



Compassionate Employee Offboarding

A Thoughtful Approach to Employee Termination



Terminating an employee is one of the most challenging tasks for a manager. Even when justified, informing someone that they no longer have a job is difficult. Whether it's your first time or you want to ensure you're handling it correctly, this guide will help you conduct the conversation with heart and compassion.

Given that a termination meeting can be highly emotional for the employee, aim to keep it concise and action-oriented. Focus on the facts and the objectives of the meeting, and maintain this mindset throughout. Remember, it's okay (and recommended) to adopt an empathetic and caring tone during the conversation.

Keep the following in mind

Keep it Short

When it's time to terminate employment, act swiftly. Clearly state your main reasons and keep the conversation concise. This approach ensures the discussion is productive and effective. Be upfront about the situation; clarity is kindness, especially when delivering tough news.

Show Compassion

Regardless of the reasons for dismissal, it's essential to be compassionate. Find a private space to have the conversation away from other employees. Offer your support, such as providing a reference if appropriate. This can help maintain a positive relationship even after the termination.

Be Factual

Your employee may feel angry or sad, but it's crucial to stick to the facts and avoid getting drawn into an emotional conversation. Staying composed will help you communicate effectively and avoid saying anything you might regret.

Don't Discuss Others

Focus solely on the employee in question. Avoid discussing their co-workers as it's neither appropriate nor necessary. This keeps the conversation professional and respectful.

Stick to Your Decision

Remain firm and clear about your decision, regardless of their response. The termination meeting is your opportunity to communicate the decision, provide essential information, and answer relevant questions. Offering false hope will only make the situation harder for both the employee and the company.

Steps for terminating an employee due to redundancy

01 Prepare Written Notice of Redundancy

Draft a written notice of redundancy, ensuring it complies with the Fair Work Act 2009. This document should include the effective date of redundancy, a clear statement explaining the reason for redundancy, the notice period provided (or payment in lieu of notice), and the employee's final employment date. Make multiple copies for the employee, business records, and legal compliance.

02 Collect Evidence Supporting the Termination Decision

Gather evidence to support the reasons for business restructuring and the redundancy of impacted positions. This evidence is essential to demonstrate the fairness and legitimacy of the termination if questioned.

03 Schedule a Pre-Termination Meeting with the Employee

Organise a meeting with the employee as soon as the decision for termination is made. Provide a clear explanation of the reasons for termination and allow the employee to ask questions and discuss their concerns. This transparency helps maintain trust and clarity.

04 Choose an Appropriate Setting for Notification

Select a private and comfortable setting to inform the employee of the termination. The location should allow for a confidential and respectful conversation, away from the ears of other employees, ensuring dignity and privacy.

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Steps for terminating an employee due to redundancy

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05 Notify the Employee of the Termination

In the meeting, explain the reasons for the termination decision and offer support services, such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Hand over the written notice of termination and document the meeting details for your records. Show empathy and understanding throughout the conversation.

06 Discuss Logistics and Next Steps

Address logistical matters such as final pay, the return of company property, termination of IT and system access, and potential references. This part of the discussion helps the employee understand the practical implications and provides them time to process the information.

07 File Termination Documentation

File the written notice of termination, records of meetings, and any supporting documents in the employee's file. Ensure these are stored confidentially for future reference, especially in case of any legal claims or inquiries.

08 Check Local Employment Laws

Always ensure you are up to date with your local employment laws and regulations to ensure the termination process is compliant and fair.

By following these steps with care and consideration, you can handle the termination process with empathy, professionalism, and clarity.

Steps for Terminating an Employee Due to Performance and/or Behaviour

01 Prepare Written Notice of Termination

Draft a written notice of termination that complies with the Fair Work Act 2009 and your company's policies. This document should include the effective date of termination, a concise explanation of the reasons for termination related to performance and/or behaviour, the notice period provided (or payment in lieu of notice), and the employee's final employment date. Make multiple copies for the employee, business records, and legal compliance.

02 Collect Evidence Supporting the Termination Decision

Gather evidence to substantiate the decision for termination, such as performance reviews, documented feedback, records of any warnings or discussions regarding performance or behaviour, and any relevant incidents. This evidence is essential to demonstrate the fairness and legitimacy of the termination if it is ever challenged.

03 Schedule a Pre-Termination Meeting with the Employee

Organise a meeting with the employee as soon as the decision for termination is made. Provide a clear explanation of the reasons for termination and allow the employee to ask questions and express their concerns. This transparency helps maintain trust and clarity.

04 Choose an Appropriate Setting for Notification

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By taking these steps thoughtfully and considerately, you can manage the termination process with empathy, professionalism, and clear communication.

Manage Questions and Emotional Responses:

Be prepared for a range of emotional responses from the employee and have strategies in place to manage these. Offer support and be ready to answer questions they may have about the termination and their future.

