A Hiring Freeze Is Not a Market Signal. Brian Baldari on What It Actually Decides



Brick, New Jersey Nov 23, 2026 (Issuewire.com) - *Biopharma job postings and payrolls are rising while individual organizations continue to freeze. Brian Baldari, Pharm.D., MBA, founder of ResilExec® Coaching, argues that leaders are reading a company-specific allocation decision as a market condition, and waiting on the wrong signal.*

A hiring freeze gets read inside an organization as a weather report. The market is difficult, everyone is pausing, and the sensible response is to hold position until conditions improve. According to Brian Baldari, Pharm.D., MBA, founder of ResilExec® Coaching, that reading is usually wrong, and the data this year makes it demonstrably wrong.

BioSpace tallies show the number of biopharma companies making or planning workforce reductions fell 58 percent year over year in the first half of 2026, while the number of employees affected fell only 5 percent, to 14,427. In the second quarter, 26 companies cut or planned cuts, down from 64 a year earlier. By July the figure had dropped to six companies and 466 employees.

Over the same period, hiring was moving in the other direction. Biotechnology research and development payroll employment stood 3.1 percent above year-ago levels in June, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. BioSpace reported biotech research and development job postings up 42 percent year over year that month, and live postings across its site up 15 percent in the second quarter.

"Far fewer companies are cutting, and the ones that do are cutting deep," Baldari says. "At the same time postings are up and payrolls are up. Those two things are only contradictory if you think a freeze is about the market. It is not. It is about where one company decided to put its money."

A freeze is a decision that has already been made

In Baldari's assessment, the word freeze is doing work that the underlying decision does not support. A freeze implies suspension, and suspension implies resumption on the same terms.

He argues that what actually happened is an allocation decision. The budget did not disappear. It moved, or it was held back to protect a different commitment, and that choice was made by people weighing functions against each other. When hiring resumes, in his experience it resumes according to that choice rather than the one that existed before.

"Nobody announces the reallocation," Baldari says. "They announce the pause. The part that matters already happened in a meeting you were not in."

Waiting is the expensive option

Baldari believes the cost of treating a freeze as weather is routinely underestimated, particularly by strong performers who assume their position is secure.

He points to the duration data as the clearest illustration of what happens to people who move late. The BioSpace 2026 U.S. Life Sciences Employment Outlook, based on a survey of 1,499 biotech and pharmaceutical professionals, found that 49 percent of unemployed respondents had been out of work for at least six months, and 26 percent for more than a year.

"The people in that number were not careless," Baldari says. "Most of them were waiting for conditions to improve while the decision about their function was already made. By the time they moved, they were moving from behind."

What to read instead

Baldari recommends ignoring the timeline and reading the direction.

He suggests three questions. Where did the headcount go, rather than when does it return. Which functions are still being resourced, because those are the ones that were protected in the decision. And who is being consulted about the restructuring, because consultation is the most reliable available signal of which side of the allocation a leader sits on.

In his view none of those questions require inside information. They require paying attention to a set of observable facts that most leaders stop examining once the announcement has been made.

Timing is a variable, not a circumstance

Baldari's Promotion Math™ framework treats advancement as a function of five variables: Performance, Visibility, Sponsorship, Narrative, and Timing. He argues that Timing is the variable leaders are most inclined to treat as something that happens to them.

A freeze, in his assessment, is the organizational calendar moving without them. The work that matters during one is the same work that matters at any other point, with the difference that the consequences of neglecting it arrive faster.

"Performance gets you noticed. Positioning gets you promoted," Baldari says. "A freeze does not change that. It just removes the time you thought you had."

About Brian Baldari

Brian Baldari, Pharm.D., MBA, based in Brick, New Jersey, is the founder of ResilExec® Coaching and Resilient Performance Group LLC. He spent 24 years inside pharmaceutical, healthcare, and enterprise leadership organizations, held five successive Director-level roles, and advanced from Director to Vice President and Senior General Manager in 18 months. He participated in sixteen brand launches across rare and chronic disease categories, led an organization of more than 250 people, and has mentored more than 50 leaders across three continents. Through ResilExec Coaching, he helps Associate Directors, Directors, Senior Directors, Executive Directors, and Vice Presidents accelerate career growth through personalized executive coaching, leadership development, and strategic career positioning.

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