



Cadmus Compass Series: Leading your organization in times of change

Shift happens: engaging your new (smaller) team to achieve your updated mission

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The dust has mostly settled, and you've got a sense of what your mission is—and who you've got on the team to accomplish it. Following a restructure or reduction in force the re-alignment of remaining employees with new goals isn't just about strategy; it's about rebuilding trust, reenergizing the team, and giving people clarity and purpose.

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Key principles to keep in mind



Clarity beats
complexity



Transparency
builds trust



Purpose fuels
performance



People need
to feel valued
and secure

Here's a step-by-step approach to help you lead through this moment effectively:

1 Acknowledge the reality

Don't pretend like nothing happened. People are likely feeling:

- Uncertainty
- Survivors' guilt
- Anxiety about the future

Be transparent and empathetic. A message like:

"This process has been challenging and hard, and we're grateful for those who remain. Now we need to focus together on what's next — and how each of you is essential to where we're going."

can go a long way in restoring morale and focus.

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"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new." - Socrates

2 Refocus roles and responsibilities

With fewer people, clarity is everything.

- Revisit job scopes: Who's doing what now?
- Prioritize: What work do we **stop**, **start**, or **double down on**?
- Align: Map everyone's work to the new strategy

Tools like a **revised org chart** or a simple **"who owns what"** doc can create structure in the chaos. [Check out the Cadmus Compass article by Beth McDonald on best practices for Organizational Design.](#)

3 Communicate, communicate, communicate

Create safe spaces for people to:

- Ask questions
- Voice concerns
- Share ideas

Hold listening sessions or 1:1s with key team members. When people feel heard, they're more willing to re-engage. [Cadmus expert Sonia Checchia provides practical tips on how to keep your people at the center of your communications.](#)

4 Reset goals—together

As a result of the change, you may need to substantially revise your organization's objectives and key results (OKRs), rebuild your dashboards and quad charts, and revise the timelines and deliverables for in-flight project plans.

Encourage your people to create personal goals for their roles that map to the organization's new goals and mission. Consider holding working sessions with a neutral facilitator to co-create these revised work products with your team. This builds ownership and buy-in.

Ask:

- What are the most critical things we must deliver in the next 3–6 months?
- What obstacles might we face—and how can we work through them together?

5 Rebuild trust through action

Walk the walk AND talk the talk.

- Set clear expectations
- Recognize quick wins
- Be honest when things don't go as planned

Consistency, not perfection, builds trust post-layoff.

6 Track and communicate progress

Use regular standups, dashboards, or internal updates to show progress toward new goals. Visibility = motivation. You might create a simple one-page roadmap of the journey with a “you are here” marker that visually encourages the team on the progress being made.

Maripat Hinders is a senior specialist at Cadmus and has experienced the disorienting effects of “re-sizing” in both the commercial and government contracting world, where she delivers marketing and communications programs that exceed expectations.

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