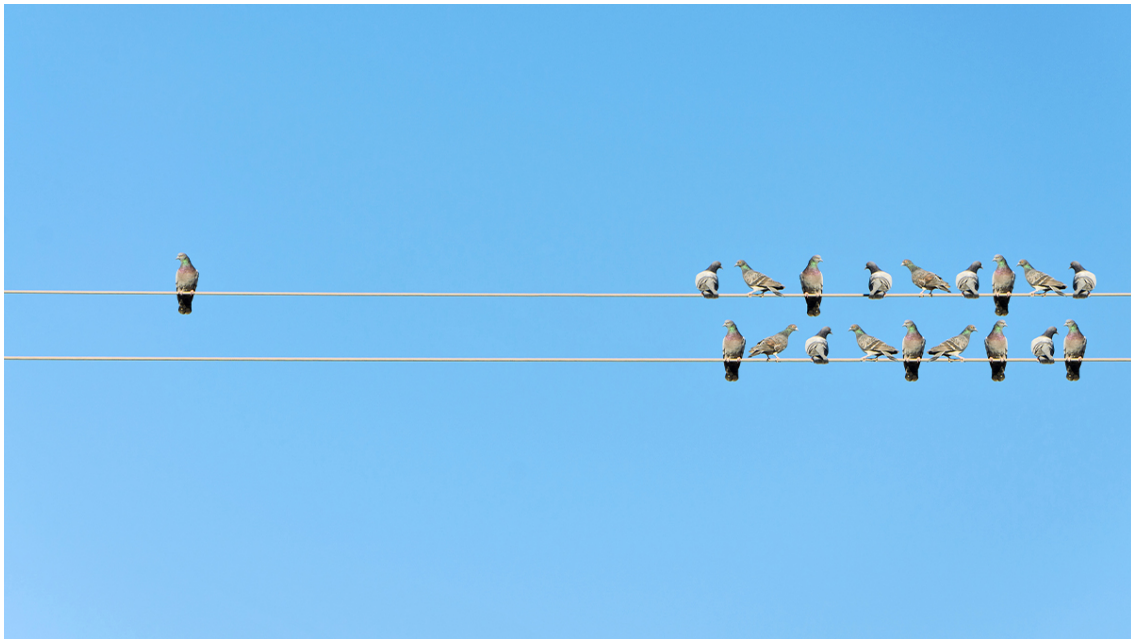


Navigating Uncertainty About Your Role During a Reorg

by Dina Denham Smith

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Summary. While you may have limited influence over your company's reorganization, you absolutely have control over your response in moving forward. In this piece, the author offers strategies to help you successfully navigate through a corporate state of flux: 1) First,... [more](#)

You've likely experienced at least one reorg in your career. And, like most executives and employees, you probably dread them.

While a successful redesign can help a company boost performance, they're often a miserable experience for everyone involved. Most reorganizations take 10 months from plan to implementation, and the extended uncertainty leads to significant stress and anxiety, regardless of whether job losses accompany the change. It's no wonder approximately 60% of organizations experience plummeting productivity during this limbo state.

Reorgs can be especially difficult when you're nervous about what might happen with your role. While it may feel like the situation is out of your hands, there is much you can do to steer toward a positive outcome. Here are a few steps to take if you're worried about a looming reorg:

First, talk to your manager and emphasize how you bring value.

When you learn of the reorg, some restructuring decisions may be final. But chances are, many pieces are still in play. Proactively talk to your manager about the impending changes and your career.

To prepare for the meeting, clarify how your value aligns with the company's needs. Take a broad view of the business, including its challenges, market opportunities, and strategic direction.

Next, identify a few scenarios that demonstrate how you could meaningfully contribute to the company's success. You might say, "Here's what I see for the business. I want to help us succeed, and here are areas where I have expertise or have led before." Your manager will appreciate your holistic perspective and company-first mentality. And by clarifying the different ways you can contribute, you make it easier for them to advocate on your behalf.

Finally, remember that you're not the only one approaching your manager in this way, and they're likely unable to make any guarantees. Acknowledge your understanding of these circumstances; your manager will appreciate your empathy.

Nurture your network.

A robust internal network is always beneficial for career success. It has even more value within the uncertainty of a reorg, when access to information and opportunities could be a game changer for you. The more supporters you have at your company, the safer you are.

Make a list of people to connect with, including allies, former managers, and mentors or sponsors. In addition to nurturing your close ties, consider colleagues with whom you've fallen out of touch, like former teammates, cross-functional partners, or coworkers you used to socialize with. Dormant ties offer more novel insights and advice and can be a valuable source of knowledge and social capital.

One client whose role was in jeopardy received two separate offers from other areas of his company by reinvigorating his network. Your internal networking efforts can also unlock external opportunities should the need or desire arise.

Do some scenario planning.

Contemplating how the reorg may unfold and how you might respond can help you react more dynamically to the unknown future.

What are plausible outcomes of the reorg for you? Scan the current reality of the business, considering influential internal and external factors. Think about the worst case, best case, and several outcomes between these poles, and determine how you would handle each one.

Document action steps and consider timing: Are there strategies and tactics you should pursue sooner rather than later? One of my clients, for example, identified a possible opportunity to shift into a new department. Energized by this scenario, he started contributing ideas to the group's manager and took on a problem they were facing. Getting creative and adding value can boost the chances of your preferred outcome.

Finally, look for indicators that a given scenario will occur. For example, if your manager asks you to detail your role and responsibilities, it's likely they're under pressure to restructure their team and consolidate roles. Staying alert to these signs can prompt you when to take more immediate action.

By proactively identifying a range of potential outcomes and determining how you will respond, you can ensure you don't get caught on your back foot.

Make time for career maintenance.

Regularly updating your resume and LinkedIn profile is good career hygiene, enabling you to capture your contributions and accomplishments while they're still fresh. Use every reorg as a prompt to undertake this career upkeep.

It's also an opportunity to reflect on your overall feelings about your current role. A reorg can offer a valuable inflection point, even if you didn't realize you were ready for one; perhaps you can let it be your impetus to explore more energizing possibilities, either internally or externally.

Manage your emotions, and be kind to yourself.

It's normal to feel stressed, angry, or fearful about your future during this period of limbo. To manage your emotions, notice and briefly name them; for example, "I feel stressed I might lose my job." Labeling your feelings can help you feel calmer and reduce the risk of being reactive.

And try not to personalize any reorg-related conversations and decisions. The reality is that companies undertake restructuring efforts purely for business reasons. Thinking otherwise only adds to your emotional load.

Take this example. One of my clients was required to transition her organization to another leader with her next role still undefined. She felt unvalued and upset, but knew she needed to be collaborative. In reappraising the situation, she realized this change would give her a chance to recharge and try something new. This helped her feel more positive about the transition and showed that she could thrive in uncertainty, resulting in accolades and a more senior role. Ask yourself: What could be some upsides of this reorg for me?

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While you may have limited influence over your company's reorganization, you absolutely have control over your response in moving forward. Using the strategies here can provide a measure of self-determination and opportunity, helping you successfully navigate through a corporate state of flux.

Dina Denham Smith is an executive coach to senior leaders at world-leading brands such as Adobe, Netflix, PwC, Dropbox, Stripe, and numerous high-growth companies. A former business executive herself, she is the founder and CEO of Cognitas, and helps leaders and their teams reach new heights of success. Connect with her on LinkedIn.

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