



21 November, 2008

Numbers, please.

Sun management told Guild leaders yesterday that 12 union employees from different departments have volunteered to leave with packages similar to the one offered to members over the summer. The company also reported that three Guild members (two in advertising; one in marketing) were laid-off on Friday.

Additional job cuts appear to be happening across the company, but Sun Labor Relations Director Ann Barnes could not give the Guild a target number of how many union employees the Baltimore Sun Media Group (BSMG) may shed during what she described as a "dreadful market" for the newspaper business. She also declined to discuss any reductions facing non-Guild employees.

In a press release last week, the Guild announced that the BSMG (which includes The Sun, Patuxent, Homestead Publishing, b and baltimoresun.com) was planning to reduce jobs, but no hard numbers were available. Nearly a week later, all employees still do not know the extent of the company's job-reduction plans as the holidays approach.

Guild leaders find this inability to provide specifics incredible.

The company, however, is accepting applications for a voluntary separation package through tomorrow; Barnes said it might be possible to include additional volunteers next week, but she couldn't guarantee it. The package is essentially the same made in July. If you are interested in discussing that option, please contact your Guild rep for more details.

The company is not giving us any guidance whatsoever on whether -- or how many -- voluntary departures it will need to reduce the number of people who might be laid off. Of the

twelve who've already volunteered, three work in finance, four work in the newsroom, and five work in advertising. Barnes said the company expects to accept those who've already volunteered.

In its marketing materials, the company asks: What if you didn't know?

Well, we haven't known anything the past few weeks and, despite some information provided today, we still do not have a good sense of how deep the ax will fall on employees by the end of the year.

In the meantime, the Sun has moved forward with a plan to create what it calls a new "Targeted Print" division, which is combining local retail ad sales reps from the Community Newspaper Group with local reps from the Sun. Barnes said that no Guild-covered employees would be laid off as a result of this action.

However, Guild-represented employees in these advertising positions have not yet been told what new job they will be doing if their current accounts are given to non-union employees from CNG who are being absorbed into this so-called "Targeted Print" division. Guild leaders have grave concerns about how these employees have been treated in recent weeks --- and are also extremely concerned about the work environment for all rank-and-file employees at the Sun's other publications.

The Guild is challenging the movement of the work to the Patuxent group.

For more information, visit www.wbng.org and the News Of The Sun blog (newsofthesun.blogspot.com)

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