

# Leading Through Redundancy

A Strategic Guide for CEOs and HR Leaders  
Managing Workforce Restructuring in Ireland



# Introduction

## Leading Organisations Through Difficult Change

**Redundancies are among the most difficult and emotionally charged processes organisations undertake.**

Irish employment legislation provides a framework for redundancy programmes, but the reality for leaders is that no two redundancy processes are ever the same. Each restructuring programme brings its own mix of commercial pressures, employee concerns, organisational dynamics and leadership challenges.

For many organisations, redundancy programmes arise during periods of significant change. Rising operational costs, global economic uncertainty, geopolitical instability, tariffs, supply chain disruption and technological transformation are forcing organisations to rethink how work is structured and where it is carried out.

Handled carefully, redundancy programmes allow organisations to adapt responsibly while protecting the future of the business. Handled poorly, they can lead to legal disputes, industrial relations challenges, reputational damage and lasting cultural consequences.

This guide draws on practical experience supporting organisations through redundancy programmes in Ireland. It explains the legal framework, outlines the consultation process and highlights the leadership realities organisations must be prepared for.



# A note from our MD

*"Over the course of my career, I have supported organisations through redundancy and restructuring programmes during some of the most challenging periods for employers.*

*Our team has worked alongside CEOs, HR leaders and management teams through the global financial crisis, Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic disruption now being driven by geopolitical instability, tariffs and rapid technological change.*

*Each redundancy programme is different. While legislation provides a framework, the real complexity lies in managing the human and organisational dynamics that emerge once employees learn their roles may be at risk.*

*These processes are deeply emotive. Employees are understandably worried about their livelihoods, their families and their future. Managers are often placed in extremely difficult positions, and CEOs must balance empathy for employees with the responsibility to ensure the organisation remains sustainable.*

*At Insight HR we specialise in supporting organisations through complex change and conflict. Our role is to bring experience, structure and calm leadership to processes that can otherwise become extremely difficult for everyone involved.*

*Handled properly, redundancy programmes can be managed in a way that is fair, respectful and legally sound while still allowing organisations to move forward with confidence."*

**Mary Cullen**  
**Managing Director**  
**Insight HR**



**Mary Cullen**  
Managing Director

# The Redundancy Process in Ireland

## An Overview

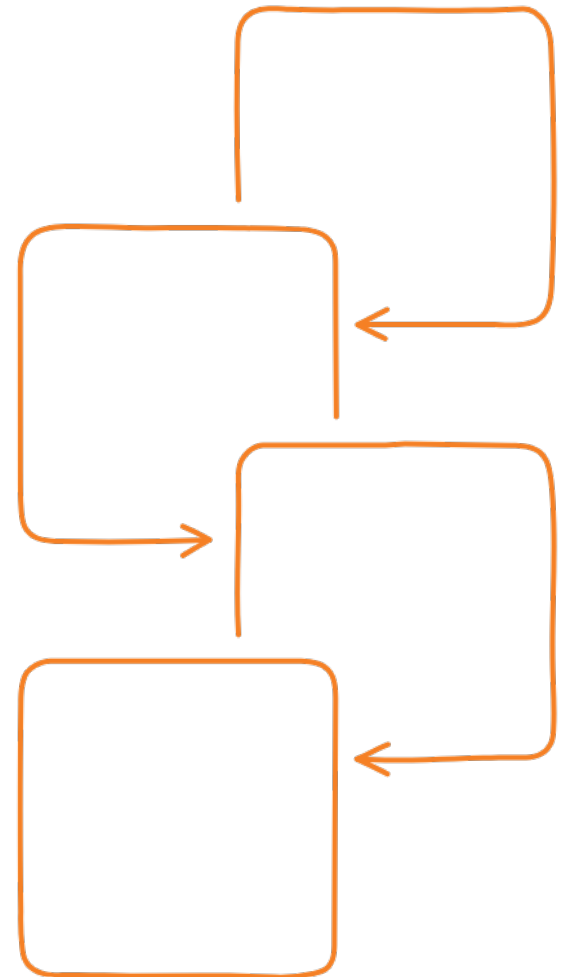
Although every organisation's circumstances are different, redundancy programmes in Ireland generally follow a structured sequence.

The process begins with the development of a business case explaining why organisational change is necessary. Once leadership teams have reached a decision that restructuring is required, employees are informed that their roles may be at risk.

