



HRXaminer

*Examining practical HR issues business owners
and managers encounter every day*

Terrific Termination Tips

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Exiting Employee Checklist

► **Exit Interviews** are typically for voluntary resignations and not for involuntary terminations. But consider giving written, mail-back exit interview questionnaires to certain involuntarily terminated employees. You may learn important

Thank You For Firing My Coworker!

Every time I've been asked by a client to participate in the termination of an employee, I've also been thanked by a coworker of the terminated employee. At first, this shocked me. But the more I tell this story in my management training sessions, the more head nods and similar comments I receive from the business owners and managers attending the session.

It sounds strange, but it's true. You see, most of us do not wake up in the morning wondering, "Who can I fire today?" Most of us are concerned about the poor performers or even the policy violators and keep giving them more and more chances to succeed. But many times employees just don't take advantage of these opportunities we so graciously provide. And there we are as business owners and managers hesitant to dismiss the employee.



insights from them.

► **Computers** are one area of concern where you can never be too safe. Backup your employee's computer before the termination. Delete their external access. Get all their passwords. Automatically forward their emails to another employee. Check old emails to see what activities might be pending.

► **Telephones** also should be considered. Does the employee have a company cell phone? Retrieve it before they leave. Did the employee use their personal cell phone as their business line? If so, how will you contact your customers to

We give that employee one more chance, while our solid performers and stars look on wondering, "Why doesn't he/she just fire that person today?"

So if you're one of those individuals hesitating to terminate an employee who isn't sufficiently contributing to the success of your organization, here are some questions and tips to consider:

- **Do you have certain employees who you just hope will resign?** This isn't a good sign. In order to be successful managers, we must design the powerful team we need to move our businesses into an increasingly successful future. Even one employee who fails to meet your standards of performance can have a seriously negative impact on your organization. It's your job to (a) help them succeed as best you can and if that doesn't work to (b) release them to succeed at another organization.
- **Are other employees and/or managers picking up the work of their coworkers?** This is a common sign of a failing employee. It is also the best way to chase a high-performing employee out of your organization to one that better appreciates his/her talents. Identify whether the failure requires training or coaching or whether the employee is incapable or disinterested. If it's the latter, then...
- **Are you trying to fix an unfixable employee?** I like to use the fun analogy that if you are in a spouse/partner relationship and you haven't been able to "fix" your spouse/partner after all the years you've spent together, what makes you think you can "fix" an employee? If strategized employee development methods aren't working, then...

Now that you've identified the employee who needs your encouragement to find greener pastures, strategize the most effective method to exit the employee. Once

make sure they're calling your organization and not the exited (and perhaps unhappy or angry) former employee. This may be something to consider when hiring, and not just at firing. Be sure to change voicemail messages as well as any phone access codes.

Discipline, Documentation and Dismissal: The 3D's is a management training program I conduct to help you and your managers understand the importance that these three components play in protecting the organization from the hassle and cost of legal action and unemployment claims. **If you're struggling with the 3D's and want to get all your managers in sync on the subject, give me a**

we've finally made the decision to terminate, we tend to want to just get it over with, but you need to prepare wisely for this event.

Consider the following:

- Have you documented the failure to perform sufficiently to contest unemployment?
- Do you or others have sufficient knowledge of the employee's job to make a smooth transition after the exit?
- Have you protected the organization from potential employee sabotage (computer backups, cancelled credit cards, confidentiality agreements, etc.) before the termination?
- What other manager can be present for the termination as a witness to protect you from false claims of the termination event?
- How will you communicate the termination to employees and/or customers?

To protect the organization, customers, and coworkers, you want to balance the need to slow down before making the decision to fire and the need to speed up the firing after you've finally made the decision. It sounds so simple, but it's a delicate dance where you need to take all the right steps. And don't be surprised if your remaining employees thank you for creating a better workplace for them.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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