



For my readers!

I have such gratitude that you have found something worthwhile to read in my newsletter month after month. Thank you for travelling with me on this journey. You don't know how much I appreciate your friendship and encouragement.

I retired from project consulting last year but love coaching, mentoring, and writing. You think retiring to a beach with an umbrella drink sounds like more fun – what can I say. I do take seriously the concepts from my last newsletter “Create More Joy” about being intentional in life; so I have some beaches, and lots of travel, on my list but also some writing. I hope you seriously focus on living intentionally and experiencing what's important to you!

This will be my last email newsletter. Never fear, you can still get a regular dose of my writing (I know you were worried). I'll write blog posts about things you

have cared about most. Realizing your potential at work and in life, building your business acumen, thriving through change, and leading projects better. Now, it might be delayed if I'm on some remote island beach, but I hope you'll understand. Maybe I'll include a helpful travel tip or two to really be obnoxious. My friends in France, at least, have appreciated detailed travel suggestions (with pictures) of the most awesome sights of Utah.

Live intentionally, keep reading, and contact me anytime! I would love to stay connected and learn what you are doing to live your best life.

Leading through Layoffs

Perhaps you've had to tell someone that they no longer have a job and maybe you've been on the hearing side of the same conversation. You mentally prepare, maybe you ask others for advice, and you dread the day and the hour for "the meeting". It's a highly distressing responsibility for most managers and for those losing a job, it will be one of the saddest days of their career. Ideally, both parties feel taken care of through the process by their leadership. Unfortunately, that is not always the case.

My most stressful layoff experience was for a person that I had never met. This happened during a merger, where the go-forward positions were defined, eligible employees were interviewed, selections made, and the remaining employees were let go. Layoff discussions were conducted in-person which meant scheduling meetings and flying into each location. For those that weren't interviewed for any position, the meeting purpose was especially obvious. The meeting started, we went through pre-defined steps, we studied the paperwork together, and then the employee verbally acknowledged the job loss. I've never felt so cold in my life. There was no previous relationship between us to lean on and no other leadership connection to help soften that awful conversation. If you are a manager feeling unsupported through a layoff process, how can you make the situation better?

Be Safe and Sensible

Whether you are more comfortable speaking in-person or over the phone, you should communicate the message in a way that makes sense for this specific person. If your HR organization is pushing a process that you don't think is safe, sensible, and compassionate; ask questions and offer alternative methods for conveying the bad news to each employee in a way that respects their dignity and values the contributions they've made to the company. Reflecting on my experience, I wish that I had help from a local leader acquainted with this person

to introduce more kindness and warmth into that cold process.

“Always be a little kinder than necessary.” —James M. Barrie

Be a Reduction Hero

Good leaders help people who are leaving. Some organizations provide severance, outplacement services and career counseling, but on top of that, leaders should mentor prior employees to help them land a role that fits their talent and aspirations. Who better to help than someone who has worked with them? It’s awkward for an employee that has been laid off to ask for insight on their skills and strengths, get advice on potential positions or career changes, or just request a LinkedIn recommendation that highlights their past contribution and value. I encourage leaders to offer real help.

This [Gallup article](#) has a helpful recommendation. Ahead of a layoff, give each employee – impacted or not – a list of their accomplishments and some positive feedback on their skills and strengths. This gives additional confidence to those that are laid off and supplies ready information for their resume.

Finally, if someone you know asks for advice or for a recommendation when they have been laid off, be a friend and act on their request. Wouldn’t you appreciate the same consideration?

Professional courtesy and compassion will be remembered long after a layoff.

Communicate Better

No matter how much you explain why the organization is conducting a layoff, and the steps for selection and notification, employees will struggle to process the fact that they or their teammates are losing their jobs. Leaders should be composed and steady and offer employees some assurance where possible to keep up team spirit and productivity.

- Inform them about what you know and when new information will be available. Don’t speculate or make promises you can’t keep. Don’t act like everything is fine.
- Update them about changes in team priorities, roles, and responsibilities. Be realistic.
- Articulate any change in direction and where the organization is going. Sharing information about the path forward provides a sense of stability. However, avoid crafting a grand new vision right now.

Communicating better is about being balanced, honest and empathetic.

Put your Team Back Together

“Survivor” is great TV, but traumatic in real life.

When the layoff is complete and your team seems ready to focus on a new future, concentrate on rebuilding team cohesion. Work with them to create that new grand vision, talk about new initiatives, set new team goals, and chuckle as you watch your co-workers suspended upside down at a ropes course. What could be better to help memories of the layoff fade away.

For Christian Business Leaders:

“Katy is rude!”

Katy is brilliant, Katy gets a lot done, Katy does not tolerate stupidity or work delays, and Katy is rude. What should I do about Katy? Getting work

done is easy, having people get along while getting work done is hard. I feel like the goddess Justitia. You know the Roman statue of a blindfolded woman with a scale in one hand and a sword in the other? Katy’s contributions are always on one side of that scale and her personality is on the other. I’m just waiting to brandish that sword!



I never have because Katy and I have mutual respect. Katy does amazing work and has challenges at home that aren’t well known to others. I coach Katy about diplomacy, but mostly I coach others to do their work on time and with quality, like they should, but especially when they work with Katy.

But that’s not fair! Katy gets away with being rude. What is fair?

Christian leadership means balancing the virtues of Prudence, Justice, and Charity (both in generosity and mercy) whether you are hiring, firing, deciding salaries, or coping with team dynamics.

Read more in my [Employment is a Relationship](#) blog.

About Annette

Annette is a business transformation coach and mentor focused on aligning your business to your values, improving leadership and increasing operational effectiveness. Her Transformation Tips blog shares business advice, resources and best practices. She is passionate about building up the community of Christian leaders with her TIPS for Christian Leaders posts. If you are located in Northern Colorado, join Front Range Catholic Business Leaders on Linked In.



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