Institute of Columbus, Ohio, offered a related view: "I'm finding that some people can thrive on change . . . if you communicate with them and involve them in the change process." He added that "it sounds like common sense, but it's amazing how many companies simply don't seem to be aware of that."

Should a restructuring and layoffs become necessary, many consultants say, the key to motivating the employees who remain is to make sure they believe that the organization's financial health has improved in a major way and that enough fat has been cut and enough bureaucracy cleared so that their own jobs will be more personally fulfilling. With that knowledge, they will go on with the job in good stead.

Safeway Stores Inc. is trying to apply a similar philosophy.

In a move to fend off a hostile takeover, the grocery chain went private in 1986 and has executed a painful slimming that took employment from 167,000 to 120,000. Today, through such things as internal newsletters, seminars and personal visits from chairman Peter Magowan, Safeway is trying to heal the wounds and build commitment.

"What we're saying to the people left is, 'Congratulations, you made it, you're part of the new Safeway,' " said Bob Bradford, a spokesman for the national grocery chain. " 'We're better equipped to meet competition. Yes, we had to do a lot of things to get to this point, but look at where we are now.' "

Others, however, contend that the job of picking up the pieces is usually underestimated. David Noer, an associate professor of organizational behavior at Duke University, talks of "layoff survivor sickness," a condition that he likens to the psychological trauma that afflicts some survivors of death camps and air crashes.

People's vitality may dry up because of feelings of guilt that they are prospering while friends are on the street, or out of fear that they may be next. And these are the people who are supposed to revitalize the company and let it take on the world, Noer noted. Management

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Noer said a few U.S. companies are being more open about future uncertainty when they hire people, and he lauds it. "It's a much more healthy relationship than trying to buy someone's commitment and loyalty with a promise you can't keep," he said. " . . . It's like a football team. They gather together for a season and then they renegotiate again for a whole new season. If they make the cut, they have a commitment for a year. But not forever."

Apple Computer Inc., which pioneered the personal computer industry, is among those rated as heading in new directions. "We view our em-

Sullivan, vice president of human resources. The California firm attempts to encourage innovation, risk-taking and personal fulfillment in its people, said Sullivan, but does not feel threatened or offended if some eventually want to leave.

"It's kind of like a no-fault divorce, that at some point, relationships change, individuals change, organizations change," said Sullivan. "So the thing that made the relationship click 10 years ago may no longer be valid." In fact, he said, Apple has a relatively low turnover.

Other signs of the times: steady growth in the country's "contingent" labor force, now 30 million strong.

by tax-deferred accounts into which employee and company both contribute. These can be moved at any time.

"The kind of chains that organizations used to have is less binding because people have more options," said Richard Balzer, a labor-management consultant.

Meanwhile, ways in which people are rewarded are changing too to reflect the times. "As profit margins get tighter, you can't constantly increase salaries," said New York consultant Bright. "Managers are going to need to learn different ways to share glory." This might include simple things such as giving employees

American workers who have served well for 20 years can find themselves on the street because of a mild recession.

But the contrast is not entirely what it seems: here and there are signs that Japan may be rethinking that approach as new economic challenges arise. Belt-tightening aimed at neutralizing the impact of the newly strong yen has led some major Japanese companies into de facto layoffs, shunting employees across the country or to lower-paying jobs at affiliated companies. While no one expects Japan ever to adopt the U.S. model in full, it is moving in a similar direction.