



saying goodbye responsibly

the four E's of a socially responsible reduction-in-force

According to Wikipedia, social responsibility is “an entity, be it an organization or individual, [that] has an obligation to act for the benefit of society at large.” As individuals, we are becoming increasingly familiar with what it means to be socially responsible during the COVID-19 pandemic – working remotely, practicing social distancing, washing our hands all the time, etc.

However, the definition of a [socially responsible organization](#), especially in these uncertain times, is still evolving. Many organizations have done an outstanding job of not only supporting the consumers of their products and services in times of crisis but have also supported their employee base, by offering unique work mobility programs, alternative work arrangements, employee assistance programs, and other tools to support the health and well-being of their most valued asset.

But what if an organization must say goodbye to talent given economic pressures? Will they continue to demonstrate the same level of support and empathy? Will they provide transitioning employees with the tools and support required to find their next job? While some companies believe that providing transition support services in the form of coaching and tools is “the right thing to do,” others provide it because they know that how

they treat people will have lasting implications on their employer brand and goodwill. In fact, recent CareerArc research shows that almost 40% of laid-off and terminated employees gave their employers a negative review on company sites like Glassdoor — reviews that hurt corporate brand and reputation. Regardless of an organization’s rationale for providing services, how they do it and for whom matters more at this point in history than at any other time. To ensure your organization is taking a socially responsible approach, be sure your service addresses the [four qualities of a better employee experience](#) (i.e., empathetic, embracing, efficient, and enriching).

Lead With Empathy

In decades past, organizations have primarily focused their transition support dollars on senior-level resources, leaving more junior-level employees to fend for themselves. This was due to the belief that a) it would take senior folks a longer time to find a job, b) keeping execs happy protected the brand, and c) services were all in-person, lacked technology, and, in turn, were expensive to administer. Unfortunately, recent world events will disproportionately impact lower level workers without the appropriate resources to find their next job, including advice that may help them to reinvent themselves. Socially responsible and empathetic organizations will provide outplacement services to all employees for a length of time that is reasonable given the economic conditions. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018, it takes individuals an average of 27 weeks to find their next job. **Socially responsible employers should start with a service length for all near this amount of time to ensure that everyone is covered under current market conditions.** Fortunately, high quality services utilizing technology now exist at a price point that will allow for this type of coverage and duration.

Find Services That Embrace Employees

Losing a job is one of life's biggest stressors and often triggers financial and relationship related challenges. **Socially responsible companies will acknowledge that services provided must embrace the employee's stress via unlimited, one-on-one coaching and support when and where needed.** Especially during these challenging times, outplacement services will need a face. With shelter-in-place orders in many states right now, the importance of video conferencing and "screen-to-face" interaction has never been more important. Our world has quickly become accustomed to online conversations on everything from medical health to financial advice. Getting advice from an experienced professional on skills, interests and how that translates into a focus for your job search is no different.

Deliver a Consumer Grade, Efficient Solution

Socially responsible companies value a transitioning employee's time, much in the way they value the time of their customers and retained talent. This value is demonstrated through an efficient outplacement solution that gives employees everything they need to find their next job fast. In the job market of right now, job search engines and resume guides are table stakes. **Socially responsible organizations will seek outplacement providers who offer everything from 24/7 platform connectivity to social profile setup support, job matching integrated with social connections, and immediate push notifications on jobs of interest.** These features increase candidate visibility and connectivity and that translates directly into more interviews and offers leading to a job, which is the ultimate goal of every person that is laid off.

Find a Service That Enriches the Experience

So how do you enrich the job search experience during a time of economic unrest? The word "enrich" in an employee context connotes images of growth and development. For transitioning employees, it is more about providing the individual with expertise and skills to find a new position that is reflective of their unique situation. **Leading outplacement firms will provide experienced coaching services that are not only attune to the economic conditions of a given geography or industry, but can translate and match those conditions with an individual's unique expertise.** As we move in the direction of a skills-based workforce, advice paired with career assessments will deliver far more than a standalone technology. Many of the individuals impacted in 2020 will have never lost a job before. Socially responsible companies will give them something comprehensive so that they can create the best version of themselves in the marketplace.

At the end of the day, how you treat people matters. I'm glad that outplacement is no longer a confined service, offered to a select few for too short of time in an antiquated way. The new era of socially responsible service means that everyone affected has a chance to land a better job faster.

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