forward with dignity, and protect your company's reputation long term.

SECTION 1: THE 30/60/90-DAY WORKFORCE PLANNING GUIDE

Redundancies can't be rushed. When they are, organisations face backlash, legal errors, low morale, and long-term employer brand damage.

This 30/60/90 framework keeps HR leaders in control, reducing chaos, building clarity, and ensuring every step is legally and ethically sound.

◆ FIRST 30 DAYS. STRATEGIC CLARITY & RISK CONTROL

Goal: Build the business case, align leadership, prepare documentation, and minimise risk.

Diagnose the business need

Understanding why redundancies are happening clarifies everything else: communication, documentation, severance structure, and timing.

Typical triggers include:

- 1
- **Cost reduction:** Budget constraints, falling revenue, or margin pressure.
 - **AI-driven role redundancy:** Automation replacing manual or admin-heavy tasks.
 - **Department restructures:** Aligning teams to new priorities.
 - **Mergers or acquisitions:** Removing overlap, consolidating functions.
 - **Performance decline:** Sustained underperformance requiring organisational redesign.

Why this matters:

A vague or poorly articulated business rationale is the number one cause of legal exposure and employee mistrust.

Document objective criteria

Your selection process must be defensible, consistent, and transparent.

Red flags include criteria like “poor attitude,” “not a cultural fit,” or “manager’s discretion”.

Use **neutral, role-based** criteria:

- 2
- Role duplication
 - Skills no longer aligned with future needs
 - Organisational realignment
 - Geographic reorganisation
 - Shift in strategic priorities

Why this matters:

Objective criteria minimise claims of unfair dismissal and discrimination.

Conduct a risk assessment

Your goal is to reduce legal, reputational, and operational risk before moving forward. Assess:

3

- **Legal exposure:** Jurisdiction requirements vary; consult legal early.
- **Union or works council implications:** Missing consultation steps can invalidate the process.
- **Contractual obligations:** Notice periods, protected clauses, and executive contracts.
- **Adverse impact risk:** Ensure no protected group is disproportionately affected.
- **Compliance timelines:** Statutory notice periods and collective consultation rules.

Start internal alignment

Before any communication leaves the HR department, leadership must be unified. Align on:

4

- Final number of roles affected
- Budget for severance, benefits continuation, and outplacement
- High-level messaging
- Critical dates (manager briefings, announcement day, final day)

Why this matters:

Internal misalignment leads to inconsistent messaging, a major driver of employee distrust and press leaks.

Prepare communication templates

These should be prewritten before redundancy week so you can act calmly, not reactively.

Templates include:

5

- CEO announcement
- Manager scripts
- HR talking points
- Internal Q&A sheet
- Employee FAQ
- Email templates for affected individuals

Select an outplacement partner

A modern outplacement provider reduces stress on HR and improves employee outcomes.

Prioritise:

6

- Digital-first delivery
- Fast deployment (same-day access)
- Flexible pricing
- Coaching support
- Tools for CV, job search, networking, job matching
- Support for all levels, from junior to executive

◆ DAY 31–60. EXECUTION & COMMUNICATION PREP

Goal: Align HR, Legal, Finance, Comms, and managers for a flawless delivery.

Manager readiness training

Managers will carry most of the emotional load; they must be prepared.

Cover:

1

- Exact words to use
- Emotional responses to expect
- What not to say (no promises, no personal comments)
- How to stay calm and compassionate
- How to handle follow-up questions

Tip: Run practice role-play sessions, they dramatically reduce delivery mistakes.

Build a redundancy day roadmap

This timeline keeps everyone aligned and prevents confusion.

Include:

2

- 8:00 – Manager briefing
- 9:00 – Begin individual meetings
- 12:00 – HR check-ins
- 14:00 – IT deactivation
- 16:00 – Follow-up employee support calls

Ensure documentation is perfect

Missing or incorrect documents increase risk and delay the process.

Checklist:

3

- Termination letters
- Statutory notices
- Severance packages
- Benefits continuation details
- Outplacement login instructions
- Employee FAQ

Stress-test messaging

In a 10-minute meeting, ask leadership:

4

- Does every department understand the rationale?
- Could this messaging be misinterpreted?
- What tough questions might employees ask?

This avoids public confusion, internal leaks, or contradictory statements.

◆ DAY 61–90. DELIVERY & REBUILD

Goal: Align HR, Legal, Finance, Comms, and managers for a flawless delivery.

