

manual, pay close attention to procedures for employee terminations. If they're billed as "guidelines" or "recommendations," there are usually no legal ramifications if you decide not to follow them to the letter. But if the procedures can be construed as club policy, then employees who feel they haven't been fired "by the book" can turn around and claim wrongful discharge.

Exit Lines

In the end, the more grounded you are in the legal and ethical rules of the road, the less likely it is that the next time you give someone the boot, you'll get kicked around in the process.

Happy Endings

When you fire someone, it's easy to get so caught up in the substance that you forget all about form. But fine-tuning your approach can make the whole process more humane—and prevent the kind of bad blood that leads to litigation. Here are a few tips from a well-known executive recruiter, Robert Half, and his book *Robert Half on Hiring*.

● **Do it yourself and in private.** Delegating a dismissal to your assistant is unfair all around. Not only do you lose control of how it's handled, but you also set a bad example for others on your staff.

● **Be prepared.** Have all the relevant paperwork ready: Pink slip, owed pay, memos detailing the amount of pension plans accruing, etc.

● **Don't beat around the bush about why you're firing the person.** And don't try to soften the blow by offering false hope of later reinstatement. What you "promise" in a moment of weakness may come back to haunt you.

● **Start strong.** Try leading into the crusher with a positive evaluation: "You're great with the crew, Joe. I just don't think the job is

keyed to your strengths."

● **Be prepared for severe reactions.** Even though studies show that, except in rare cases, employees expect to be fired, the reality still hits hard. Be sympathetic; give the employee some time to accept the news; then focus on the next steps.

● **Be consistent.** Don't promise termination "fringes," like an extended stay in the club's employee quarters, unless you're prepared to offer the same to the next employee you fire.

● **Consider the ripple effect.** Handle other employees' questions and concerns with reasonable candor. And try passing out some reassuring positive feedback; others may be worried that they're next.

Worth noting

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One study showed that the majority of all firings are the employer's—not the employee's—fault. The prime offenders: bad hiring due to poor screening, interviewing, and reference checking; inadequate training; and shoddy supervision.

The source for this article was Learning International, Inc., a sales and service training company in Stamford, CT.

It's a Fact

A test conducted by the USGA proves that golf shoe spikes with recessed flanges cause far less damage to greens than normal spikes.

The average golf shoe has 12 spikes, and the USGA has computed that a player averages 28 paces per green; 28 paces times 24 spikes means 672 impressions; 672 impressions times 18 greens equals 12,096 impressions per round per player. Assuming the 200 rounds are played each day on a course, the greens receive 2,419,200 impressions daily, or more than 72 million holes each month.

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