Where collective redundancies arise, Irish legislation requires a consultation period of at least 30 days before notices of redundancy can be issued. During this time organisations must engage with employee representatives and consider proposals that may reduce the need for job losses.

Once consultation concludes and final decisions are made, affected employees receive formal notice of termination of employment. The notice period then begins.

Understanding this sequence is important because redundancy programmes are not single events. They are organisational transitions that can unfold over several months.



Section One

# The Redundancy Process in Ireland

# The Redundancy Process in Ireland

## 1. Developing the Business Case

Redundancy processes begin with a clear business rationale explaining why organisational change is required.

This may arise from financial pressures, technological change, restructuring following mergers or acquisitions, relocation of operations, or wider global business decisions.

The business case should clearly document the commercial circumstances that have led to the proposal and explain why certain roles may no longer be required.

A well-prepared business case becomes an important reference point during consultation, particularly where employees or their representatives challenge the rationale for the proposed changes.

## 2. Considering Alternatives to Redundancy

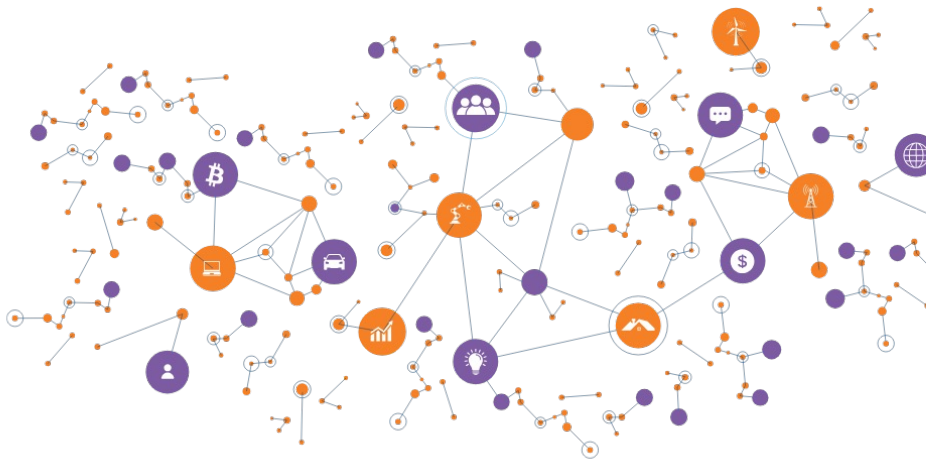
Before implementing redundancies, organisations are expected to consider whether other measures could reduce the need for job losses.

These may include temporary measures such as reduced working hours, lay-offs, short-time working arrangements, voluntary redundancies, career breaks or early retirement options.

While these measures are not always feasible, demonstrating that alternatives were considered helps reinforce the credibility of the process.

# The Redundancy Process in Ireland

## 3. Identifying Roles Potentially Affected



Redundancy relates to **roles rather than individuals**. Organisations must therefore identify which roles or functions may no longer be required.

Where multiple employees perform similar roles, organisations may need to identify a **selection pool** and determine the criteria that will be used to assess which roles are affected.

Selection criteria must be fair, objective and capable of explanation during consultation.

## 4. Informing Employees That Their Roles Are At Risk

Once preparation work has been completed, organisations inform affected employees that their roles may be at risk of redundancy. A town hall announcement is usually the most effective method of communication. This announcement marks the beginning of the formal process, but should be followed by individual meetings informing each person of how the proposed changes might affect them.

For employees, this moment can be extremely unsettling. Many immediately begin worrying about their financial security and future employment prospects. Managers and HR teams must therefore be prepared for questions, speculation and heightened emotions during this period.

# The Redundancy Process in Ireland

## 5. Commencing Collective Consultation

Where collective redundancy thresholds are met, employers must begin consultation with employee representatives for **at least 30 days** before issuing redundancy notices.

In unionised organisations, consultation takes place with the recognised trade union.

In non-union environments, employees must elect representatives to participate in the consultation process. The employer must facilitate elections. Consultation discussions must address the reasons for the proposed redundancies, the number of roles affected, the selection criteria and potential alternatives.

## 6. Holding Individual Consultation Meetings

Alongside collective consultation, organisations should also meet individually with employees whose roles are at risk.

These meetings allow employees to ask questions, raise concerns and propose alternatives. If a selection matrix is being used, you will provide information about how their individual score would be determined.

In practice, many organisations conduct two consultation meetings with each employee before final decisions are made.

Where large numbers of employees are affected, this phase can involve dozens of meetings and significant coordination between HR and line managers.

