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Case Study

Restructuring & Redundancies



InsightHR

good people : good business

How we helped a client navigate organisational restructuring

A case study in strategic guidance and emotional complexity

We recently worked with a client undertaking a significant organisational restructure, who was referred into us by a trusted solicitor partner.

A global company, employing 350 staff in Ireland and operating in a unionised environment, planned to enhance productivity by opening offices in other geographical regions with lower labour costs, automating manual tasks, and optimising processes.

This ambitious transformation required redundancies across multiple geographical locations, with 50 roles potentially affected in Ireland.

Organisational restructuring is rarely a straightforward process. The practical challenges - legal compliance, union negotiations, and strategic realignment - are compounded by the human impact.

Redundancy, as identified by psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, can evoke emotional responses akin to the grief following bereavement, often manifesting in denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

With extensive experience in business transformation, collective redundancies, change management, and more, the team here at Insight HR immediately knew our goal was to guide our client through this multifaceted process in Ireland, ensuring a balance of both employment law compliance and compassionate leadership.



How we provided effective and comprehensive support

1. Strategic planning and preparation

Megan Power, HR Consultant here at Insight HR, led the project with support from the wider team, including HR Consultant Joe Thompson. Megan was selected to lead this project because of her experience in managing large-scale transformations.

Planning at the outset of any restructuring process is essential to its success. While the future is unknowable, it is not unimaginable, and careful preparation allows organisations to anticipate potential challenges and mitigate risks. Before any announcement is made, it is crucial to establish a clear strategy, develop detailed plans, and equip managers with the tools and knowledge they need to navigate the process effectively.

Resistance to change is one of the most significant reasons many change management initiatives fail, often stemming from fear, uncertainty, or a lack of trust. Factoring this resistance into the preparation stage - by fostering open communication, building trust, and addressing concerns proactively - can significantly enhance the likelihood of a smoother transition. Proper planning ensures the organisation is ready to support employees, respond to unforeseen issues, and maintain alignment with its strategic goals throughout the process.

After initial discussions with the Director of People and Operations, Megan recommended forming a cross-functional project team to oversee the restructuring process in Ireland. The CEO had named this jurisdiction as one of the trickier ones due to a contentious relationship with the trade union representing employees.



“Restructuring can be a daunting task for any organisation, and leave employees feeling worried. But with the right process, planning and people involved, you can achieve a result that achieves your organisational goals while keeping that all important trust with your people.”

Megan Power, HR Consultant

Megan summarised the proposed strategy into a clear, concise business case, enabling the CEO, senior leadership team, and department managers to communicate the rationale for the changes effectively and clearly to everyone. Megan then worked with the project team to plan the communication strategy, identifying who would deliver the news to the organisation and within individual departments.

It was agreed that the CEO would deliver the news during an online all-hands meeting, followed immediately by individual meetings with department heads in Ireland. Megan prepared the CEO and each department manager for their specific roles in the process. Many managers were delivering life-altering news for the first time and were understandably fearful of how it would be received. Megan's approach combined practical discussion and empathetic coaching, recognising the weight of their responsibility.

2. Employment law compliance and consultation

The first step in the process was ensuring compliance with Irish employment legislation, which involved providing information to the employees' representatives about the proposed collective redundancies and consulting with them with a view to reaching an agreement. Megan also worked with the Director of People and Operations to notify the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment of the proposed redundancies.

Megan guided the organisation in developing fair and objective selection criteria for the proposed redundancies. She emphasised the importance of basing decisions on clear, measurable factors such as skills, qualifications, and performance rather than subjective judgments to maintain transparency and fairness. Megan also advised that these criteria would need to be shared with employee representatives and individuals at risk and that consultations should include discussions on these criteria.

Megan facilitated group consultations with trade union representatives and, along with Joe Thompson, chaired individual consultations with employees and their department managers.

These consultations addressed:

- The rationale for the proposed restructure.
- Roles affected and criteria for selection for redundancy.
- Alternatives to redundancy.
- The severance package and proposed employee supports.
- The timeline for implementation.

During the consultation process, discussions with trade union representatives occasionally became heated and conflictual as differing priorities clashed. Megan used her conflict resolution skills to de-escalate tensions, fostering an environment of mutual respect and productive dialogue between management and union representatives. In individual consultations, both Megan and Joe managed strong emotional responses from employees, including anger, tears, and refusal to speak. Their calm and empathetic approach ensured these discussions remained professional and focused on achieving fair outcomes.

3. Addressing grief and emotional complexity

The redundancy process often triggers a grief response as employees confront the potential loss of their roles and the identity tied to their work. Drawing on change management theory, including John Kotter's 8-Step Change Model, Megan recognised the importance of creating a sense of urgency and building trust to move the process forward. Although building trust was challenging in a process involving potential job losses, open, honest, and transparent discussions eventually achieved this goal.

Managers also experienced emotional strain, grappling with their own fears while supporting their teams. Megan and Joe provided tailored coaching to help managers navigate this emotionally charged period, ensuring they:

- Delivered consistent messages to employees.
- Avoided contradictory or emotionally charged statements.
- Managed their emotions professionally during consultations.
- Conducted the process transparently and with integrity.

By addressing the psychological dimensions of the process, Megan and Joe ensured the organisation could balance compassion with practicality.



4. On-the-ground support and practical tools

Before the announcement, Megan coached the CEO for the all-hands meeting and prepared department managers for individual consultations. She chaired all collective meetings and, along with Joe, attended each individual consultation meeting to support managers during one-to-one discussions.

Throughout the 30-day consultation, Insight HR provided:

- Legally compliant documentation.
- Minutes for all meetings, circulated to employee representatives and employees after each meeting.
- Guidance on addressing unique circumstances, including employees on leave or with special considerations.
- A structured communication plan to address employee and union concerns effectively.

The outcome: An engaging process and enhanced support

After 30 days of intense consultation, the company proceeded with its original restructuring plan. However, meaningful engagement led to an enhanced severance package and additional supports for affected employees.

This process demonstrated the value of combining HR expertise and employment law knowledge with empathetic leadership. While 50 employees were ultimately made redundant, the department managers delivered the news with compassion and professionalism, supported by the steady guidance of the Insight HR team.



“As with many things in HR and the world of work, you can do things the compliant way or you can go above that, and do things the *best* way. This is what we aim for. When we approach a process like this, we want to achieve the *best* outcome for you.”

Joe Thompson, HR Consultant

How we can help you!

This case underscores the need for experienced partners during restructuring. Our team's ability to navigate the legal, emotional, and operational complexities ensured the process was transparent, fair, and respectful.

Creating a clear long-term vision for the post-restructuring organisation and a roadmap for achieving it was so important. The change process didn't end when departing employees left; rebuilding morale and trust among remaining staff required additional support measures such as training and team-building initiatives.

By combining change management principles with a deep understanding of human behaviour, Insight HR helped this client navigate a complex, emotionally charged process while upholding fairness and integrity.

If you're faced with a similar situation, get in touch with us today at 0567701060 or info@insighthr.ie!



Mary Cullen
Managing Director

"Restructuring can feel overwhelming, but with the right approach, it doesn't have to be. We help organisations navigate change smoothly and efficiently, ensuring every step is handled with expertise and care. Our tailored support means you're not just ticking boxes - you're making the right decisions for your business and your people."

"Behind every redundancy is a person, and how you handle the process matters. We ensure fairness, clarity, and respect at every stage, helping businesses make difficult decisions while treating employees with the dignity they deserve. A well-managed process protects both people and your organisation's reputation."



Liam Barton
HR Consultant

Get to know us!

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