

# Media Coverage

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## The heart and head rule redundancies

Ashley Midalia's "Sorry, you've been rightsized" (November 21) raises the difficulties that business leaders face in communicating with employees during tough economic times. The article made an excellent point that new euphemisms for the term "redundancies" should not be created to avoid having candid discussions with employees about job cuts.

However, the process of making job positions redundant and asking people to leave the organisation is never easy.

We always make the point to business leaders that when making job cuts they need to work from both the heart as well as the head.

Business leaders must always make the distinction that it is the job, not the person, that is being made redundant. Running the risk of

being pedantic I'd also suggest that euphemisms when used wisely are simply the substitution of a mild expression for one thought to be offensive or harsh. Who would argue that the expression "to pass away" as a euphemism for "to die" obscures the message.

Philosopher and author Alain De Botton highlighted in his book *Status Anxiety* that there is one essential difference between "labour" and other inputs: the fact that labour feels pain.

"A business can move from using coal to natural gas without the neglected energy source walking off a cliff. But labour has a habit of meeting attempts to reduce its price or presence with emotion. It sobs in the toilet cubicles, it drinks to ease its fears of underachievement and it may choose death over redundancy."

These are difficult times for all of us, but the individuals who lose their jobs in the economic downturn are the ones who are really suffering.

As a career transition and outplacement specialist I am acutely aware of the clash between the commercial and human imperatives. My years of experience and my own transition experience have shown that asking employers to "just lay all the cards on the table" won't make the pain go away.

However, it is a good start to help employees who are leaving the organisation (involuntarily) make a successful transition to a new workplace.

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