

# Thin The Herd: **Fire** **Non-Performing** **Employees**

## | Boosting organizational success

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There is a term ranchers use when they are reducing the size of livestock by removing weak animals from the group. That term is “thinning the herd.” It could also be used in the context of terminating non-performing employees, something most organizations do not do nearly as often as they should.

Retaining employees who perform poorly is expensive both financially and emotionally. It costs a lot of money to repair the damage they do. That includes the time it takes to correct mistakes they have made, dealing with a significant number of customer complaints, driving down morale, and creating friction, and infighting.



It also impacts morale and results in an increase in employee turnover. High achievers – those employees who show up on time every day, work hard, and do more than is expected – do not want to stay with you. They will not respect you and will soon be heading out of the door to work for someone who does not tolerate bad employees.

They notice when you give poor-performing employees a pass and will question your ability to lead and make good decisions. They will also resent you for relying on them to pick up the slack. You should do everything in your power to keep high-achieving employees.

Keeping employees, who perform at substandard levels, can also impact you personally and professionally. Bad employees can take you down with them. When your superiors realize what you are costing the company by not firing those employees, you could very well be overlooked for promotions – or get fired yourself.

So, how do you go about letting those employees go? First, you must realize you can not save them from themselves. They simply do not care about their performance, you, or your company. Cut them loose.



Good managers can identify the negative traits of an employee within the first 30 days. That includes job knowledge, job fit, and performance. At year one, you should have a clear record of performance reviews. Take notes, document problems, and track corrective action. Make sure employees understand what is expected of them and why.

If you expect an employee to improve, both of you should understand what that improvement should look like. Schedule a time to review those expectations and benchmarks. If they have not been met, it is termination time.

Firing someone can seem heartless at times but continuing to employ people who routinely fail is a disservice to them and your organization. On the positive side, it might serve as a wake-up call to those employees and spur them on to improve their skills, their attitudes, and their performances.

It can take some time to recover and rebuild your team spirit after terminating bad employees. It can leave you feeling empty and exhausted, but you can turn things around by quickly getting back on track and doing whatever it takes to build a strong, cohesive team of employees who respect you for “thinning the herd.”

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