



#EPICFAILS: Firing & Offboarding Gone Wrong

Introduction

Face it: Not all employees end up meeting expectations. Maybe they weren't cut out for the job. Lacked skills. Had a bad attitude. Couldn't keep up. Whatever the reason, there comes a time in the life of a hiring manager when you become the *firing* manager. And while you might secretly wish you could dole out the bad news as masterfully as Donald Trump does, you simply can't.

The reality is that no job is permanent these days. Relationships last, good or bad—and you're in a business of relationships. When it comes to the *firing* and offboarding processes, you need to focus on what is salvageable.

Of course, that's easier said than done. When you're face to face, delivering the news, there are *right* ways to proceed—and then there are the often indecorous behaviors to which many people fall prey.

Take a look at the following incredibly common mistakes in firing and offboarding, then learn how to avoid them, keep your cool, and ultimately extend your recruiting power.



Source: <http://thecareerist.typepad.com/.a/6a0120a9220c59970b01901be1e90b970b-pi>

Mistake 1: The fear-driven public shaming

Look, we get it. Firing someone isn't easy. It's hard for you and it can be unpredictable. You don't want a scene so don't think you can hide behind a crowded room. It helps no one.

- Always keep privacy and respect at the forefront of your interactions with any employee you are dismissing.
- Select a quiet, closed venue, and give the employee space to digest what you're saying, consider the situation, and ask questions to clarify the company's position on the matter.
- Remember, we live in a highly litigious world. Your company relies on you to be fair and compliant, so document everything related to an employee's termination and offboarding. There is no way you can succeed here if you fire someone publicly with no way to track what's happened.
- Want your key fobs, badges, and access tokens back? Then bear in mind that everything you say and do when you fire someone will impact the subsequent offboarding process and affect the trust someone has in you and the company's brand at large. You get trust by *giving* trust.

Mistake 2: The post-interview tweet fest

You just went through an uncomfortable thing. And maybe it didn't go smoothly. It happens, right? You just need to vent a little. Just 140 characters of #hegotfired and #neversawitcoming and #awkwardmuch. But...no. This is 100% *most definitely* not the time for social media.

- First of all, if you're tweeting, other people are reading—including the employee you just let go. Social media is vital to recruiters and hiring managers, but the messages have to remain civil, professional, and centered on building an exceptional employment brand.
- For the sake of personal privacy, corporate legality, and human decency, always keep what happens behind closed doors private if it affects someone's livelihood.
- Don't mistake the need for personal privacy with keeping the whole team in the dark. If you have to fire someone, people *will* talk. You can control the situation up front by providing facts as early as possible.

Mistake 3: The silent treatment

Sometimes it's easier to keep the dialogue to a minimum when you're firing someone. You don't have hours to dissect it all, and the more you discuss things, the more you might dig a hole or say the wrong thing. You're just trying to do your job, not become a therapist. Isn't that okay?

- Well, sort of. A bewildered, newly fired ex-employee is a dangerous thing—but a clued-in, newly fired employee has an opportunity for learning and redemption.
- Unless you really do work with a Top Secret clearance, this isn't the time to act coy and secretive. If you're letting someone go, you need to tell them *why*. This is how they improve from the experience.
- If you're just the messenger, or you don't have enough information to provide helpful details, then don't proceed with the termination process until you're ready and informed. Maybe that means requesting additional facts from a supervisor or even handing off the task to a counterpart. Your goal should be to create a factual setting where the employee being let go has enough understanding of the situation to depart without confusion.



Source: <http://i.imgur.com/zwgtLuG.jpg>

Mistake 4: The monologue

Contrary to the folks who would rather not converse, some people want to do *all* the talking — even in the exit interview. That’s how you control the situation (or so it seems). The problem with that scenario is that you don’t get an opportunity to hear how the other side feels. And that’s important.

- Whether you’re firing someone or conducting an exit interview, say what you have to say. Be as thorough as possible in your expectations and requests. But then *be quiet and listen*.
- The offboarding process is designed to help the company get vital information about what went wrong. You want to hear about any issues the employee might have had and understand any problem areas that can be addressed. Ask the kinds of questions that elicit useful responses.
- Think about *why* this person didn’t work out. Was it a poor fit? A skill issue? Resist the urge to be overly vocal or lay blame. Sometimes if people act poorly or don’t fit in, it’s not their fault—it’s yours as a company. After all, *you’re the company that hired them*. Be engaging and transparent enough throughout the process that people feel it’s okay to tell you where they think something went wrong.



Source: <http://1.bp.blogspot.com/>



Mistake 5: The burning of the bridges

Let's be honest: The process of firing and offboarding an employee is rarely all rainbows and unicorns. Things can get ugly. Voices can elevate. Tempers can flare. You are discussing careers, but beyond that, you're often discussing *personalities*. There might be accusations, misunderstandings, and even hurt feelings—no matter what your position or how many years you've been around the sun. When the bridge is right in front of you, and someone hands you a torch... well, it's tempting to view it as a solution. But it's not. For either side.

- It's okay to say *goodbye*—but never say good *riddance*. Aside from being a legal no-no, expressions of vitriol can do irreparable damage to your personal reputation *and* the reputation of your company.
- Even if *you* can't foresee a way to work with this person again, your competitors might leap at the opportunity to grab someone from your organization. Don't give anyone a reason to spill secrets or bad-mouth the company. And if they *do* join a competitor, remember that people change. They mature and gain experience. Someone who wasn't a fit for your company this year could become an invaluable asset down the road. Or maybe you just don't want them stabbing you in the back.
- Finally, while you're not required to connect with every colleague on LinkedIn or Facebook, don't make a display of unfriending people after they leave the company. Social networking exists for a reason—because connections and relationships last long after people change jobs.

Now...Learn from your mistakes

No one wants to be fired, and no one wants to do the firing. But things happen, don't they? It's important to step up and perform the act—as well as all subsequent offboarding processes—with professional decorum and an eye on the future. Think of firing like the evil twin of recruiting. If you want to ensure the long-term respectability of your employment brand, you need to conduct one task as effectively and professionally as you do the other.

For more information on building an employment brand worth protecting, visit www.jobvite.com