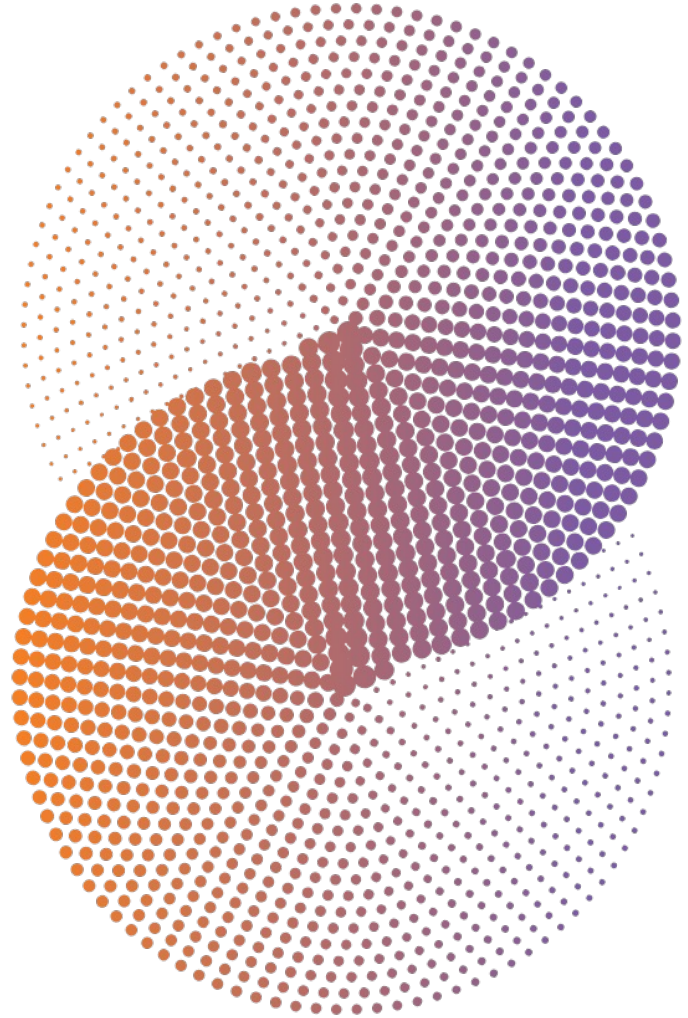
# The Redundancy Process in Ireland

## 7. Considering Employee Proposals and Alternatives

Employees and their representatives may propose alternatives to redundancy during consultation.

These suggestions might involve redeployment, voluntary redundancy options, voluntary retirement, career breaks, changes to working arrangements or other cost-saving measures.

Employers must give genuine consideration to these proposals before making final decisions.



## 8. Communicating Final Decisions

Once consultation has concluded and the organisation has carefully considered all proposals, final decisions are communicated to employees.

Where employees have been selected for redundancy, they receive formal written confirmation explaining the decision and outlining the next steps.

# The Redundancy Process in Ireland

## 9. Issuing Notice of Redundancy

After consultation concludes, the employer issues notice of termination of employment.

Statutory notice periods in Ireland range from a minimum of two weeks to a maximum of eight weeks, depending on the employee's length of service. Where contractual notice periods are longer than the statutory requirement, the contractual notice period applies. In some situations organisations may choose to provide pay in lieu of notice, although this is not always possible where knowledge transfer is required.

## 10. Managing the Transition Period

In some restructuring programmes employees remain with the organisation for several months after consultation has concluded. This often occurs where work is being relocated to another country or transferred to new teams and employees are required to support knowledge transfer.

While this approach can be necessary, it can also be challenging for managers as employee motivation and engagement may decline during this period. Careful leadership and clear communication are essential to maintaining stability until the process concludes.

## 11. Final Payments and Employee Support

At the end of the process, employees receive their redundancy payments together with any outstanding salary, annual leave or other contractual entitlements. You may also wish to put in place a termination agreement to avoid any future litigation. The termination agreement is drafted by a solicitor and to take legal effect the business contributes to independent legal advice for each employee.

Organisations may also choose to provide additional supports such as career transition services, CV guidance or access to employee assistance programmes. Supporting employees during this final stage can help ensure that the process concludes in a respectful and professional manner.

# The Legal Framework for Redundancy in Ireland

Redundancy in Ireland is governed primarily by the Redundancy Payments Acts 1967–2022 and the Protection of Employment Acts 1977–2024, alongside protections under the Unfair Dismissals Acts.

