

THE GUILD LEADER

Monday, Oct. 15, 2012

What's Next?

So what happens next?

We've had a couple of meetings with the company about the layoff situation. Both sides used the sessions to outline their respective concerns and ideas for dealing with it.

Without getting into details, the member survey showed strong support for five unpaid furlough days as a way of avoiding layoffs. Our position is that furloughs save the most jobs, around four, and make any other effort even more effective.

We also reiterated the clear sentiment of the membership that any pay cuts have to have an expiration date.

The company is resisting furloughs. And they want any cuts to be permanent. This is the gulf that the bargaining will try to bridge.

If proposed, the amount of any pay cut won't be an issue. The company said they will accept any offer. If we say three percent, they won't demand four. Their worry is that the economy is still uncertain and if revenues go down further, they want to be able to react, meaning more layoffs.

From what our members in advertising are hearing, the big thing on their minds is something that was passed by the legislature that reduced the requirements for who has to place legal ads in papers. Some estimate it could cost the Journal hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost revenue.

Both sides have agreed to take a few days to come up with proposals that cover our needs while addressing the other side's as well.

One possibility is a re-opener for any agreement. Instead of the concessions lasting a year, they might last, say, six months, and then the situation could be reviewed and possibly renewed. If the legal ad loss is not as bad as feared, or if a national economic upturn brings in more revenue, there may be no need for further reductions.

But if things get worse, then any pay cuts would be restored. Salaries would bounce back to the October, 2012 pay level and any layoffs would be calculated from that starting point.

In effect, we want to buy some time, see if the economy gets better and if that improvement will be enough to solve our current budget problem.

The company said it's open to renewing the buyout offer it made before (same terms, unfortunately). If you're planning to retire in 2013, please consider this, it will literally save a co-worker's job.

Local President John Hill, who is also the international Guild's vice president for the northeastern United States region, will be in Maryland for meetings of the international union's executive board Tuesday and Wednesday, returning Thursday. While there, he'll be consulting with other regional vice presidents and the Guild staff from Washington D.C. to see if anyone else has ever come up with

contract language that might help us now.

For its part, the company will be talking with its managers here as well as with corporate ownership in Dallas.

Our plan is to set a membership meeting for Oct. 31, 2012 in expectation of having SOMETHING to bring to you, though at this point we don't know what that might be.

There's no denying \$1.2 million, by our estimate 16 jobs, is a daunting number and the mathematics are challenging. But *if* we can get them to agree to furloughs, that saves four jobs; *if* we okay a one-year/three percent pay cut, that gets us to ten. More buyouts could raise it even higher.

Those are a lot of ifs, and just one of them can undo it all. And even if we can get them resolved, you'll be the final judge of whether it's worth it or not.

Social Media Concerns

Facebook and the like are good ways to communicate with each other about all of this, but please keep in mind that it is not a private medium.

That means people on the outside will be watching the things we post and say.

Reporters at other media will quote what they see and read, so please be careful about what you post. It is far from a private conversation.

Seniority

Now that layoffs are a possibility, seniority standing within jobs will become important. Who gets laid off is determined by who is most junior WITHIN A SPECIFIC JOB, not the union overall.

What happens is the company decides it has eight people doing job X and only wants six. The two least senior people in job X are laid off.

If one of those people is competent to do job Y, and if they have more overall seniority than someone in job Y, then they can bump into it and the less senior person in job Y is laid off. Then the job Y person may bump, and so on. Under the contract, the company defines who is competent for any job.

The Executive Board's policy is that each member can find out his or her standing within their current job, but we don't post the overall list. We did that during the first layoffs in 2008 and people started taking the list around their rooms and to other departments, announcing who they were senior to and who they intended to bump if they were laid off. This created a really poisonous atmosphere at a time things were bad enough.

The policy is contact the local president (jghthird@gmail.com) and we can tell you your standing in your job. First is the worst, it means you're the first one to go in a layoff, so we'd tell you are first, second third, etc. We won't tell others your ranking, but once you know your number, and who was hired after you, it's not hard to figure out who stands where.

