

IMPACT

Manager Supplement

October - December 2005

Making the Decision to Terminate an Employee

Did you know?

- Free “Simple Will” Kits are available from Claremont EAP
- A free credit report is available once per year
- Claremont EAP provides legal referrals for family law, consumer issues, traffic violations, and personal injury
- Referrals are available for child care, adult/eldercare, adoption assistance, school/college selection, and pet care

Claremont EAP
800.834.3773

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When poor performance is the cause, the decision to terminate is a big one, requiring fairness, objectivity and meticulous documentation.



Performance Evaluation

Termination for inadequate performance must be documented in performance evaluations. The evaluation should indicate:

- The area of performance where improvement is required.
- What the employee is required to do to improve performance.

Follow up a poor performance evaluation by counseling the employee on areas where improvement is needed.

Probation

This is the next step if an employee doesn't improve after counseling. An employee on probation should be given:

- A time period in which he or she must improve.
- Clear guidelines as to what reasonable level of improvement must be achieved.

When Improvement Doesn't

Happen

When an employee doesn't improve during the probationary period, you can safely continue with steps to terminate the employee.

Not Enough Improvement

When an employee shows some improvement, but not enough, you must decide if there are circumstances, such as sincere effort or temporary personal crises, that justify giving the employee additional opportunities to improve.

Third-Party Review

Every proposed termination should be reviewed by a third party, such as your supervisor or a personnel officer, to guarantee fairness and objectivity. Your proposed termination should meet three criteria:

1. **Fairness:** Is the employee being required to meet the same standards as other

employees who are not being terminated?

2. **Equity:** Is the employee's behavior or poor performance serious enough to justify termination as opposed to lesser consequences such as demotion or a suspension
3. **Objectivity:** Can you document your decision to terminate with facts such as numbers indicating poor productivity, dates of discussions about performance and terms of probation? Accurate records of poor performance and your steps to correct it will help to sustain your decision if an employee challenges the termination decision.

Motivating Without Money

Some years raises and bonuses are not economically feasible for a company. In both lean and prosperous years, money as a motivation is not necessarily the best approach. If one top salesperson, for example, always wins the bonuses, the rest of the sales staff might give up trying. When a job is enjoyable to an employee, they are “intrinsically motivated” to excel in job performance.

Create Intrinsic Motivation With:

Content

Find ways to alter an individual job enough to be more challenging to the employee completing it. A job that is a challenge, something an employee

can sink their teeth into, is more motivating.

Collaboration

Encourage collaboration within the workplace. When each member participates and sees the quality results, they feel good about their input.

Choice

Allow enough choice in structuring the job so that the employee can take ownership of the project. They will be more motivated to complete the project if they are allowed to make decisions about the job.

Look Out for Burnout

Burnout in an employee or team can lead to depression, confusion, low morale and shoddy work. Keep a lookout for the following indicators:

- Any sudden change in work habits and attitude
- Loss of motivation
- Chronic negativity
- Creative blackout
- Absenteeism/tardiness

Countering Burnout

Use detective work. Do a little digging and locate the cause of the burnout. Counteracting damage already done is tricky and will depend on the employee and work situation.

Missed Promotion or Bonus

Frequently missed cash incentives and being passed over for a promotion can turn an otherwise high-energy employee into a passive participant. Help them find another avenue for achievement, such as a challenging new assignment.

Anxiety

Many downsizing companies expect less employees to complete more work. When employees don't feel they have enough time to adjust, they often feel burned out. Using some creativity in redistributing work within the team can help.

Uncertainty

Most people enjoy consistency in



their job and life. Expect to see burnout if the team works in an atmosphere of frequent long-term change. Firm up those aspects that are within your supervisory control: schedules, minimum hours and short-term assignment deadlines.

Reorganization

Change is always difficult. When your company needs to make changes for its own health, commu-

nication is a key to smoothing the way and reducing burnout. Give advanced notice whenever possible, and involve team members in planning for upcoming changes.

Overwork

Each individual has limits of endurance. Reaching the limits of overwork will cause burnout. Redistribution of responsibilities or breaking down large projects into smaller pieces and short-term goals could alleviate the pressure.

A Plan to Leave the Job

An employee anticipating an upcoming job change will often exhibit classic burnout behavior.

Their work may slip and their attitude may change.

Provide a Release Valve

Venting frustrations and being allowed to talk about the cause of personal burnout will often go a long way to put out the fire. Show the employee that someone cares and help them clear the air and their mind.

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Managers can call Claremont for consultation regarding employees who appear to be experiencing personal problems, whether or not work performance has become an issue. The purpose of this consultation is to help formulate an approach that effectively facilitates the person receiving appropriate help. The Claremont consultant will review the do's and don'ts for handling these often delicate situations and suggest things you can say and do which are most likely to be helpful.