

HOW TO SAY, “YOU’RE FIRED!”

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Having to fire someone is one of the worst tasks that we, as Managers, handle in our jobs. It is always extremely hard to tell someone that you are terminating them, and there is no easy way to tell them. It is very important to have another Manager involved.

Causes of involuntary termination are: performance, attendance, violation of firm policy and serious misconduct.

Termination goals/outcomes: minimize legal exposure; fair and respectful treatment of terminated employees and minimize rumors and bad will.

Separation should not be a surprise:

- Preparation
 - Discharge Checklist
- Termination Meeting
 - Do’s and Don’ts
- Dealing with Difficult Situations

When preparing a Performance Memo, this document does not have to be signed to be valid. Final warning should indicate that future occurrences may warrant disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Preparation documentation, such as documented performance facts, performance evaluations, memos, notes and review policies and procedures, needs to be readily available.

There are numerous documents that should be prepared and ready at this time:

- Discrimination Checklist
- Severance and Release Forms (Under Age 40 Employees)
- Benefits Exit Packet
 - Health/Dental Insurance – COBRA expenses
 - 401K
 - Flexible Spending Account (FSA)
 - Life Insurance
 - Long Term Disability
 - Employee Assistance Plan (EAP)
 - Retirement Plan

Termination meetings: when, where, what and how

Have another Manager present. Time of Day: fewer employees around, before lunch and just before the end of the day. Planning for the day of the week – NOT FRIDAY!! This prevents stewing and rehashing. Allows employee to move on: file unemployment, look for other jobs

and research benefits. Where to do it: neutral space, schedule employee and alert security if necessary. What to say: develop a termination script: plan what you will say; get straight to reason for meeting – no small talk; give factual reasons for termination – do not sugar coat; outline legal issues to cover such as final paycheck and benefits information; have all documentation prepared and ready.

Planning what to say:

- Do's and Don'ts
- How much detail are you required to provide?
 - Do keep it brief; 15 minutes or less
 - Do keep your feelings to yourself
 - Do explain fully any benefits the employee is entitled to receive
 - Don't burden them with how hard it is for you
 - Don't apologize
 - Don't argue
 - Keep open body language and eye contact
 - No touching
 - No hugging
 - Don't give false compliments trying to make things easier
 - Don't counsel

(No argument, altercations or violence. No hugging, only state the facts.)

You do not have to give a written statement outlining reasons for termination. But it is a good idea if you have your facts straight on the reasons for the discharge.

You are not required to answer questions from the employee about the reason for termination.

If they ride metro or bus, have a cab voucher ready.

Have someone in the firm pack their desk and mail personal items. Collect all Firm property: laptop, blackberry, company car, keys, parking garage card and swipe card. Escort the employee out of the building.

You might want to notify the staff. Don't discuss specific reasons – maintain employee privacy. Speak with tact and concern for terminated employee. Assure remaining employees the terminated employee was treated fairly.

Crying employee:

- Always have tissues available
- Provide time for employee to collect themselves, alone if needed

Angry employee:

- Anger is a normal emotion
- Repeat angry statements back to employee calmly to show that you are listening (provides contract to their behavior)

Below are 52 ways to say “You’re Fired:”

1. career alternative enhancement
 2. career change opportunity
 3. career transition
 4. constructive discharge
 5. constructive dismissal
 6. decline a contract extension
 7. decruit
 8. defund
 9. dehire
 10. de-select
 11. distaff
 12. discharge
 13. discontinue
 14. downscale
 15. downsize
 16. early retirement opportunity
 17. employee transition
 18. end of a trial period
 19. excessing
 20. free up for the future
 21. involuntary separation
 22. lateralize
 23. let go
 24. make internal efficiencies
 25. make redundant
 26. manage down
 27. negotiate a departure
 28. outplace
 29. outsource
 30. personnel realignment
 31. personnel surplus reduction
 32. rationalize the workforce
 33. reduce headcount
 34. reduce in force (or rifting)
 35. re-engineer the staff
 36. release
 37. relieve of duties
 38. reorganize (or re-org)
 39. reshuffle
 40. restructure
 41. retrench
 42. rightsize
 43. select out
 44. separate
 45. skill-mix adjustment
 46. streamline
 47. surplus
 48. unassigned
 49. waive
 50. workforce imbalance correction
- And finally the consoling reminders that:
51. you’re now free to “pursue other interests,” and
 52. “spend more time with the family.”