



Understanding your Employment Status

Since your employment status does have a direct and immediate result on your personal life (including your family) we need to understand what is happening to our employment status. IBM and/or the “high tech industry” elects to use the term “layoff” to describe what happens when cost cutting actions result in people *permanently losing their jobs*. The first step in understanding our employment status is to accurately describe what is really happening to us, so that we can understand our employment status as individuals and then we can educate the people around us so that we can gain their support to improve our fate. The table below is intended to contain “terms” that can be used to describe an individual’s employment status that can be generically applied to anyone working in any industry.

Employment Status	Description
Full Time Employment	You have a full time job, at least 40 hours per week, hopefully with benefits.
Layoff	You have TEMPORARILY lost your job, but you will get it back when the workload increases, (your employer has promised this to you!) and full or partial benefits while you are out of work. When you get your job back, you go back to work with full pay, full benefits.
Fired	You do not have a job, you have no source of income and benefits. This is a term that is reserved for people who have lost their job as a direct result of some wrong doing on their part
Job Cut/Downsizing	You have lost your job PERMANENTLY, as a result of cost cutting actions by your employer, you have no income, no benefits. The company you did work for may have a severance package. This may consist of a temporary extension of your salary/paycheck, benefits and retraining funding, but when that stops, you have no income and no benefits, you no longer have a job!

IBM employees do not go thru a “LAYOFF”, our jobs are being cut, there is a BIG DIFFERENCE between the two terms. Hopefully you are now educated on what is really happening to us, we are having our jobs cut/eliminated/downsized.

The next step in the education process is that we have to start using the term that most accurately describes what is happening to us. We need to say it to ourselves, and every person that we come into contact with when we discuss our employment status. If we are ever going to improve our work environment, which has a direct impact on our personal lives we need to get the help of a lot of people to improve our fate. We need to start at home, at work, the IBM Alliance, your community and the local and regional media.



Here are several examples of why it makes a difference on the term that is used to describe your employment status.

Example #1

As a result of the events this part year at IBM Burlington, I contacted a reporter for a local newspaper and informed the reporter that IBM was "FIRING" people, the term "LAYOFF" was inaccurate and therefore did not apply. The reporter's response was that IBM hires people back in the spring. I informed that reporter that the people that IBM hires in the spring are not the same people that they "FIRED" during the prior holiday season. The reporter then said that the term "LAYOFF" was used "by the industry" and it is ok.

Example #2

I was on vacation out of state, and just for curiosity I asked the person next to me at the swimming pool what the local economic environment was like. The woman I spoke to was aware of the "LAYOFFS" at IBM and wondered when we were going to get our jobs back. I looked at her and told her that IBM had "JOB CUTS", there are no plans to give these people their jobs back. She was surprised by what I said, and I was surprised by what she thought was happening to IBM employees. She used the terms "JOB CUTS" and "DOWNSIZING" to describe what is happening to people where she lives when they PERMANENTLY lost their jobs.

Example #3

I contacted a reporter from another local newspaper and asked the reporter not to use the term "LAYOFF" because IBM was really firing people, they lost their jobs permanently. The reporter replied that he did not like to use the term "fired" because it implied a negative and/or wrong action by the people affected, therefore he did not feel that the term "fired" was correct. I tend to agree with this reporter, not one of the affected IBM'ers did anything wrong to deserve the fate that IBM assigned to them. The reporter is willing to realize that the job loss is permanent and the affected people are going to have to find work elsewhere.

So based upon the examples above I think that we need to use the correct term for the IBM employment status for at least the sake of accuracy. This will also make it easier to gain the support of the people around us, we are not going to correct the problems all by ourselves, we need the help of the people around us. If you had a limited amount of resources to help out people in need, whom would you help first? , a person who went thru a "LAYOFF" or who suffered a permanent job loss. I would personally give aid to the person who needs it the most, which is a person who does not have a job.

As I said earlier, we need to start at home with the correct description of our employment status, and include all discussions with everyone else. We also need to have the Alliance organization use the correct term where it applies and the term "LAYOFF" has never applied to any job cuts taken by IBM, especially during November 2001 and June 2002. If we are going to place our fate in a union effort to improve our employment status, then we (the union) must use the correct term so that we can convince ourselves that we really know what is happening to us. Once we have convinced ourselves what is really going on we can convince others (local politicians, Senators, Congressmen and the media) what is really going on so that they can help us also.

So please contact your local media, Congressmen, Senators and local media via E-mail, snail mail or the phone and give them an accurate description of what is going on.

Signed by,

Anonymous Alliance Supporter