

How To Let Someone Go In The Right Way

Regardless of company size and no matter what the reason, it is always hard to give somebody the bad news that they're losing their job. Even if you think they've been underperforming or you know they'll soon find something else, it's unusual to find joy in letting someone go.

And no matter where you sit within the organization, as a manager or senior leader, knowing that you have to broach the news with the recipient can be uncomfortable at best, and downright daunting at worst. Even if you consider people skills among your strongest, having to deliver such bad news can send even the most composed among us into a tailspin. It's important to take control of the situation, because how and when you break the news can help influence the tone of the ripple effect that is undoubtedly felt by the wider team. During prolonged periods of uncertainty, this matters even more.

There are ways to make it easier (even if it'll never be easy) to tell someone bad news:

Ask for time—don't ambush

Instead, be respectful and ask them if you could have 30 minutes (or however long you need) and then suggest a time and location. This gives them a heads up that something is going on and ensures you will both be able to focus.

Know when to stop talking

It's normal to go into too much detail or spend too much time building up to your point. Or, getting lost in the condiments that accompany so many praise sandwiches—by this, we mean buttering them up with something positive, filling them with the bad news, but finishing with something unnecessarily positive again. It doesn't soften the blow, but merely serves to confuse the message. Instead, script out what you're going to say. And get to the point quickly.

Express that you're sorry

You're a human and you may well have worked with this person for some time—perhaps you even consider them a friend. So, it's ok to say you're sorry and feel bad, if it's genuine. But don't make it all about you.

Give your reasons concisely

Instead of making it about you, focus on the other person and what they need to hear. As per the point above, don't confuse this by being unnecessarily flowery and positive. First, they need to understand—explain the reasoning behind the decision, as clearly as you can. This is why scripting can help you prepare.

Then ask for questions and answer them as best as you can. When you can't answer, say so and offer alternative sources of information.

Explain what comes next

Focus on the person in front of you as they uncertainly wonder what's ahead of them. You may be in a position to tell them about all the support available e.g. outplacement services, offering help as they consider their position and figure out 'now, what?' and 'how?'

Offer to catch up again

To the extent that you mean it and it's appropriate, offer to act as a sounding board/referee/point of information in the future. Not only is it the right thing to do, it's also prudent—not only to manage the implications on the current business, but because one day you may involuntarily lose your job and need your network.

Treating people well as they leave is therefore becoming something employers who really care about employer brand are doing more of. They've realized there is a wide diaspora of ex 'family members' who are now working with competitors, clients and suppliers—ex-employees who may also be talking to the people you are trying to hire.

Offboarding correctly is something too many companies who purport to be in a war for talent forget to do, but it's instrumental reputationally—which matters when it comes to recruitment and retention. So, when it comes to having the difficult conversation, remember to not just make it easier in the moment, but to focus on the longer-term gains.

<https://forbesmiddleeast.com/how-to-let-someone-go-in-the-right-way>