WHITEPAPER · OUTPLACEMENT & CAREER TRANSITION

# You cannot make a redundancy a good experience. You can make it a decent one.

Employer-funded career transition support that people actually use — why how staff leave is a business risk, what a real programme contains, how notification day decides everything, and the ten questions to ask any provider before you sign.

For CHROs, HR directors & founders | EU & UAE | 16 min read | Updated 2026

**4–12 wks**

programme length, by tier — starting the week notice is given

**1:1**

a named consultant, not a portal with a helpline behind it

**19,000+**

CVs personally reviewed by the people who coach your leavers

**100%**

confidential — the employer never sees what is discussed

01 · THE PROBLEM

## How people leave is a business risk, not an HR formality.

Every redundancy programme has a budget line for legal review and a budget line for severance. Very few have one for the twenty minutes after the conversation ends — which is the part everyone remembers.

A restructuring is not one event with one audience. It has three, and they are all watching at once.

### The people leaving

They are losing income, routine and professional identity in a single meeting. What they do in the following fortnight largely determines how long they are out of work.

### The people staying

Survivor syndrome is real and expensive: the remaining team judges the company's character by how it treated the ones who went. Productivity, trust and voluntary attrition all move.

### The market

Former employees write reviews, talk to recruiters, and are interviewed by your future candidates. A badly handled exit becomes a permanent line in your employer brand.

### And the regulator, sometimes

In several European jurisdictions collective redundancy triggers consultation duties, and social plans routinely include transition support as a negotiated element rather than a courtesy.

**You cannot make a redundancy a good experience. You can make it a decent one.**

The difference is not the size of the payment. It is whether the person walks out with a plan, and whether their manager was able to look them in the eye while explaining it.

02 · DEFINITION

## What outplacement is — and what it is not.

Outplacement is employer-funded career transition support for people leaving the organisation involuntarily. The employer buys it; the departing employee is the client in every way that matters.

### What it is

- A structured programme with a named consultant and a defined end point
- Practical: materials rebuilt, market mapped, interviews rehearsed, offers negotiated
- Confidential from the employer — content of sessions is never reported back
- Voluntary for the individual, and separable from the severance agreement
- Part of the package, disclosed in the notification meeting

### What it is not

- **Not a job guarantee.** Any provider promising placement is selling something they cannot deliver
- **Not a login.** A portal with CV templates and a webinar library is a subscription, not support
- **Not a legal instrument.** It does not replace consultation, notice or advice from counsel
- **Not surveillance.** The employer receives participation and satisfaction data, never content
- **Not a favour.** It is a commercial service with deliverables, bought like any other

The distinction that matters commercially is between **digital-only** and **consultant-led** provision. Digital-only is inexpensive and scales infinitely; it also has a well-known engagement problem, because a person in the first week of redundancy rarely logs into anything voluntarily. Consultant-led costs more and works, for the unglamorous reason that a scheduled appointment with a named human is harder to avoid than an email.

03 · BUSINESS CASE

## Why an employer pays for something it no longer benefits from.

The objection is reasonable: why fund support for someone who has already left the payroll? Four answers, in the order finance tends to accept them.

| Driver | What it actually protects |
|---|---|
| **The people who stay** | **The strongest predictor of post-restructuring engagement is how the remaining team judges the treatment of those who left. Transition support is the most visible signal available, and it is visible on day one.** |
| **Dispute risk** | People who feel abandoned escalate; people with a plan and a named contact rarely do. Support does not settle a claim, but it changes the emotional starting position of one. |
| **Employer brand** | Reviews written in the month after a layoff sit on your careers page for years. So does the sentence "at least they gave us real help" — and its opposite. |
| **Negotiation leverage** | Where works councils, unions or social plans are involved, transition support is a credible non-cash element that improves a package without inflating the settlement figure. |
| **Leadership integrity** | The line managers delivering the news are your own people. Giving them something concrete to offer is the difference between a conversation they can hold and one they will avoid. |

**A note on cost framing.** Transition support is usually a small fraction of the severance value it accompanies. The useful comparison for a CFO is not "cost per leaver" in isolation — it is the cost set against re-recruitment if regretted attrition rises among those who stay, and against the cost of a single escalated dispute.

04 · THE INDIVIDUAL

## What a departing employee actually needs.

Not encouragement. Four concrete things, in this order — and the order matters, because working on the CV before the narrative produces a document that lists duties instead of value.

FIRST

### A story they can say out loud

Why the role ended, in one honest sentence that closes the subject rather than opening it. Until that sentence exists, every application and every interview is conducted from a defensive crouch.

SECOND

### Evidence of what they were worth

Most people cannot articulate their own achievements. They describe responsibilities. Converting "managed the P2P team" into "cut invoice cycle time 40% across four entities" is the single highest-leverage hour of the programme.

THIRD

### A market they can actually reach

Not "apply to everything". A named list of target employers, the routes into each, and a realistic read on where their profile is strong and where it is a stretch.

And fourth: **practice**. Interviewing is a performance skill that decays. Someone who has been in the same company for eight years has not answered "tell me about yourself" to a stranger in eight years, and the first three attempts are always the worst ones. Doing those three in a rehearsal rather than in a real process is most of the value.

