



EFFECTIVE TERMINATIONS & TRANSITIONS GUIDE

DISCLAIMER:

This is not legal advice. Please consult the employment laws in your state or country to ensure you are in compliance when terminating employment.

One of the worst things that leaders in organizations are faced with is unilaterally ending the employment of another person. Most people don't want to wield that kind of power over another person's livelihood. Nor do they like to be dealt out an ego blow, especially when the person has been trying their best.

Terminations are no fun. They aren't supposed to be. The most you can hope for is to become good at them. It is possible. I have seen really bad terminations and ones that ended in a feeling of mutual respect and a win/win. Here are the steps to getting there.

How you end employment should always be an expression of your vision and values. When we talked about rituals, tools, and processes in (Module 1, Video 13), this is an example of a process that creates or contradicts your values. So whatever you create, keep that in mind.

Here's a general set of recommended best practices that honor people and aim for a win/win experience.

1. No Surprises (when possible)

It is a worthy goal to never have anyone be surprised when their employment is ending. In some cases that isn't possible. They may have been caught in unethical or illegal behavior, in which case swift action may be necessary.

2. Have a Performance Improvement Process

In the vast majority of cases, you can put in place processes and systems to prevent surprises. But a system does more than that. If you follow it, it prevents the emotional elements from overriding and creating damage. When

you live with the frustration of an team member who isn't performing, you can build frustration, especially if you aren't having the hard conversations. Eventually what can happen is you end up venting that frustration at the termination, which doesn't help anyone.

So here's a simple process to adopt:

- a) Use the A.R.I.S.E. Performance Model (Module 3, Videos 7-9):
When someone isn't performing up to standards, this tool ensures you've done your level best to turn performance around. Make sure you've really drained the cup on this and had the hard conversations you needed to.

- b) Present the Choice of Turnaround Plan or Transition Plan:
If you have followed the step above, and you're still not seeing improvement, before you terminate employment, consider a requirement that team members must be given a choice. T

They can either enroll in a 90-day Turnaround Plan (sometimes called a Performance Improvement Plan or PIP), a written plan that lays out clear expectations about what new behaviors or competencies are needed, along with some concrete measures to help a team member become clear on what is expected and by when. Unless meaningful progress is made by the end of the 90 days, ending employment is the most likely next step.

Or in some cases, the team member may not want to do what it takes to turn performance around, or may not believe it's possible. In this case, they can initiate a gradual 90-day Transition Plan, where they begin to search for another job while staying employed. They slowly hand off projects as needed until their time is up or a new person is hired.

This is an important moment of choosing and it gives them some sense of dignity and empowerment.

3. Find the Goldilocks Zone

There's a saying in the HR community that goes like this: "Hire slow, fire fast." It makes sense, it can hurt an organization to delay termination. But I have seen it misunderstood and misused too many times.

The two biggest mistakes I've seen in firing, is either going too fast, or going too slow. This applies to both the decision to terminate and how the conversation with the team member goes.

Some leaders and organizations "rip the band-aid." They decide before the process has played out. Or they make a swift announcement and get the person out as soon as possible. This can destabilize the leaders, the culture, and the business. It can lead to burned bridges and bad blood.

Other organizations drag the decision out long after it is clear this isn't working or decide but wait too long to act. This can injure the credibility of the leader as other team members can always see when someone isn't performing. It calls into question the leader's judgment and ability to create a culture of accountability.

Pay attention to these two extremes and find the timing that feels right for your situation.

4. Tune Your Mindset

Bring your awareness to the story you are telling about this situation. Remember two things:

First, you are not responsible for anyone else's livelihood in life, that is always their responsibility, no matter what they believe or tell themselves about your role in that.

Second, keeping a team member employed who is not successful or effective is a disservice to them and the organization. It can prevent the organization from achieving its WHY. In addition, when we prop up the illusion of competence, we impede their growth.

Confronting the truth of another person's limits is in service to them and their second job (which is to grow). They won't thank you for it, mind you.

When you are grounded in your body and mind with these truths, the other person will unconsciously feel it. This gives them a chance to take responsibility for their destiny and stand on their own two feet.

5. Be Direct

Make clear from the outset what is happening and remember, they won't hear much after you say it, so consider this the first conversation of several to help them get clear.

- Simply say "We have made a decision to end your employment with the organization."
- Then give the reasons why.
- Tell them next steps.

Don't make the first conversation too long. You will initiate another conversation about details. But first, they will need time to privately go through their emotional paces.

You aren't in a discussion, you are delivering a decision. Assuming it's not a surprise, they will understand that.

6. Be Kind

You don't want to be overly sympathetic or try to relate, that will ring false in most cases. Instead use language that is clear, not cryptic, but be respectful and kind in the delivery. Consider reviewing the Overplayed Strengths and Switches videos (Module 3, Videos 10 and 11) to get ideas about how you want to speak to them.

7. Give them Options

A pretty standard approach to terminations says, terminate fast. Have the conversation, walk them to the door, take their keys, hand them a 2-week severance check, and thank them for their service. While it may be common, it isn't the only option, nor is it in either of your best interest. It costs you needlessly in time and money. It is also unnecessary emotional trauma to the person being fired. Instead, consider giving them a choice here again.

Option 1:

You can offer them the option of leaving immediately and collecting severance.

Option 2:

You offer to have them stay employed for the next 90-days without severance, while they look for a job.

- Publically, it will be treated as a resignation.
- It gives them time to adjust to the new reality.
- You remind them it is easier to find a new job when you already have one and you want them to land on their feet.
- You may even ask them to help train the replacement if one is hired.
- You may also choose to serve as a positive reference.
- They can say their goodbyes on their terms
- In exchange, you ask them to help you wind down the work and hand off projects in good faith.

The Advantages to Option 2:

- 1) It is a much easier conversation for you to have
- 2) It gives dignity to the team member. Offering a choice on how a person wants to leave, gives them some empowerment in an otherwise disempowered moment.
- 3) You model a culture of respect in your organization
- 4) You get a smoother transition in the emotional system
- 5) Institutional knowledge is less likely to be lost
- 6) You save on severance.