A redundancy arises where an employee's role ceases to exist due to business reasons such as:

- closure of the business
- relocation of operations
- technological change
- reduced need for employees to carry out certain work
- organisational restructuring

Under Irish law, redundancy relates to the role itself rather than the individual occupying the role.

Employees with at least 104 weeks' continuous service are entitled to statutory redundancy payments calculated as two weeks' pay for every year of service plus one additional week, subject to a statutory cap of €600.00.

Employees who believe a redundancy dismissal was unfair may bring claims before the Workplace Relations Commission.

Section Two

# The Human Side

Leadership, Empathy and  
Responsibility

# Why the Redundancy Process Requires Careful Leadership

While these steps provide a framework for redundancy programmes, the real challenge lies in managing the organisational dynamics that emerge once employees learn their roles may be at risk.

Redundancy processes involve uncertainty, emotion and difficult conversations. For CEOs, HR leaders and managers, guiding an organisation through this period requires careful planning, clear communication and experienced support.

At **Insight HR**, we have supported organisations through restructuring programmes during some of the most challenging economic periods in recent history.

Our experience shows that redundancy processes are rarely straightforward, but with the right guidance they can be managed in a way that is structured, fair and respectful for everyone involved.



# The Impact of the Process on a CEO

For CEOs, restructuring a workforce is one of the most difficult decisions they will face. In most cases, leadership teams spend months examining financial forecasts, operational pressures and strategic options before concluding that restructuring is necessary.

Very few CEOs approach these decisions lightly. Many describe the period leading up to the announcement as deeply stressful.

They understand the impact these decisions will have on employees and their families, yet they must also ensure the organisation remains financially sustainable. Once the decision is made, the CEO's role becomes one of steady leadership during uncertainty.

The announcement of proposed redundancies is often delivered by the CEO. The way this message is communicated can influence how employees perceive the fairness and transparency of the process.



## The Isolation of Leadership

One of the realities of senior leadership is that the role can become particularly isolating during difficult periods.

Employees may look to the CEO for reassurance, while board members and investors expect the organisation to remain financially disciplined. Managers may have concerns about how the changes will affect their teams. HR leaders may seek clarity about how to navigate consultation and communication.

In the middle of all of this sits the CEO, carrying the weight of responsibility for decisions that will affect the organisation and its people. Many leaders feel that they must remain outwardly strong and composed throughout the process. They recognise that their own reactions influence how others respond to the situation.

Yet behind that composure, the reality is that many CEOs experience significant stress during restructuring programmes. They may lose sleep worrying about the impact on employees, the risk of reputational damage, the possibility of industrial relations disputes and the long-term stability of the organisation.

These are not easy decisions for anyone to make.

# Balancing Empathy and Leadership

Strong leadership during redundancy programmes does not mean ignoring the human impact of the decision.

In fact, employees often judge the fairness of the process not only by the outcome but by how leaders communicate and conduct themselves during the process.

Showing empathy does not weaken leadership. It strengthens trust.

Employees may not agree with the decision to restructure, but they are far more likely to accept the outcome if they believe the organisation has acted honestly, respectfully and transparently.

Leaders who acknowledge the difficulty of the situation while clearly explaining the reasons for change often create a more constructive environment for consultation.

## Balancing Stakeholder Responsibilities

During redundancy programmes, CEOs must balance the expectations of multiple stakeholders.

Employees and their families are understandably concerned about job security and financial stability.

Managers are responsible for maintaining operational performance while supporting teams through uncertainty.

Boards and investors expect leaders to make financially responsible decisions that protect the organisation's future.

Customers and business partners look for reassurance that the organisation remains stable.

Navigating these competing expectations requires careful judgement and disciplined leadership.



# Leadership Does Not Mean Facing It Alone

One of the most important lessons experienced leaders learn during restructuring programmes is that these processes should not be managed in isolation.

Having experienced advisors who understand both the technical framework and the human dynamics of redundancy programmes can provide valuable support during difficult moments.

At Insight HR, we often work alongside CEOs and leadership teams during these periods. Our role is not simply to guide the redundancy process itself, but to help leaders navigate the organisational and human challenges that inevitably arise.

Redundancy programmes are rarely easy, but with thoughtful leadership, clear communication and experienced guidance, organisations can move through these difficult periods while maintaining professionalism, fairness and respect for the people involved.



