

Resort Trades

Timeshare Resort & Hospitality Professionals





Employee Terminations

Humane Treatment Can Benefit the Bottom Line

by Phillip M. Perry

Abstract: Employee terminations are an unfortunate but necessary part of every business operation. Managers need to prepare carefully for exit procedures that provide a clean break with departing individuals while maintaining staff morale. Adopting an empathic approach can assist terminated employees in their transition while upholding the company's reputation.

You've tried everything to get Andy up to speed. Despite your best efforts, though, his job performance remains poor. You've reluctantly decided it's time to let him go. But how can you fire Andy without hampering his career, demoralizing the remaining staff, and upsetting the customers with whom he's worked?

Very often the difficulty in answering that question delays the scheduling of a termination meeting -- famously the least popular management duty. Managers can hesitate to take action anytime a company needs to terminate personnel—whether for job performance failures, violation of company policies, chronic absenteeism, or as part of a reduction in force required by re-structuring.

Maybe termination is an unwelcome task, but it's important to move sooner rather than later. "Sometimes you just have to cut your losses," said John Tschohl, president of Service Quality Institute. "Delays only make the problem worse and can result in a hit to the bottom line."

SHOW EMPATHY

Thankfully, there are a number of ways a manager can smooth the rocky road to termination. One is to exhibit an understanding of the emotional trauma termination can have on the affected individual. "Demonstrating empathy to exiting employees reflects healthy company values and has a profound impact on business culture," said Stephanie Reitz, Director of Client Services at consulting firm myHR Partner. "The remaining staff will feel better about where they work and will be encouraged to stay aboard."

Botched terminations, on the other hand, can damage retention and recruitment efforts. "Employees who observe callous treatment of terminated workers may think, 'Maybe it's time for

me to seek other opportunities with a better, more respectful company,'" said Cissy Pau, principal consultant at Clear HR Consulting.

Poor treatment of departing employees can also lead to damaging word of mouth and negative online reviews that make it tough to attract future hires. "Job candidates today are extremely well-informed," said Reitz. "Accepting a job offer is no longer just about a prospective paycheck. It's also about the experience, the culture, and about how people are treated throughout the entire work life cycle, from onboarding until the time they walk out the door."

One more thing: Angry or upset terminated employees may seek relief in legal action. "People who are treated in a way they find insulting, aggravating, cold or callous, are far more likely to go to a lawyer and see if there's something they can do about it," said James W. Seegers, partner at law firm Baker & Hostetler. "Treating people with respect and a little bit of compassion can help de-escalate emotions. And keeping just a few people from seeking out lawyers will

save a company a lot of money." (See sidebar, "Avoid Wrongful Discharge Lawsuits.")

MAINTAIN PRIVACY

No performance-related termination should come out of the blue. "Prior to letting an employee go, there should have been one or more meetings during which the supervisor discussed performance issues and detailed what the individual needed to do to improve," said Thomas W. Slattery, a San Diego-based attorney. This graduated approach not only communicates fair treatment, but also helps defend against any charge that the termination was done for reasons other than poor performance.

Advance preparation is also necessary for cases in which the employee has violated company policy. It is critical to lay the groundwork by thoroughly investigating the misdeeds. The results of such investigations should be recorded in written reports.

Chronic absenteeism, too, needs to be adequately recorded. Here, past attendance records of the individual will speak for

themselves, as will copies of written warnings given the employee over time.

Whatever the cause, when the decision is made to separate an employee, practice makes perfect—or at least reduces the chance for costly errors. “Rehearsal is essential for a successful termination meeting,” said Pau. “Plan what you’re going to say. Practice your script with another company manager to evaluate its effectiveness.”

Empathic employers will schedule termination meetings in locations that minimize the risk of embarrassment. “Avoid any public place where everybody can see that a termination is taking place,” said Pete Tosh, Founder of The Focus Group. “The employee’s office is a good choice because it is private. And if they’ve got just a few personal things, they can just pick them up and leave.”

If the employee does not have a private office, it’s wise to schedule the meeting in a conference room or other private setting. “To minimize observation by colleagues, offer to make arrangements for the individual to come into the workplace one evening or on a weekend to remove their personal belongings,” said Tosh.

The termination meeting is no place to engage in small talk, negotiate a resolution to the employment crisis, or argue about the person’s work history. “One of the biggest mistakes companies make in an exit interview is getting into a debate with the employee about their past performance,” said Seegers. “The approach should be that the termination decision has been made and now

What to Do When You are Laid Off

You’ve received word that your employer no longer needs you. Your first reaction is likely shock, followed by fear of the future. Take solace in the fact that your emotions are shared by people in the same situation everywhere.

“Getting laid off is a very difficult thing for most people,” said John Tschohl, president of Service Quality Institute. “It’s the last thing anyone wants to have happen. But there are some steps people can take to ease the path forward.”

Here’s a checklist of steps that Tschohl and other experts suggest for easing the transition to a new position:

- Take a deep breath. Give yourself time and permission to process your emotions and settle down.
- Collect vital information from your employer. What are the details about your final paycheck, separation pay, and continuation of health insurance and other benefits?
- Ask for assistance. Will your employer give you a letter of recommendation? The name of a contact for future employers to call for references? Connections or leads to outplacement services?
- Start networking. Let your colleagues know you are seeking new opportunities. Start attending more industry events, join professional groups, and update your LinkedIn profile. Ask what networking boards your colleagues use and sign up.
- Develop new skills. Take courses that will expand your talents and make you more attractive to future employers.
- Re-engineer your mindset. Look upon separation as an opportunity to align future work to your life goals.
- Stay positive. Use knowledge of past professional accomplishments as a springboard for a productive mental attitude.
- Turn this lemon into lemonade!



At Grand Pacific Resorts, our Associates are empowered to BE EPIC!

Embodying our core values of **B**alance, **E**mpowerment, **E**nthusiasm, **P**assion, **I**ntegrity, and **C**onsistency is how we create experiences worth sharing.

Every day across each of our resorts, dedicated Associates go above and beyond in all that they do. Whether it’s driving to pick up stranded Guests after a late night shift, or personally scouring local grocery stores for a turkey thermometer, we receive countless examples of our passionate Associates performing outstanding acts of service.

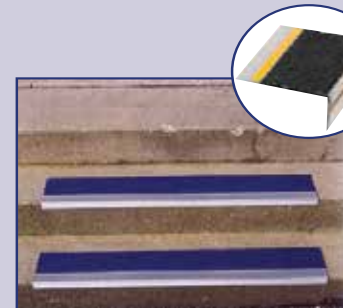
We understand that a company is only as good as its people and are thrilled to celebrate the remarkable individuals who inspire us, contribute to our excellence, and help make every vacation experience exceptional.

We Invite YOU to Join this Award-Winning Team
Learn more at GrandPacificResorts.com



OUTDOOR SAFETY SOLUTIONS

From cracked and crumbling concrete steps to slippery stairs, ramps and entrances, Musson has solutions for reducing slips and falls and making your properties safe.



Rubber and Aluminum Stair Treads and Nosings



Products for entrances and outdoor ramps



MUSSON RUBBER CO.

P.O. Box 7038 • Akron, Ohio 44306
800-321-2381 • Fax 330-773-3254

info@mussonrubber.com • www.mussonrubber.com