

# APPOINTMENT

## Finding one's place

Although outplacement is chiefly aimed at employees who find themselves in a redundancy situation, it can also help protect a company's brand when it is forced to take such action. **Linda Daly** reports

**W**HEN Cork-based multinational Tyco announced in September that it was to cut 320 jobs, it also stated it would offer outplacement services to redundant staff. Whether this was to soften the blow of the redundancy action or protect the company as a brand is unclear, but outplacement is increasingly being used as a tool by organisations to do one or both of these things.

Outplacement generally provides the redundant workers with a professional assessment or analysis of their situation. It offers them guidance on certain techniques to ensure they are successful in the future, provides them with information about the jobs market and gives them the tools to market themselves.

When completed, a good outplacement service will equip employees with the job-seeking skills necessary for today's shaky market; in some cases, consultants go as far as placing employees in new jobs.

For the employee, the benefits of outplacement are manifold. It offers valued support to staff members and helps them cope with the shock of being made redundant. In addition, it can help the redundant employee move into new employment as quickly as possible. For those suddenly out of work, an outplacement service can be that vital first step in rebuilding their career, especially if they've been in the same position for years.

While employers seeking to cut costs may scoff at the idea of spending more money



**PAUL MULLAN: human-resource service consultant and founder of Measurability**

on outplacement services, Paul Mullan, human-resource service consultant and founder of Measurability, says it is a worthwhile investment. Outplacement services can bring as many benefits to employers as they can to employees, he argues.

Outplacement services help to appease the anger, emotion and vulnerability felt by remaining staff members in the wake of redundancy action, and it also helps protect the company's brand, Mullan believes.

"If a company is staying in operation it needs to send out a positive message to the survivors of redundancy that the company does care about its staff," he says. "In a sense it also sends out a message to customers and

shareholders that management is doing the right thing by its employees."

Providing redundant staff with outsourcing services can, in turn, improve productivity

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as well as the morale of the remaining employees in the organisation. When redundancies are made within an organisation, this generally leads to a flow of resignations from the surviving employees due to fear. Outplacement can reduce attrition rates, according to Mullan.

With the focus now being shifted away from insolvency to creating a more competitive business, organisations may want to take the long-term view when it comes to redundancy packages. "From an organisational perspective, another benefit of outplacement is that it can act as a good recruitment tool for the future," says Mullan.

"I've known of companies that have let staff members go and a few years later were

back employing people. Initiatives such as outplacement send out a positive message to future employees."

Outplacement can take a number of permutations, but it predominantly comes in two forms. The first of these is one-to-one coaching which a personal coach, will work with an individual, covering everything from career direction to writing a CV and preparing for interview. The second comes in the form of group workshops where a number of similar-level people within the firm attend sessions.

Mullan says that while multinationals have long offered outplacement services to redundant staff, more recently, small to medium-sized enterprises are seeking the service.

The recent flurry of redundancies has led to extra work for those offering outplacement services, but a lack of regulation in the area means services vary from bad to good. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the employer to ensure the outplacement firm it is using is professional.

Generally, outplacement professionals should possess either chartered membership of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development or professional qualifications in psychology, vocational guidance, coaching or counselling.

Taking on an outplacement service is like taking on any other service, according to Mullan. He advises firms to shop around and talk with the service provider to ensure they are getting the best value for their money.