05 · THE PROGRAMME

## The programme, module by module.

| Module | What happens | What they leave with |
|---|---|---|
| **1 · Landing & reset** | First session inside five working days of notification. Practical triage — finances, timelines, notice mechanics — before any career work. Nobody plans a career move in week one; they stabilise. | A calm 30-day plan and a named consultant |
| **2 · Achievement mapping** | **Structured interview to extract evidence: scope owned, numbers moved, systems used, decisions made. This is where most of the recoverable value sits, and it is done in conversation because people cannot write it about themselves.** | **An evidence bank of 8–12 quantified achievements** |
| **3 · Positioning & narrative** | The exit sentence, the professional value proposition, and the two or three role types worth targeting — chosen on evidence rather than optimism. | A one-page positioning statement and a departure narrative |
| **4 · Materials** | CV rebuilt against how shortlists are actually screened, LinkedIn profile aligned, and a cover-note structure that survives being skimmed in nine seconds. | A screen-ready CV, LinkedIn profile and note templates |
| **5 · Market approach** | Target-employer list, the route into each, recruiter strategy, and how to approach a hiring manager directly without sounding like a mass mailing. | A named target list and a weekly outreach routine |
| **6 · Interview practice** | **Mock interviews with real feedback from someone who runs them professionally — structure, evidence, the redundancy question, and the answers that quietly lose offers.** | **Two recorded rehearsals and written feedback** |
| **7 · Offer & negotiation** | Reading an offer, benchmarking it, negotiating without damaging the relationship, and handling the counter-offer from a current employer if one appears. | A benchmarked view and a negotiation script |
| **8 · First 90 days** | Available after landing: onboarding into a new culture, early-win planning, and what to do if the new role turns out to be misrepresented. | A 90-day plan and an open line back |

Modules 2 and 6 are the ones people remember, and they are the two that digital-only provision cannot replicate: both require someone on the other side of the table who knows what a shortlist decision actually turns on.

## Three tiers, one standard of delivery.

| Tier | For | Shape |
|---|---|---|
| **Executive** | **Directors, C-suite and specialists in thin markets** | **12 weeks, individual throughout. Adds confidential market mapping, board and NED positioning, and discreet introductions where a genuine fit exists.** |
| **Professional** | Managers, senior specialists, team leads | 8 weeks, individual sessions with group workshops for interview practice and market strategy. |
| **Cohort** | Site closures and volume reductions | 4 weeks: group workshops for the common material, plus guaranteed individual time for achievement mapping and one interview rehearsal each — the two things that do not work in a group. |

The cohort tier exists because the alternative — a login and a PDF — is what most people are given at volume, and it is why outplacement has the reputation it has in some organisations. Group delivery is a legitimate way to control cost. Removing the human entirely is not; it simply moves the cost onto the person who has just lost their job.

07 · TIMING

## The notification day decides the engagement rate.

Whether people use the support you paid for is determined almost entirely by how it is introduced, in a meeting lasting fifteen minutes.

### What works

- The support is named in the meeting itself, with the consultant's name and a first session already provisionally booked
- A one-page leave-behind — nobody retains spoken information in that conversation
- Contact within 48 hours, made by us rather than waiting for the person to initiate
- Participation explicitly voluntary, and explicitly not conditional on signing anything

### What kills it

- An email sent a week later, when the person has already gone quiet
- A voucher code and a URL, with no human attached
- Support presented as compensation for the decision, which reads as an attempt to buy acceptance
- Managers who were not briefed and cannot answer "what is this, actually?"

We brief the managers delivering the news before the day, in a session lasting under an hour. Not on how to break it — that is theirs to own — but on what the support is, what it is not, and the two or three questions they will be asked and should not improvise answers to.

08 · THE EMPLOYER

## What the employer has to get right.

Outplacement cannot repair a badly run process. It can only complete a decently run one. Five things sit with the employer, and no provider can substitute for them.

**01** **Consultation done properly, and early**

Where collective redundancy rules apply, the legal process has its own timetable and its own advisers. Transition support sits alongside it, never in place of it.

**02** **Managers briefed and rehearsed**

The person delivering the news sets the tone for everything after. They need the words, the boundaries, and permission not to know every answer.

**03** **One message, everywhere**

What is said internally, what is said to those leaving, and what is said publicly must match. Divergence between the three is what generates the reviews you will still be reading in two years.

**04** **The support offered to everyone in scope**

Tiering by seniority is normal. Offering it only to those considered a legal risk is visible, and it is read exactly as it is meant.

**05** **Attention to the people who stay**

The team that remains has just watched. Their questions are legitimate and they will not ask them in a town hall. Plan for that conversation separately.

