

THE ETIQUETTE OF DOWNSIZING

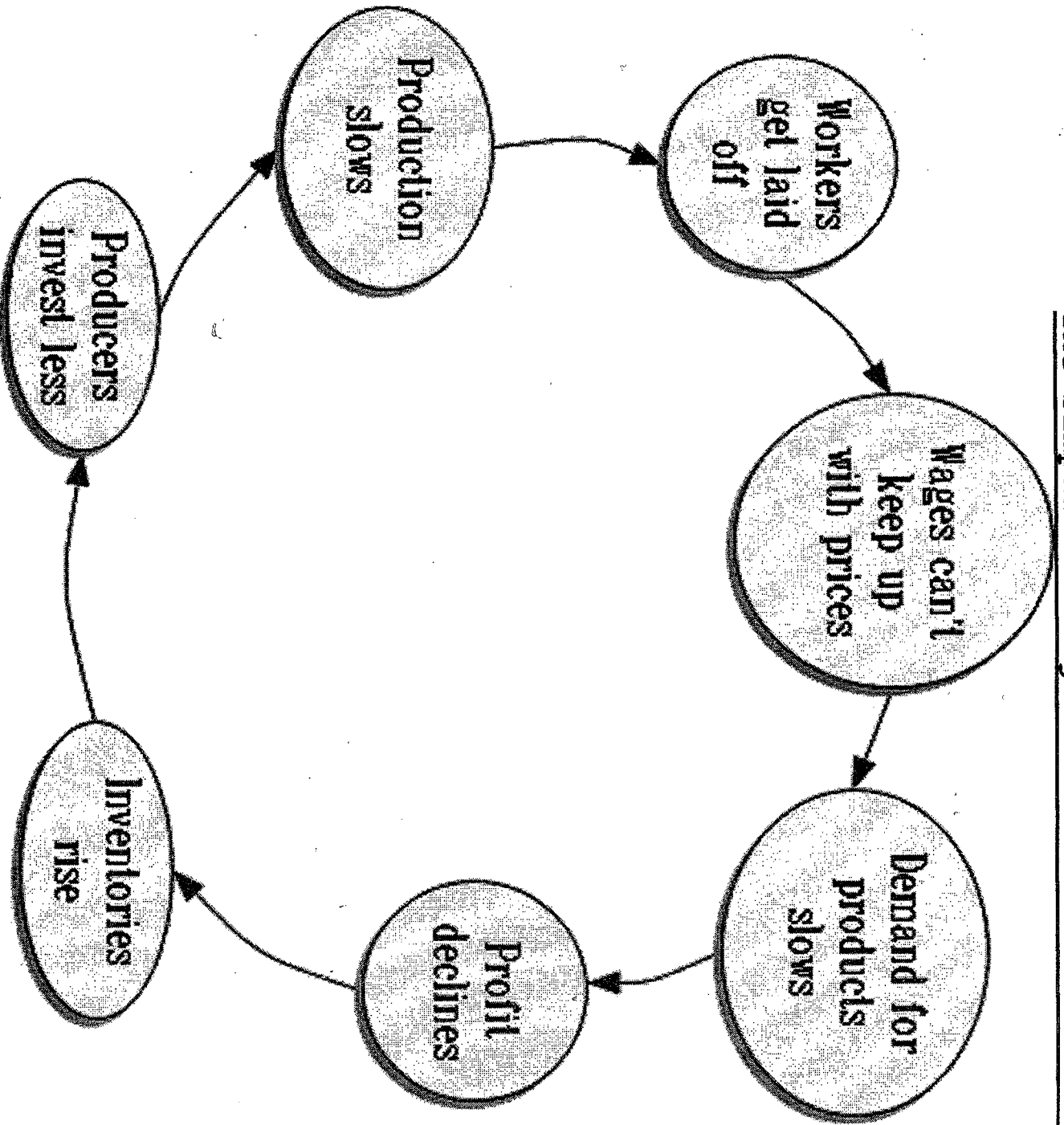
Compiled from various internal memos of companies that are currently downsizing, including Chemical Bank and the Times-Mirror Company, among others.

TERMINATION GUIDELINES

1. The termination meeting should last no more than 5 to 10 minutes.
2. The termination meeting should be held in a neutral location, with easy access for security.
3. Avoid any small talk. Get to the point. Don't debate. Don't discuss any issues of "fairness."
4. The downsized employee should clearly understand that he or she is being *fired* and this will be his or her *last* day of work.
5. Have Kleenex available.
6. Be supportive and empathetic, but not compromising. Use silence to give the employee an opportunity to react to the news.
7. Don't be defensive or argumentative. Don't be apologetic.
8. Don't provide extensive justification for the downsizing decision.
9. Do not try to make light of the situation by making jokes or trying to be funny.
10. Remain calm and try not to display any emotion.
11. If the employee becomes too emotional, suggest that he or she see a counselor. You may need to restate the message that he or she has been fired to ensure that the employee knows that the decision is final and has been made at the highest level for the good of the company.
12. The following are the four most common emotional responses employees have upon learning of their termination and the best way for the manager to handle them.

- **ANGER.** The louder the downsized employee talks, the softer the manager should talk. The idea is to diffuse confrontation, since the employee cannot have a one-sided argument.
 - **DENIAL.** Just because a person has been told, "You're fired," does not mean that he or she really hears it or believes it. The manager's role is to let individuals know the importance of getting their lives back together as soon as possible.
 - **DEPRESSION.** This type of emotion should send an immediate warning signal. The person should be referred to a human resources counselor.
 - **HYSTERIA.** Both men and women are capable of overreacting to news of their termination. For terminated people who begin to cry after hearing the news, have a glass of water handy.
13. The manager who conducts the termination wants to hear a fired employee say, "Can I see you again?" or "How much am I getting in severance?" Such comments show that the downsized individual is getting over the news and thinking about the future.
 14. Managers need to recognize the following symptoms during the meeting that may indicate the terminated worker could turn violent: expression of unusual or bizarre thoughts; a fixation on weapons; romantic obsession; depression; and chemical dependence.
 15. Request that the employee turn over his or her keys and other property of the company. Secure all access to the computers.
 16. Contact security immediately if any assistance is required to escort the terminated employee from the property.
 17. Offer the number of any services that may be of help to the terminated individual, such as temporary employment agencies, government assistance programs, out-of-state job banks, and a list of phone numbers for nearby moving services such as U-Haul and Ryder Truck.

The Simplified Negative Circular Flow Diagram



Barry Bluestone & Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America* (Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry), p. 65 to 75