Redundancy announcement day

Keep everything:

1

- Short
- Respectful
- Honest
- Clear

Activate outplacement the same day, immediate support reduces emotional shock.

24–48 hour support window

This is when emotions peak.

HR should provide:

2

- Follow-up calls
- Clarification on severance
- Access to career support
- Guidance on next steps

Support the “survivors”

Remaining employees experience:

3

- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Uncertainty
- Fear of future redundancies

Provide:

- Town hall Q&A
- Clear roadmap of what’s next
- Peers-to-leadership communication
- Reassurance about workload redistribution

Document learnings

Capture:

4

- Gaps in communication
- Manager feedback
- Legal complications
- Employee sentiment

This builds maturity into future processes.

Strengthen employer brand

Share external messaging that focuses on:

5

- Transparency
- Empathy
- Future vision
- Care for departing employees

SECTION 2: EMPLOYER BRAND-RISK SCORE CHECKLIST

This checklist predicts how employees and the public will react to your redundancy process.

Score each from 1 (low risk) to 5 (high risk).

1

Clarity of business rationale

Can you explain the "why" in one sentence? Employees trust clarity.

2

Communication consistency

Mixed messages worsen fear and trigger Glassdoor reviews.

3

Manager readiness

Unprepared managers cause 80 percent of brand damage in layoffs.

4

Employee trust level

Low current engagement = higher risk of backlash and leaks.

5

Severity of role cuts

More roles = more scrutiny and more support required.

6

Support level provided

Outplacement and emotional support reduce reputational damage.

7

Timing

Redundancies during "good news cycles" confuse employees and press.

8

Social media risk

Influencers inside the workforce can amplify backlash quickly.

9

Fairness of selection process

Employees will question criteria immediately.

10

Legal certainty

Any compliance risk = extreme brand risk.

SECTION 3: LEGAL RISK CHEAT SHEET

This section protects HR from the most common, and costly, mistakes.

1

Valid business rationale

Must be essential, defensible, and clearly documented.

2

Objective criteria

Subjective assessments lead directly to tribunal claims.

3

Consultation compliance

Failing this can invalidate the entire process.

4

Adverse impact checks

Look for patterns: age, gender, disability, ethnicity, parental status.

5

Notice periods

Check both legal minimum and contract requirements.

6

Severance accuracy

Errors here are one of the top causes of legal disputes.

7

Legally-safe communication

Avoid all performance-based explanations unless documented.

8

Employee rights clarity

Confusion around benefits or pay leads to mistrust and escalations.

SECTION 4: SCRIPTS FOR EVERY TOUCHPOINT

Clear, empathetic communication reduces conflict, fear, and misunderstandings.

EXECUTIVE ANNOUNCEMENT. ALL STAFF

Tone: calm, factual, human

Purpose: Provide clarity, avoid panic

Script: “Today we are announcing structural changes that will impact several colleagues across the organisation. This decision follows a careful review of our financial outlook, operational structure, and long-term strategy.

This does not reflect the performance or dedication of our people. We are committed to treating every individual with respect and fairness throughout this transition. Affected colleagues will receive severance, extended benefits, and access to career transition platform to support them into their next role.”



MANAGER 1:1 MEETING SCRIPT

Tone: direct, compassionate

Length: under 90 seconds

Script: “I have difficult news. Your role is being made redundant as part of a wider organisational restructure. This decision is based purely on role requirements and business structure, it is not related to your performance.

I understand this may be upsetting. I’m here to walk you through what happens next, including severance, benefits, timelines, and the outplacement support we’re offering. Please take the time you need, and I’m here to answer your questions.”



SECTION 4: SCRIPTS FOR EVERY TOUCHPOINT

Clear, empathetic communication reduces conflict, fear, and misunderstandings.

EMAIL TO AFFECTED EMPLOYEE

Hi [Name],

Following today's meeting, I'm sharing your redundancy documentation, including your notice information, severance package, benefits continuation, and access instructions for an outplacement support.

We are committed to supporting you throughout this transition, and please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.



TEAM ANNOUNCEMENT FOR REMAINING STAFF

"Today we shared difficult news with colleagues whose roles have been made redundant. We are grateful for their contribution to the company.

We know this may be unsettling, and it's normal to feel a mix of emotions. We want to reassure you of the company's direction and encourage you to ask questions. Our leadership team is here to support you."

