

By VIRGINIA BACKAITIS



**ALL FOR ONE, ONE FOR ALL:** To reverse a half-dozen layoffs, firefighters in Yonkers recently agreed to work an extra shift each for no pay between now and June.

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When corporate executive Jane Brown (not her real name) was called into her boss' office last December, she knew the news wouldn't be good. Given that the once-robust real estate development firm she works for had already let go about half of its workers, "I fully anticipated getting laid off," she says.

But it wasn't her job Brown was going to lose; it was 50 percent of her paycheck. Not only was she being asked to do her job for less, but she'd also have to ask the people she managed to do the same. "How did you feel about that?" seems like a stupid follow-up question, but there's compassion rather than anger in Brown's answer. "The company is struggling to survive," she says, "and we're trying to hold onto as many people as we can. The people who remain are here not only because we need them, but because there aren't better options outside our doors. There's a world of hurt out there."

As the economy falters, a growing number of workers are facing the same prospect as Brown: They're not being downsized, but their hours, salaries or benefits are. To avoid or reduce layoffs, companies are asking workers to accept pay cuts, forgo bonuses and raises, go on furloughs or switch to four-day workweeks, even to relocate to places where labor rates are lower.

It's not only company employees who are feeling the pressure to share the pain - self-employed workers are being asked to make concessions, too. Comedienne Nancy Lombardo, who's appeared on "Saturday Night Live" and Colin Quinn's show, says she's regularly asked to drop her rate for a gig.

"I'm willing to work with people," says Lombardo, who's been supplementing her income with editing and coaching work. "I understand that money is tight and that it doesn't cost anything to stay home in front of the television."

As a result, Lombardo is one of a number of workers @work interviewed who's recently had to talk with her family about how concessions are affecting their lifestyles. She's told her son that if he wants extra snacks or treats, he'll have to earn the money to pay for them. "This recession, maybe it's not bad for my son's generation," says Lombardo. "He's getting a good lesson in economics."