Section Three

# Getting It Right

Practical Strategies and Support  
for Managing Redundancy  
Successfully

# Reality Check: Redundancy Processes Rarely Go Exactly to Plan

While redundancy programmes are carefully planned, the reality is that once employees learn their roles may be at risk, organisational dynamics can shift quickly.

Rumours and speculation often begin circulating within hours of an announcement. Employees naturally begin discussing what they have heard, comparing roles and trying to understand how decisions may affect them.

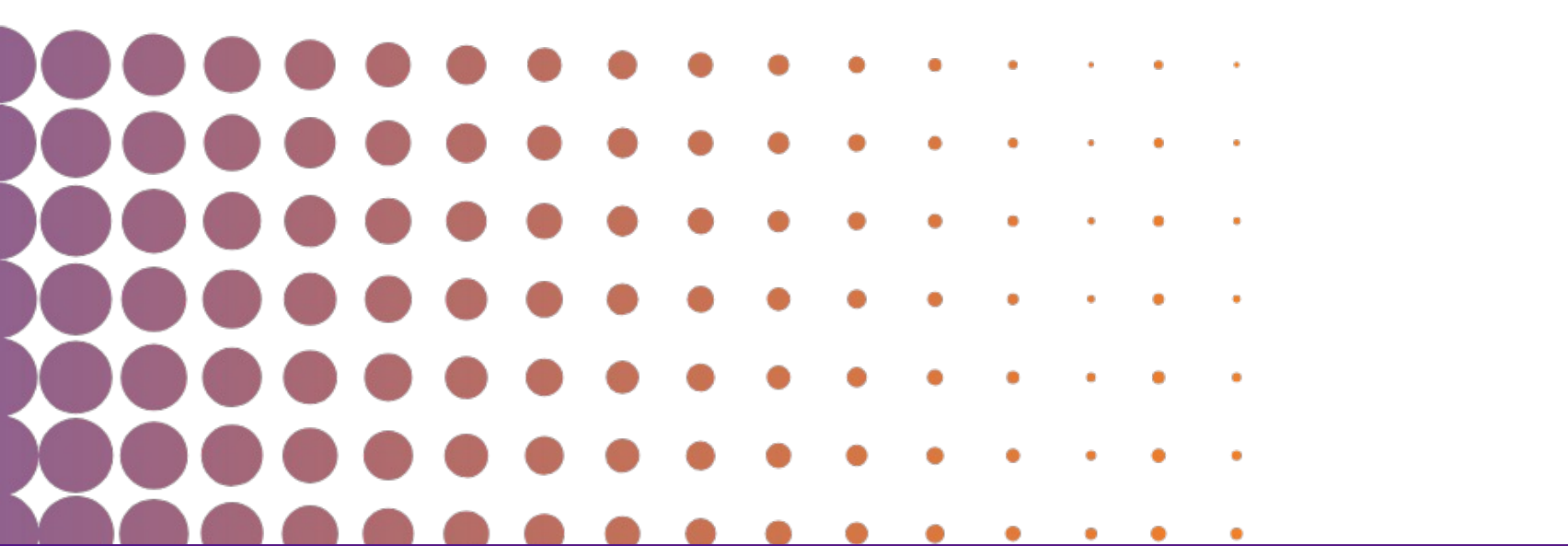
Managers may be approached by employees seeking reassurance about their own roles, while HR teams often become the focal point for questions and concerns.

Employees who feel their future is uncertain may challenge aspects of the process, including job titles, selection criteria or the rationale for the restructuring.

Grievances, complaints or even protected disclosures may arise during consultation.

For leaders who have never managed a redundancy programme before, these developments can be unsettling. However, they are a common feature of organisational restructuring.

This is why redundancy programmes require experienced facilitation, careful communication and steady leadership.



# Why HR Should Not Go It Alone on a First Collective Redundancy

Collective redundancy processes are among the most demanding pieces of work an HR team will ever manage. In Ireland, they sit within a clear legal framework including mandatory employee-representative consultation and a minimum 30-day consultation period before redundancies can take effect in a collective case.

But the real challenge is rarely the legislation on its own. The difficulty lies in what happens once employees learn their roles may be at risk. Anxiety rises quickly. Questions multiply. Managers become uncertain. Trade unions or employee representatives can challenge the rationale, the proposed selection criteria, the package, the timing and the fairness of the process. Grievances, complaints and protected disclosures can emerge. None of this is unusual. It is the reality of this kind of change.