In cases of termination, it's crucial to handle the process fairly, transparently, and with sensitivity to the employee's situation. Ensuring compliance with legal requirements and treating the employee ethically should be your top priorities.

Below are some scripts to help you handle these instances with grace.

IF THEY BEGIN CRYING...

"I understand this is a difficult time. Please take these tissues and some water. I'll give you the time you need to collect yourself."

IF THEY BEGIN SHOUTING...

"I understand you're upset by this decision, but shouting won't help. I'd like for us to part ways on good terms because I wish you well in the future. To do so, we need to be able to speak calmly."

IF THEY ASK, "YOU'RE LETTING ME GO? WHAT ABOUT HEIDI?"

"We're not discussing Heidi's performance right now, just yours."

IF THEY SAY, "THIS IS JUST BECAUSE I'M [A MEMBER OF A PROTECTED CLASS]!"

"You are being terminated as a result of well-documented performance issues."

FOR DETAILED QUESTIONS ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT, OR ANY OTHER TOPIC YOU'RE NOT 100% SURE ABOUT

"I'm sorry, I don't know the answer. You'll need to ask an expert about that."

By approaching these conversations with empathy and transparency, you can effectively manage emotional responses and maintain professionalism throughout the process.



Communicating to team members

Terminating an employee is never easy, and sharing this news with the rest of the team can be even more challenging. Here are some recommendations to navigate this situation with sensitivity and professionalism:

Ensure Confidentiality

Before informing the team, make sure the terminated employee is aware of the decision. Respect their privacy and avoid sharing specific details about the termination with the team.

Plan Your Message

Craft your message thoughtfully. Aim to preserve the dignity of the departing employee while reassuring the remaining team members about their own positions. A brief explanation that the individual is no longer with the company is often sufficient.

Be Empathetic

Recognise that the team may feel shocked or worried. They might also need to adjust to changes in their workloads or responsibilities. Show empathy and offer your support to help them through this transition.

Clear Communication

Hold a team meeting, either in-person or virtually, to deliver the news. It's better to communicate verbally rather than via email, as this allows for immediate clarification of any doubts or concerns. Be straightforward yet sensitive in your delivery.

Foster a Supportive Environment

Encourage team members to express their feelings and concerns. Answer their questions honestly while maintaining confidentiality. Remind them that such decisions are made for the overall benefit of the team and the company.

Explain Next Steps

Inform your team about the plan moving forward, whether it involves redistributing tasks or recruiting for the vacant position. This will help alleviate concerns about increased workloads or uncertainty about the future.

Focus on the Future

After addressing the immediate change, steer the conversation towards future projects and goals. This helps refocus the team's attention on their work and maintains their morale and productivity.

Your aim should be to minimise disruption, support the team through the transition, and maintain their morale and productivity

Termination Checklist for Business Owners, HR Professionals, and Managers

Preparing for Termination

1. Prepare Written Notice

- Draft a written notice of termination /redundancy.
- Ensure compliance with the Fair Work Act 2009.
- Include effective date, reasons for termination, notice period, and final employment date.
- Make multiple copies for the employee, business records, and legal compliance.

2. Collect Supporting Evidence

- Gather performance reviews, documented feedback, and records of warnings.
- Compile documentation of business downturn or restructuring plans for redundancy.
- Ensure evidence is detailed and well-documented.

3. Schedule Pre-Termination Meeting

- Organise a meeting promptly after the decision is made.
- Prepare a clear explanation for the termination decision.
- Allow the employee to ask questions and express concerns.

Termination Checklist for Business Owners, HR Professionals, and Managers

Conducting the Termination Meeting

1. Choose Appropriate Setting

- Select a private and comfortable setting for the conversation.
- Ensure confidentiality and respect during the meeting.

2. Notify the Employee

- Clearly explain the reasons for termination/redundancy.
- Offer support services such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Provide the written notice of termination/redundancy.
- Document the meeting details for records.

3. Manage Emotional Responses

- Be prepared for a range of emotional responses.
- Use scripts to handle situations with empathy and professionalism.

Termination Checklist for Business Owners, HR Professionals, and Managers

Post-Termination Procedures

1. Discuss Logistics and Next Steps

- Address final pay, return of company property, and termination of IT access.
- Discuss potential references and other practical implications.
- Allow time for the employee to process the information.

2. File Termination Documentation

- File the written notice, meeting records, and supporting documents confidentially.
- Ensure all documentation is stored securely for future reference.

3. Check Local Employment Laws

- Verify compliance with local employment laws and regulations.
- Ensure the termination process is fair and transparent.

4. Communicate to Team Members

- Ensure confidentiality and respect for the terminated employee.
- Plan your message to maintain the dignity of the departing employee.
- Be empathetic and address team members' concerns.
- Hold a team meeting to communicate the news clearly.
- Foster a supportive environment and encourage open communication.
- Explain next steps and focus on the future.

For more information visit:

Fair Work Australia

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>



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