

Press release
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Half of Hong Kong bosses have demoted employees What to do when demoted

- 52% of Hong Kong bosses have demoted an employee at their company.
- The employee being recently promoted but not succeeding in the new role is the main reason for demoting the employee (34%), followed by organisational restructuring (31%) and poor performance (28%).

Hong Kong, 6 May 2019 – While many employees hope it never happens to them, demotions in the workplace are apparently more common than some may think. A new survey of Hong Kong bosses, independently commissioned by specialist recruiter [Robert Half](#), has found more than half (52%) have demoted an employee at their company.

Reasons for demotion

Hong Kong business leaders cite several reasons for demotion. More than one third (34%) have demoted an employee who got promoted but was not succeeding in the new role. The second reason for demotion - as cited by 31% of Hong Kong bosses - was an organisational restructuring or the position having been eliminated. More than one in four (28%) state the employee was performing poorly and 8% say the demotion was voluntary on behalf of the employee.

The employee's reaction to being demoted

Employees react differently when being demoted. More than one in three (38%) Hong Kong bosses say the employee handled the news as gracefully as possible. A strong reaction to being demoted was cited by 27% who say the employee quit in response, followed by 25% who got upset and lost interest in their work. Only 10% took a proactive approach and focused on excelling in their new position.

Adam Johnston, Managing Director of Robert Half Hong Kong says: *"A demotion may happen for a variety of reasons, including performance issues, organisational restructuring or an employee requesting fewer responsibilities due to personal or career priorities."*

"While it's never easy to accept reduction in rank, workers can demonstrate their professionalism and bounce back by keeping their emotions in check, understanding the root cause and performing at a high level to position themselves for future advancement. Career-savvy professionals should always be open to receiving constructive feedback on how to improve in their role, so a demotion can also be seen as an opportunity to reflect on performance and identify areas for improvement – which can help to accelerate careers in the long-term."

Here are some tips for workers when dealing with an involuntary demotion:

1. Assess what happened

The first thing to do is to find out why your company is taking this action and to calmly reflect on it. Was it a disciplinary action? A performance-related issue? The elimination of your position? You might ask questions such as these:

- "Can I have a little more time in the position to improve?"
- "Can you describe my new role?"
- "Can you outline the transition plan?"
- "What if I don't want to take the position you're offering?"
- "How will the demotion be communicated?"

2. Be open to feedback

Consider the possibility that your manager considers you a valuable employee and wants you to be successful in a role that better suits your current skills. Ask if there are concerns about your performance or attitude or if there are ways you can improve your job skills. Listen for helpful suggestions, and don't discount the possibility of a better offer opening up later at your company.

3. Reach out to your support system

Don't underestimate the toll a demotion can take on your emotions. You might feel rejected or unappreciated, and you may need to seek support from friends, family, or even mentors outside the workplace.

4. Create an action plan

Find a way to frame the demotion as an opportunity to strengthen your skills or performance and strategise where you want to go with your career. Focus on identifying specific steps you can take to regain your confidence and seek opportunities to invest in yourself with professional development training. This will help you perform at your best if you do decide to stay in the lower-level job.

5. Figure out whether to stay or leave

If you decide to explore the employment waters and plan for your departure, you'll need to update your resume, initiate networking activities, ask for referrals, research companies and start your job search. This may be an ideal time to work with a recruitment agency to make connections with employers.

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Notes to editors

About the research

The annual study is developed by Robert Half and was conducted in January 2019 by an independent research firm, surveying 225 business leaders in Hong Kong. This survey is part of the international workplace survey, a questionnaire about job trends, talent management and trends in the workplace.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the world's first and largest specialised recruitment consultancy. Founded in 1948, the company has more than 300 offices worldwide providing recruitment solutions for accounting and finance, financial services and technology professionals in Hong Kong. More information on roberthalf.com.hk.

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