Restructuring is rarely a private process. News of potential job losses spreads quickly through organisations and, in some cases, into the public domain. This visibility can heighten tension across the workforce and place HR teams at the centre of difficult conversations.

Over the years we have worked with many HR professionals who describe the experience of managing a redundancy programme as one of the most stressful periods of their careers. Relationships that previously felt positive and collaborative can suddenly become strained. Employees who once trusted HR may now see the function as representing the organisation's decision to reduce roles. Managers may look to HR for answers to difficult questions, while leadership teams expect the process to run smoothly and without risk.

When multiple issues begin to arise simultaneously, it can leave HR professionals feeling overwhelmed. Some describe feeling unsure whether they have interpreted legal advice correctly, anxious about the consequences of decisions being made, or concerned that the organisation may face complaints or legal challenges if the process is not handled carefully.

In particularly difficult situations, HR professionals may also find themselves becoming the focus of frustration or blame when tensions escalate. This is an enormous amount of responsibility for any individual or team to carry. Recognising this reality is important.



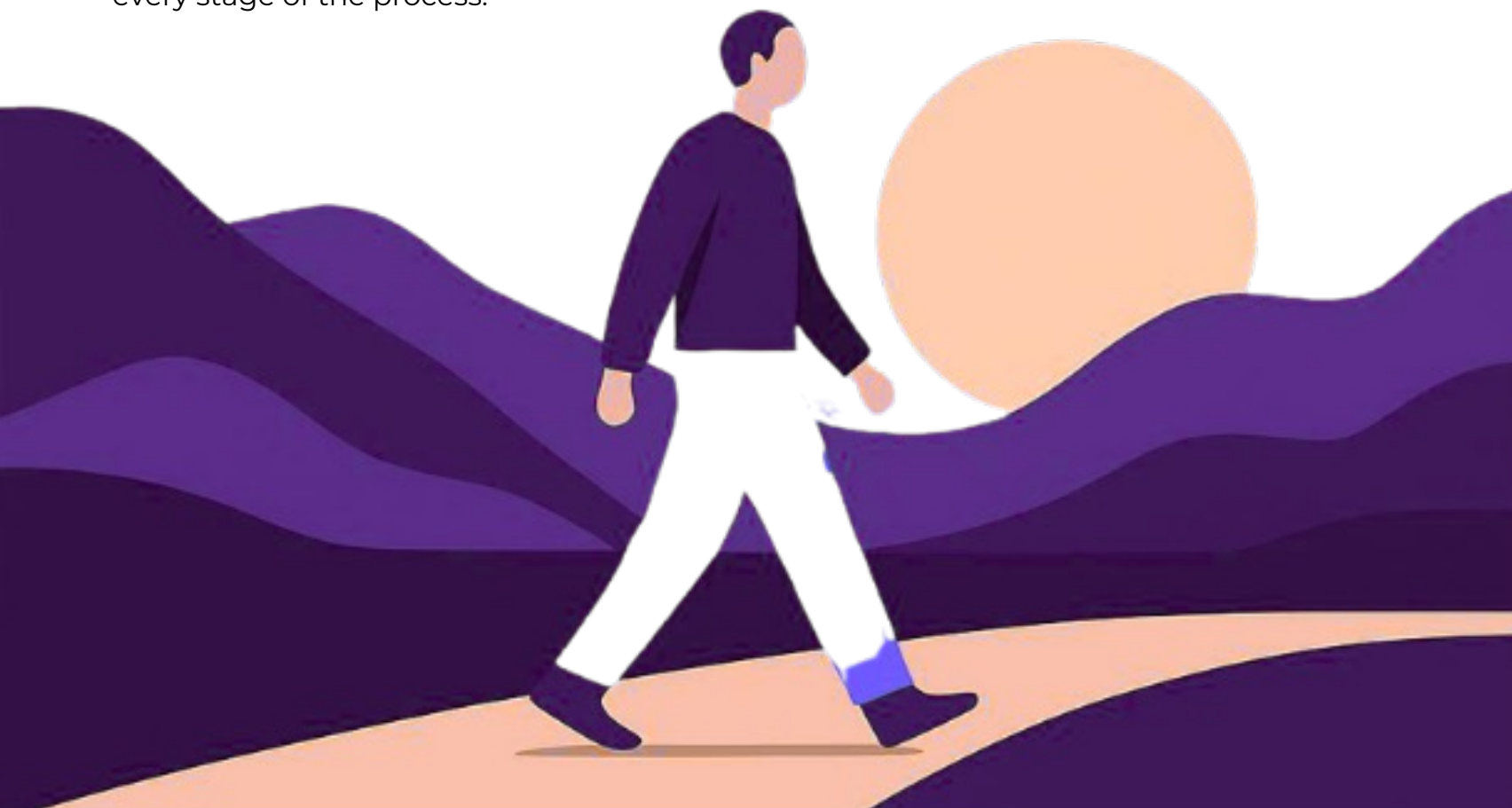
# Why HR Should Not Go It Alone on a First Collective Redundancy

That is why, in our view, an HR practitioner managing a collective redundancy for the first time - irrespective of their experience within HR - should not try to do it alone.

