

# Terminating Team Members When You Need To

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## Terminating Team Members When You Need To

No business owner likes to admit they need to make a staffing change. Firing can be difficult, and—in some states or countries—risky if you have not already documented a history of poor on-the-job performance over a period of time.

I've always found the best way to part on amicable terms is to help the employee or independent contractor see that their talents lay elsewhere—either outside of your organization or outside of the job they are doing for you now. An experienced mentor of mine once said, "There are no bad people, just bad situations." It's true. And when it becomes obvious that your employee or contractor isn't performing to your satisfaction or isn't accomplishing what you need from them—and you've tried to resolve the situation with additional training or discussion—it's time to have the final conversation and help them transition out of your organization into a better situation for them (and you).

Before you fire someone, be sure to take steps to safeguard your business—including your customer records, voice mail system, email accounts, passcodes, physical documents and other assets such as equipment, vehicles and supplies. Change computer logins the employee has access to, change voice mail passcodes, redirect email accounts to yourself or other employees you assign for the task, schedule other employees to cover the phones or sales desk, advise outsource vendors that the employee is no longer authorized to give directives and so on—particularly if the terminated employee will be leaving immediately following the meeting.

Before mentioning the termination meeting, be sure to get any specific information you need about projects in process, contact names, sales leads in process, and so on. Additionally, be sure to retrieve any documents or equipment they may have in their possession outside of your office.

My recommendation is that you don't risk your business by letting the terminated employee work longer than a few days after their termination. In fact, many businesses end an employee's onsite presence immediately by walking them to the door. While the termination may be amicable, you cannot predict what a former employee will do to disrupt your operations during their final days or hours on the job—especially if they did not agree with the termination.

Be aware that a layoff is different than a termination. If you are downsizing and must let go some staff members, be sure they realize they are not being fired for poor performance, but merely because there is no future work for them to do or no money left to pay them. In the case of laying off an employee or eliminating their job, follow the same steps to secure your business assets. You may decide to give them several days or a few weeks to finalize projects for you before leaving.

## Planning a Termination

Prior to the termination meeting:

- o Review labor laws for your state or province as they pertain to termination:

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- o Document poor on-the-job performance or unresolved disciplinary issues:

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- o Investigate the status of projects in process:

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- o Secure contact information for key accounts and vendor relationships:

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- o Identify sales leads in process:

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- o Secure important files, documents, webpages, or work product:

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- o Retrieve equipment, keys to the building or offices, computers, laptops, software, directories, cell phones, vehicles or office supplies:

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**Be sure to change, rescind or otherwise safeguard:**

Email Account(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Voice Mail Access \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Customer Records  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signing Authority on Credit Cards, Vendor Accounts, Purchase Orders, Frequent Flyer Accounts, and Shipping Accounts  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sales Leads or Client Account(s)  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Domain or CRM access, logins and passcodes (especially the passcodes to your website's hosting panel and your CRM/shopping cart)  
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