



Supervisor NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
February 2020

Easing the Difficult Job of Terminating an Employee

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If you have ever had the misfortune of terminating someone's employment, then this statement will come as no surprise: firing an employee is possibly the hardest part of being a manager.

Even if the case for termination seems clear, there's still the weight that comes with the decision because your action will have potential ramifications for your employee's livelihood. For most managers, the thought of having to terminate someone is enough to cause unease in the pit of their stomachs.

But while never easy, employee termination can still be a dignified process, for both the manager and the employee. Below are some key points to consider when terminating an employee that can help make this process a little less intimidating, and a little more human.

Clarify your reason for termination before you terminate.

If you've documented problems in the past, then termination will likely be no surprise to the employee. Prior to actual termination though, it's important that you have write-ups for every time an employee has violated policy, and how you attempted to address that problem. When you let your employee go, this documentation will be your primary reason for doing so.

Create a rough "script" for the termination.

It can be very helpful to practice what you want to say prior to actually saying it. Depending on whether you or

an HR lead handle the primary discussion, you may be in a position for the employee to appeal. Know how you would handle an "appeal," and how you can close the conversation while still helping your employee understand that his or her time with the company was appreciated.

Know what benefits your employee receives.

Have a benefits package ready before the event. This package can extend beyond the standard rundown of COBRA benefits, and could include resources for re-employment, or a pre-determined severance package.

Plan the firing event.

Will you terminate at the end of the day so the office is empty? Will you hold the event in your office or in theirs? How will you stay on message when the questions come? What will happen to the person's belongings? How long will you allow the event to go on? While no one can promise a smooth termination, it's still best to plan the event ahead of time. As a rule of thumb, termination should go no longer than 15 minutes, and you should always have a witness, if possible.

Communicate with the rest of the office.

Suspicion grows in silence, and terminations affect the rest of the office. If you want to keep morale up, communicate with your team about the termination. Your messaging doesn't have to be complicated, but it should be clear and honest. It can be something as simple as, "We had to let Fred go today. This was an unfortunate but necessary decision, and it does not reflect on the rest of the team here."

At the end of the day, no amount of preparation can remove the fact that terminating an employee is a difficult event. However, by focusing on some core principles, and by allowing your policy and expectations to do the heavy-lifting, you can release someone from employment in a way that's respectful to both the individual and the company.