This is not a criticism of internal HR capability. Many highly capable HR professionals find themselves facing a collective redundancy for the first time because these situations are not routine. They tend to arise at moments of intense business pressure, when organisations are already dealing with financial distress, global restructuring, offshoring, automation or rising costs. In those moments, HR is expected to know the process, support the managers, guide the CEO, manage the documentation, respond to employees, hold the line on messaging and keep the organisation steady. That is a heavy burden for anyone to carry without experienced support.

Learning under the guidance of an experienced HR specialist with a strong track record in redundancy and restructuring makes a significant difference. Experience brings judgement. It helps HR teams anticipate where the process is likely to go off course, recognise when a manager needs tighter scripting, understand when a consultation meeting needs to pause, and respond appropriately when emotions, complaints or industrial relations issues begin to escalate.

At Insight HR, we regularly work alongside internal HR teams in exactly this way. We do not see that as replacing internal capability. We see it as strengthening it. Collective redundancy is an area where learning under the guidance of experienced practitioners protects the organisation, supports the HR team and gives leaders greater confidence at every stage of the process.



# Consultation: A Core Requirement of the Redundancy Process

Consultation is a fundamental element of redundancy programmes in Ireland.

Where collective redundancies occur, employers must consult with employee representatives for **at least thirty days** before issuing notices of redundancy.

Consultation arrangements depend on the organisation's industrial relations environment.

In unionised organisations, consultation takes place with the recognised trade union.

In non-union environments, employees elect representatives to participate in consultation discussions.

Consultation meetings must address several key topics including:

- the reasons for the proposed redundancies
- the number and categories of employees affected
- the proposed selection criteria
- the timeframe for redundancies
- redundancy payment arrangements
- measures that may reduce or avoid redundancies

Consultation must take place **with a view to reaching agreement**, and organisations must genuinely consider proposals put forward by employee representatives.

## Individual Consultation with Employees

Alongside collective consultation, organisations should also meet individually with employees whose roles are at risk.

These meetings provide an opportunity to explain how roles have been identified and allow employees to raise questions or alternative proposals.

We recommend that organisations conduct at least **two consultation meetings** with each affected employee.

Where multiple employees are involved, this stage of the process can involve dozens of meetings and careful coordination between HR and line managers.

# Consultation Timelines and Notice Periods

Consultation and notice periods are two distinct stages of the redundancy process.

Consultation takes place first and must run for at least thirty days in collective redundancy situations.

Only once consultation has concluded can notices of redundancy be issued. Statutory notice periods under Irish legislation range from **a minimum of two weeks up to eight weeks**, depending on an employee's length of service.

Many organisations provide contractual notice periods that exceed the statutory minimum. Where a contract of employment provides a longer notice period, the contractual notice period applies.



# Managing Extended Notice Periods

In some restructuring programmes employees remain with the organisation for several months after consultation has concluded.

This often occurs where knowledge transfer or operational continuity is required.

For example, organisations relocating operations to another country may need employees to remain in place to support transition activities. While this approach can be commercially necessary, it can present leadership challenges. Employees may remain primarily to secure the redundancy package being offered, and motivation may gradually decline. Managers must therefore maintain operational stability while supporting employees through a difficult transition period.

## Pay in Lieu of Notice

In some cases organisations choose to provide **pay in lieu of notice**, allowing employment to end immediately after consultation concludes.

This approach can allow both the organisation and affected employees to move forward more quickly.

However, pay in lieu of notice is not always practicable where knowledge transfer or operational continuity is required.

Each organisation must carefully assess which approach best supports its restructuring objectives.

# Redundancy Packages and Negotiation Dynamics

One of the most sensitive moments in any redundancy programme arises when discussions turn to the redundancy package. While statutory redundancy payments are clearly defined under Irish legislation, many organisations offer enhanced packages above the statutory minimum. In practice, the level of enhancement often becomes one of the most heavily debated aspects of the consultation process.

