

The WORKPLACE by AMY EDMUNDS

How To Make A Dismissal



Sooner or later almost every employer will have to dismiss someone. Take steps to protect yourself with proper documentation, preserve the dignity of your organization and the employee, and be sensitive to the resulting aftermath.

Write It Down

Mishandling a dismissal can put your company at risk of being sued. To be successful in court requires documentation. You should be prepared to provide at least one dated memo addressed to the employee that spells out specific performance failings over a period of time. You also need proof -- signed by the employee, that you discussed the problems and gave recommendations for improvement. Finally, you'll need a report citing the employee's failure to improve over time.

Types of Dismissals

Proper labeling of dismissals is also essential to minimize becoming entangled in costly lawsuits. Be aware that imprecise wording can affect the dismissed individual's unemployment compensation and leave your firm liable.

FIRING refers to a for-cause dismissal, e.g. theft, sabotage, gross insubordination. Documentation is key in these situations. Disciplinary action must be taken immediately and applied consistently.

TERMINATION refers to failure to perform to expectations. Document and advise the employee.

LAYOFF refers to a status in which the employee is subject to recall. It is not a dismissal.

POSITION ELIMINATION refers permanent elimination of a job because of business conditions. It is not a dismissal.

Breaking the News

Individual circumstances will ultimately dictate the terms of the dismissal. And, no amount of preparation will completely take the sting out of job loss. But careful forethought can ensure that the company is legally protected and that both the dismissed individual and supervisor emerge with their self-esteem intact.

- Make sure you have completed all necessary documentation.

- Explain the exact reasons for the dismissal, being specific in business terms as oppose to personal reasons.

- Don't tell anyone, other than those who have a specific need to know, that an individual will be discharged. A leak will compromise your leadership and increase the employee's resentment. In addition, over publicizing the information makes you liable for a defamation claim.

- Have the individuals' immediate supervisor deliver the message.

- Describe the exit interview process. Realize that the employee may not comprehend all of this at this time. Outline the details of transfer-

ring responsibilities, personal effects, company property, severance, continued health-insurance coverage, etc.

- Listen as the employee vents feelings. Don't argue. Be sympathetic without compromising the decision.

- Be considerate of the employee's dignity. Avoid asking them to clean out their desk or locker immediately and leave, or having a security guard escort the individual from the building. Instead, schedule the meeting near the end of the week and for late in the day. You may encourage them to telephone a friend or family member to pick them up

- Public places, such as restaurants, are favorite settings to reduce the risk of an emotional scene. However, a closed-door session may better preserve the employee's privacy.

Aftermath

Breaking the news to the dismissed employee is not your only task. You must also face the rest of your staff. Here are three steps for minimizing the disruption a dismissal causes among staff members:

Step 1: Prepare yourself. Make sure your feel confident about what you've done.

Step 2: Initiate conversation. Talk openly with the ex-employee's friends to reassure them that their jobs are secure, if that seems necessary.

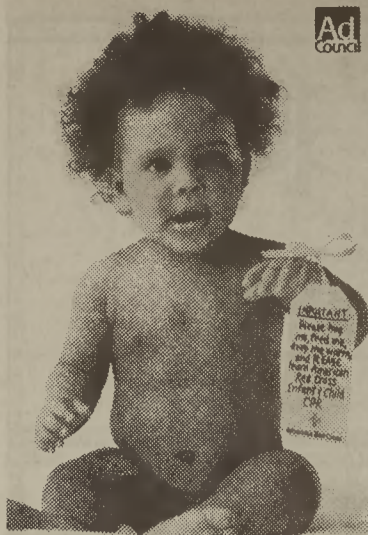
Step 3: Know the law. Disclose the circumstances only to those people who need to know for business purposes.

A Tough Job

Dismissals are a devastating event for the employee. But the experience isn't always that much better on the other side of the desk. It is common to feel some anxiety, guilt or loss. After all, a dismissal is a mutual failure for the manager who thought he hired the right employee for the position. Don't ignore your own need for consolation after the announcement has been made.

If you follow these guidelines, you will have made the best out of something that will always be difficult. You will have demonstrated firm and sensitive leadership to your subordinates, thereby enhancing your effectiveness as a business owner.

Amy Edmunds is the owner of Executive Reflections, an employment service providing temporary help, job readiness, seminars and resume consultations, located in Charlotte.



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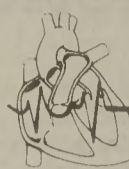
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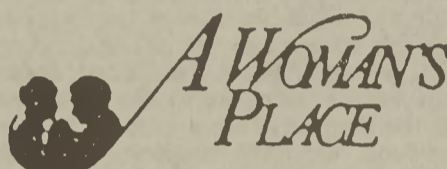
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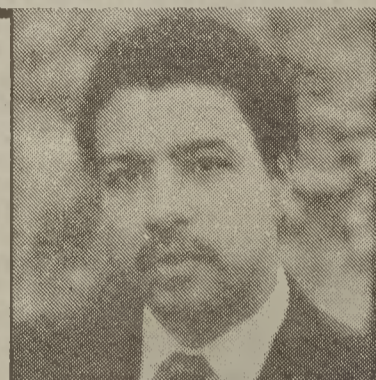
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Conway Teacher Suspended

Continued From Page 1A

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was suspended by Dawsey on Aug. 29 for his involvement in the boycott.

The board reached its decision to fire Singleton after several days of deliberations that followed a four-day hearing that concluded Nov. 10. The board held the hearing to determine whether to fire or reinstate him.

Singleton was dismayed at the board's decision and denied that his actions were disruptive.

"This school board has no justifiable reason for my dismissal whatsoever," Singleton said in a telephone interview from his church office.

The protest began after Conway coach Chuck Jordan replaced

quarterback Carlos Hunt, who is black and who led the team to a winning season a year ago, with

Mickey Wilson Jr., a white teammate.

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