Supporting technicians in redundancy and restructuring

When a business faces a downturn and all the options of redeployment and other measures have been thoroughly consulted with unions the staff may still face a risk of redundancy.

If redundancies are likely union reps should consider the support needs of the staff at risk. The employer might have ideas or plans which should be consulted with unions too.

Employers often use outplacement companies which presents a question for unions on whether they are appropriate for staff's needs and good quality.

Where **technician workforce** is at risk a consideration should be placed on employer's financial contribution towards professional registration and professional institution membership.

Financing registration is a tangible way to help staff demonstrate their competencies and skills and helps them in looking for employment elsewhere.

Professional registration provides an international recognised status (EngTech, RSciTech or RITTech) which tells that the individual's skills, knowledge and competence fulfil the standards of the profession.

In other words, with registration technicians can demonstrate their professional achievement.

Engineering UK 2016 The State of Engineering report suggests that employers are facing big skills shortages at technician level such as a projected annual shortfall of over 29,000 level 3 engineering technicians. The report highlights that practicing technicians are very employable.

A shortfall of technicians seems also to be hitting other areas of technician workforce, such as higher education where people are leaving the technician profession mostly due to retirement.

This means that there are opportunities for employment but the technicians may need to demonstrate their current skills and competencies on top of all the experience they have gained. Professional registration can help with this especially if the employee is not a recent apprentice or graduate.

Steps to take:

- When the negotiations are established on restructuring and/or redundancy with the union/s check that learning, development and skills are addressed and especially the question of how the employer is going to support staff at risk.

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PATHWAYS

- If members are at risk of redundancy or will be taking up a different role elsewhere in the organisation, learning and skills are going to play an essential part in ensuring that the transition is fully supported.

- Start mapping the workforce to establish who technicians are and which job roles they carry. Organise a survey to scope general awareness of professional registration and interest to apply. A survey template can be found on unionlearn website.

- Find out from the Engineering Council (EngTech), the Science Council (RSciTech) or the BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT (RITTech) what the cost of professional registration and institution membership is and develop a proposal for the employer.

- Discuss registration with the employer and propose that as part of redundancy support they fund the registration and membership fees and give paid time off for the application process. Do not forget that union learning reps (ULRs) and other workplace reps also need time off to advice members.

- The other training needs to enhance members' access to job opportunities can be around interview, job seeking, CV writing and job application skills. If the employer appoints a training consultancy/outplacement agency make sure union is consulted on good quality provision that is useful to staff.

More information

Unionlearn Technician Pathways project www.unionlearn.org.uk/technician-pathways

TUC workSMART https://worksmart.org.uk/work-rights/losing-your-job/redundancy

The Science Council https://sciencecouncil.org/scientists-science-technicians/

The Engineering Council www.engc.org.uk/professional-registration/the-professional-titles/engineering-technician/

EngTechNow www.engtechnow.com/