Once consultation begins, tensions can quickly increase. Trade unions or employee representatives will often feel a strong responsibility to secure the best possible outcome for the employees they represent. Even in non-union environments, elected representatives frequently push hard for improvements to the proposed package.

For organisations, these discussions can become increasingly intense as consultation progresses. For this reason, careful preparation is essential long before the consultation process begins.

Finance teams and leadership groups responsible for budgeting the restructuring programme should model several potential financial scenarios before the redundancy announcement is made. This allows the organisation to understand the financial implications of different package outcomes and ensures that leadership teams are prepared if negotiations move beyond the initial proposal.

In our experience, it is rarely advisable for organisations to begin consultation with their absolute best offer.

Negotiation is a natural part of collective consultation processes, particularly where employee representatives or trade unions are involved. Allowing some room for discussion and potential improvements to the proposed package can help the process move forward constructively. Where representatives feel they have secured tangible improvements for employees, it can help ease tensions and allow the consultation process to conclude in a more collaborative manner.



# Supporting Managers Through the Process

Managers often find themselves carrying the greatest operational burden during redundancy programmes, despite rarely being involved in the early stages of planning. Once the announcement is made, they become the primary point of contact for employees seeking answers, reassurance and sometimes somewhere to direct their frustration.

Managers are one of an organisation's greatest assets during restructuring, but they can also represent a significant point of risk if they are not properly prepared. In difficult moments, managers may feel tempted to reassure employees that their roles are safe, share their personal views about the decisions being made, or engage in informal conversations that unintentionally undermine the consultation process.

At the same time, managers frequently experience the brunt of employee anger and distress. They are expected to continue running the operation while leading teams that may be demotivated, anxious or frustrated about the proposed changes.

For many managers, this can be an extremely stressful period. Some report losing sleep or feeling under intense pressure as they try to support their teams while managing their own concerns about the organisation's direction.

Preparing managers properly is therefore essential. They should be briefed thoroughly on the process, provided with clear scripts and messaging, and given space to raise their own concerns about the restructuring. Managers must understand the importance of staying on message and avoiding off-the-cuff reassurances that could create legal or procedural risks for the organisation.

Equally important is ensuring that managers feel supported throughout the process. With the right preparation, guidance and HR support, managers can play a critical role in helping organisations navigate redundancy programmes professionally while maintaining stability within their teams.



# Supporting Organisations Through Complex Workforce Change

At **Insight HR**, we support organisations through redundancy and restructuring programmes by working alongside CEOs, HR leaders and management teams.

Our experience spans major periods of economic disruption including the global financial crisis, Brexit, the pandemic and the economic transformation now affecting organisations worldwide.

We help organisations navigate the legal requirements of redundancy processes while also managing the human and organisational dynamics that arise during periods of change.

## When to Seek Specialist Support

Redundancy programmes are among the most sensitive organisational processes leaders will face.

Engaging experienced advisors early in the process can help organisations manage restructuring programmes in a structured, fair and professional way while avoiding unnecessary disputes or delays.

If your organisation is considering workforce restructuring or redundancy programmes in Ireland, the team at **Insight HR** can support your leadership team through the process.



# Can we help?

Insight HR offers a range of redundancy-related services – from developing your restructuring plan to preparing documentation, coaching managers, attending consultation meetings and delivering notifications, we ensure your organisation is protected, prepared and supported at every step.



**Strategic,  
Expert-Led  
Advice**



**Full  
Legal Compliance**



**Risk  
Mitigation**



**Stability Through  
Change**

## Your Trusted HR Partner

**For more than 25 years, Insight HR has provided HR services and solutions to some of Ireland's best companies.**

Our team of highly respected and experienced consultants have a diverse set of skills not often found in internal HR departments, including barrister qualifications, CIPD membership, mediation accreditation, and decades of HR experience across dozens of sectors and businesses, both national and international.

Whether it's ongoing HR support, one-off projects or emergency expertise and advice, Insight HR will provide you with a customised solution and a dedicated team of human experts you can trust, giving you peace of mind and security.



**Mary Cullen**  
Managing Director

“With Insight HR, your investment will never just be about fixing a problem or developing a strategy. Instead, our partnership approach **arms teams with the knowledge they need to make better decisions.** We leave HR teams **better informed** and **more confident** in their abilities to resolve future HR issues.”

# We look forward to working with you...

We're always ready to help...



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