## What good looks like, and what it is honest to promise.

| Measure | Why it matters | Reported to the employer? |
|---|---|---|
| **Take-up rate** | **The first honest test of whether the day was handled well. A low rate is a notification problem, not a participant problem.** | **Yes — aggregate** |
| **Engagement depth** | Sessions attended against sessions offered. Distinguishes a real programme from a redeemed voucher. | Yes — aggregate |
| **Time to landing** | Notification to accepted offer. The number people care about most, and the one most affected by market conditions outside anyone's control. | Yes — aggregate, with context |
| **Landing quality** | Whether the new role is at comparable level and package, or a step back taken under pressure. | Yes — aggregate |
| **Participant satisfaction** | Collected independently, including from those who did not land. The uncomfortable responses are the useful ones. | Yes — aggregate |
| **Session content** | What was discussed, what was disclosed, how someone feels about their former employer. | **Never.** Not in aggregate, not informally, not on request |

On outcomes we are deliberately careful. Landing times depend on market, discipline, location, seniority and personal circumstance, and any provider quoting a single reassuring average across all of those is quoting a marketing number. We report what happened in your programme, with the context that explains it, and we will tell you before you buy if we think a particular population will be hard to place.

10 · ETHICS

## Consent, confidentiality and the conflicts to name out loud.

### How we run it

- Participation is voluntary and never a condition of any settlement
- Session content is confidential from the employer without exception
- Personal data is processed on a documented basis, minimised, and deleted at programme end on request
- Participants are told at the outset exactly what is reported and what is not
- No participant is required to use us as a recruiter, or to disclose where they are interviewing

### The conflict we name first

Dreamwork is a search firm. A participant may be a strong fit for a live mandate we are running, and that can be genuinely good for them. So the rule is stated on day one: **we only introduce a participant to one of our own mandates with their explicit consent, we never present coaching as a route into our roles, and their programme is identical either way.** A provider that does not raise this conflict before you ask has not thought about it.

General guidance on transition support, not legal advice. Redundancy consultation, notice and settlement obligations vary by jurisdiction and by collective agreement — take those from counsel, and treat transition support as a separate commercial decision alongside them.

11 · BUYER'S CHECKLIST

## Ten questions to ask any outplacement provider.

01 **Who actually delivers the sessions, and what have they done?**

Ask for the consultant, not the brand. A career coach who has never screened a shortlist is guessing about what gets someone interviewed.

02 **How many hours of one-to-one time, guaranteed in writing?**

"Unlimited access" usually means unlimited access to a platform. Ask for the number of scheduled human hours.

03 **What is your take-up rate, and how is it measured?**

Providers rarely volunteer this. It is the number that separates a programme from a voucher.

04 **What exactly is reported back to us, and what never is?**

If they cannot answer this crisply, they have not drawn the line — and your leavers will sense that.

05 **How fast is first contact after notification, and who initiates it?**

Anything slower than 48 hours, or dependent on the participant reaching out, will lose the people who most need it.

06 **Show me the materials a participant leaves with.**

Ask to see an anonymised CV before and after. It is the fastest quality test available.

07 **What happens if someone hasn't landed when the programme ends?**

A hard stop is legitimate if it is stated. Discovering it at week eight is not.

08 **Do you brief our managers before notification day?**

Providers that skip this are optimising their delivery cost at the expense of your take-up rate.

09 **How do you handle it when a participant is a fit for one of your own mandates?**

Every provider that also recruits has this conflict. The good ones raise it before you do.

10 **What would make you tell us this is the wrong programme?**

A provider who cannot describe their own poor-fit case is selling, not advising.

12 · HOW WE WORK

## Outplacement at Dreamwork.

Dreamwork is a founder-led executive search and talent advisory practice across the EU and UAE. Our transition practice exists because of an asymmetry we see constantly: the people best placed to tell someone how to get hired are the people who decide who gets shortlisted — and they are almost never the people delivering outplacement.

The background is operational rather than coaching-only: talent acquisition led for a 10,000-employee multinational across four markets, a €30M staffing P&L, 188+ executive and senior placements, and over 19,000 CVs personally reviewed. When we tell a participant that the top third of their CV is costing them interviews, that is not a stylistic opinion.

| | Executive | Professional | Cohort |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Programme length** | 12 weeks | 8 weeks | 4 weeks |
| **Individual sessions** | Throughout | Core modules | Achievement mapping + one rehearsal |
| **Group workshops** | Optional | Included | Primary format |
| **First contact** | **Within 48 hours of notification, initiated by us** | | |
| **Manager briefing** | Included in every tier, before notification day | | |
| **Confidentiality** | Absolute — aggregate reporting only, content never shared | | |
| **Languages** | English, Bulgarian, Greek — EU & UAE delivery | | |

We scope every programme against the population rather than the headcount, and we will say so on the first call if we think a different provider — or a different tier — serves your people better. The section on what outplacement cannot do is not there for balance; it is there because a programme sold into the wrong situation fails visibly, in front of the audience you were trying to reassure.

**Nobody thanks you for a redundancy. They do remember whether you left them with a plan.**

That is the entire product — and it is bought by the employer precisely because the person who needs it is in no position to buy it themselves.

BEGIN THE ASCENT

## Plan the exit before you announce it.

Forty-five confidential minutes on the population, the timetable and what your managers will actually be asked on the day. If a different provider or a different tier serves your people better, we will say so on that call.

✓Confidential from the employer ✓Voluntary for the individual ✓First contact within 48 hours

✓Manager briefing included

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General guidance on transition support — not legal advice.