

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA? SURVIVOR SYNDROME

Many moons ago, therapists noticed that the people who survived disasters or escaped the ill fate of those who were close to them were liable to go into spirals of depression and guilt.

Some bright spark considered that this idea could be applied to people in firms who escape lay-offs or redundancy. This can certainly happen, but in the business context the idea bristles with implications.

One is that people's reaction differ. Some are a lot less guilt-ridden about the misfortunes of others and are inclined to utter no more than a sigh of relief that they dodged the bullet. Failure to suffer the syndrome may also be because it is so commonplace – job loss, in some walks of life, is an everyday risk.

The most unsettling aspect may be the signal such events send about the fitness of the firm. Survivors may find themselves looking on with envy at the new lives their erstwhile colleagues have been forced to discover, while around them they see nothing but defeated managers, meagre rewards, and a sour fog of resignation plus



pessimism settling on everyone. The survivor syndrome may be depressing because it tells you the world you work in is neither safe, happy nor like the community that you were told a job is supposed to offer.

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