

9 Do's and Don'ts for Firing People - Now with Less Stress and More Confidence

Reduce Stress By Observing These 9 Do's

Prepare

1. Do prepare for any eventuality. See checklist below to get started.
2. Do remember that it is not personal. Like a physician lancing an infected blister this can be done professionally, even well.
3. Do arrange the room so that a pitcher of room temperature water, plastic cups, and a box of tissue is ready. When needed, offer them a tissue by holding the box from the bottom. Or pour a small amount of water in a cup and offer it to them. Learn how to use non-verbal behavior to manage the tissue and water while delivering your message. We model this in our leadership workshops.

Announce

4. Do remember that you are delivering an announcement. Strive for a ten minute delivery but clear your calendar for an hour.
5. Do use both their first and last names to focus formality. Using both names gets their attention and enables them to "get it" that this session is different from previous difficult conversations.
6. Do prepare two sentences that succinctly delivers the message. Pause after delivering it so they can speak. Respond confidently to their concerns with further mini-announcements.

“Bobbie Last-Name, I've decided that we must bring an end to our business arrangement. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.”

Finish

7. Do anticipate what they will say back to you. The adjacent chart is a starting point, not a finished product. Games may be either unintentional manipulation or deliberate sabotage.
8. Do follow the 2 – 3 sentence response rule. Play the “broken record” that your decision is “not reversible” without being heavy handed. Don't make them losers in the game. Handle 3 – 5 objections before closing up.
9. Do bring the announcement to a close by using non-verbal behavior. Stand up, extend your hand to the door and take the first step towards it. Although better modeled via a leadership workshop this principle is something you can practice on your own.

Prepare for any eventuality!

Start with this checklist, then quadruple it based on your business:

- Clearly done discipline process?
- Keys Keycards Personal items
- Security Final pay Goodbyes
- How to inform others in department
- How to get them home if rideshare
- Passwords Files Equipment
- Legal Social media Info Tech
- Documents to sign prior leaving

Possible Games	Possible Responses
Clueless Category	
You mean you're firing me?	Yes. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
Why?!	We've talked on three previous occasions about my expectation for showing up to work on time. Things have not worked. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
I had no idea you were going to do this. It is a complete surprise.	Perhaps it is a surprise. At the same time I'm surprised that our previous discussions didn't give you a clue about the seriousness of this. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
Negotiation Category	
Can I have another chance?	No. We've explored three chances in previous discussions. Things have not worked. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
But Freddie did the same thing. Are you firing Freddie too?	We're not here to discuss Freddie. This is about you. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
This is your fault, not mine!	As the leader I accept responsibility for my actions just as I expect you to accept responsibility for yours. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
Can I just take a demotion and work in that other position where you and I both know I was very successful?	No. I believe you can be successful again in a place with new challenges for you. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
I've already got my car scheduled to go into the shop so this won't be a problem anymore.	In all likelihood you'll discover that your well maintained car will be valuable at your next place. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
Higher Authority Category	
You don't have the power to fire me! Only big boss out of the bigger city can do this!!	Bobbie, I want you to know that I've been authorized to have this conversation with you. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
Wait until you hear from my attorney!	We've checked and double checked everything on our end. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
My mom is going to want to talk to you about this.	I'm comfortable telling your mom the very same thing I'm telling you. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
Heart Strings Category	
But I have two kids – and now no job...	I have every confidence that you'll solve whatever problems come along for taking care of your kids in a responsible manner. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
The crying begins... (Typically the tears are genuine. Don't prolong the session by saying, "I'll give you a few moments to regain your composure.")	Hold the box of tissue and offer one tissue at a time. Don't give away the whole box. Pour one ounce or so of water into a paper cup and slowly refill the cup as they sip. Your goal is to deliver the announcement during the crying not to pause due to the crying.
My debt is so high, my family depends upon me, three pets are waiting at home, my mother just moved in with me, my daughter just started college, my spouse is ill and now you do this to me...	Bobbie, they depend on you because you have demonstrated a certain responsibility. Continue to live up to it as you step into your future. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
Intimidation Category	
This is discrimination! You're just firing me because I'm orange, unlucky with men, more experienced than you, better looking than you, smarter than you, etc.	This is not discrimination. I've double checked to be absolutely sure. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
This is just another one of your harassment and bullying sessions and I'm going to file a formal harassment complaint.	Bobbie, bringing our business arrangement to an end so that both of us can move forward is neither harassment or bullying. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
I'm gonna file another grievance with the union.	This decision in no way steps on the rights you have as a person. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
I'm going to be waiting for you in the parking lot.	Take this threat seriously. Use your organization's security protocol and common sense for safety.
Last Ditch Effort Category	
By firing me you are implying that I've done something wrong or unethical and I find that completely offensive.	I'm not implying anything, Bobbie. I'm telling you directly that things have not worked. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
Please, I am begging you. I'll do whatever is necessary but please just don't fire me.	Bobbie, the time to do whatever is necessary for success has already passed. And I want you to know this decision is not reversible.
Do you have anything else to say besides, "This decision is not reversible?"	No, I believe you've got it now.

Increase Confidence By Managing These 9 Don'ts

Emotion

1. Don't forget the goal. Your objective is to enable them to walk out the door with their head held high, their self-worth intact, ready to step into or up to their next job.
2. Don't let emotion get the better of you. Check your own emotion at the door, get your head straight and focus on leading them to a trailhead for a new path in their life. Be ready to deal with their emotion – whether sad, mad or glad – in a positive, firm and professional manner.
3. Don't try to persuade, influence, trump, coerce or manipulate. Your job is not to convince them that this is the best thing for them. Rather, your job is to deliver the announcement of change.

Intention

4. Don't let your good intentions derail you. Most leaders want to soften the blow because they genuinely care about other people. Often, leaders assume more responsibility than they should because they are great problem solvers. Use caution.
5. Don't offer personal help. It is true that this may be a trying time for them financially, professionally, and perhaps emotionally. Be prepared to refer them to professionals who can help.
6. Don't say "I'm sorry." It is a script that typically does not add value to the message or your goal. Instead it serves as a "softener" that diminishes your clear, firm message.

Delivery

7. Don't negotiate. You are making a simple, firm announcement that the business relationship is over. It is not a time to bargain for second chances, demotions, transfers, different bosses, etc.
8. Don't prosecute your case. Choose one reason for the termination and set it firmly in concrete that you can stand on for the announcement.
9. Don't wait until the end of the day on Friday. It increases the tension for a person who may have to spend the weekend explaining to family and/or friends why they've lost their job. Mid-week/mid-day options are better.



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