

MILLENNIUM— Leadership Capsules for the 21st Century

Capsule #6—Ending Employment Relationships

Facilitation and Self-Study Guide

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Looking to the Millennium

I remember 1970. I had just graduated from high school and was getting ready to head off to university. Leaving home seemed a wonderful adventure and I was filled with awe at the opportunities and anxiety at the uncertainty. I remember thinking how significant it was that this huge milestone in my life had fallen at the beginning of a new decade.

I also remember thinking that in 3 more decades—an eternity, it would be the end of the millennium. I thought of how funny it would be to be part of the graduating class in the year 2000. What would they be called? The class of zero?

And now, here we are. Eternity didn't really take very long at all. But in those thirty years it seems that everything has changed.

We used to pop popcorn on the stove. My children find this idea fascinating. “Why didn't you use the microwave?” they ask. We all worked in office buildings or factories. Now many of us run businesses in our homes or telecommute. We used to get a job and keep it forever. In 1970 people in the United States were amused by the little cars coming out of Japan and derided their quality. In 1970 there was no CNN. In 1970 there was no cellular telephone industry. In 1970 no one owned a home computer. A Macintosh was an apple—the kind you eat. The world was clearly divided into the good guys (us) and the bad guys (remember them?).

A millennium feels like something really big. Historically, that's been true. In the first century, paper was invented in China. It has taken 2000 years for us to develop a better medium for recording information. Around the same time, the city of London was founded by the Romans. Events happened of such tremendous historical and spiritual consequence that they still have a profound impact on our lives today.

So it is with those familiar feelings of awe at the opportunities mixed with anxiety at the uncertainty of it all that I look ahead at the millennium on whose doorstep we stand. Things will be profoundly different. They already are. Changes in how we do what we do happen at speeds that are mind-numbing.

Our organizations face these same forces. They are scrambling to redefine themselves so that they will remain relevant in a world that is in a state of constant, rapid flux. Charting the course, setting the mission, sharing a vision, opening to new learning have become the key skills that leaders need. But what does that mean on a day to day basis? How does being a LEADER change how you hire people? Or fire people? Or provide feedback? Or coach your team?

We need to create bridges between where we are coming from and where we are going. That is the purpose of this series. MILLENNIUM—Leadership Capsules for the 21st Century is 7 short bridges linking management functions and leadership skills. Each 15 minute capsule is a thought provoking discussion of the issues managers, supervisors, team leaders and others playing a leadership role in their organizations face daily. They can be used as part of a comprehensive learning experience or as refresher material to revisit concepts already explored. They can be presented in a facilitated classroom setting or as part of a self-directed study program. They are versatile tools designed to support a wide range of learning situations.

In my collaboration with a team of extraordinary leaders, I've learned a tremendous amount while producing MILLENNIUM. I hope you will find the series as rewarding to work with as I have.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robt Rosell." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "R".

Robert Rosell
Producer

How to Use this Guide

Program Format

MILLENNIUM—Leadership Capsules for the 21st Century contains seven different programs:

- #1 Leadership Is . . .
- #2 The Leader as Coach
- #3 The Leader as Mentor
- #4 Providing Performance Feedback
- #5 Beginning Employment Relationships
- #6 Ending Employment Relationships
- #7 In Compliance

The material in the MILLENNIUM capsules looks at the practical skills that are necessary to be a leader in today's complex and ever changing world. It introduces viewers to the all-important notion that each of us, at one time or another, no matter what our position in an organization, must be leaders in the 21st century. Throughout the series, experts provide us with practical ideas about leadership, and help us prepare for the realities of leading in the next millennium. The material in this booklet supports the video capsule you will be using.

Using the Guide

The material in MILLENNIUM is complex and requires a good amount of reflection, and a willingness to practice known and new skills. For that reason each of the booklets is divided into three parts:

- Part One Reflecting on the Material Covered in the Leadership Capsule
- Part Two Discussing the Capsule
- Part Three Working with the Material Presented in the Capsule

The support material can be used in three different ways: for self-study, for team presentation and discussion, or for direct facilitation.

Self-Study Approach

If you are using this material for self-study, the best way to benefit from the topic being covered is to turn to Part One of the booklet and complete the exercises. Most of the exercises presented help you explore the topic through your own experiences and ideas. Continue with this approach by viewing the entire video capsule. Following the video, reflect on the questions in Handout 5 of the Guide, comparing your own ideas with those expressed by the experts in the video. You may prefer to continue by reading through Part Two, which is a synopsis of comments presented in the video. Move onto Part Three and complete the exercises.

Team Approach

A team would do best by following the self-study method outlined above. Each team member could individually complete the exercises presented in Part One, and then view the video together. Following seeing the video, the team could engage in a discussion of the material. This discussion can be facilitated by the questions and responses offered in Part Two. The team can elect to complete the follow-up exercises and activities in Part Three individually or as a group.

Facilitation Approach

If the MILLENNIUM series is used as a training, the method of how to use this book would vary slightly to those outlined previously. The facilitator of the training should view the video capsule first. Following the viewing of the video, (s)he can review the exercises in Part One. A decision can be made about how or if any of these exercises would be incorporated in the training presentation for the capsule. As a part of constructing the training design, the facilitator can elect which questions would be used for discussion. These can be found in Part Two. In the same way, the exercises offered in Part Three can be reviewed, and a decision made as to which ones would be incorporated into the training.

All exercises, activities, and discussion questions are sequentially presented to follow the presentation of the material in the video capsule. All printed materials for all three formats is contained in this booklet. Handouts for participants are located throughout the booklet.

The only additional materials needed for exercises and activities are either a black or white board or flip charts for writing observations or recording information from brainstorming or other activities.

Discussion Questions for the Capsules

A list of discussion questions is presented in the booklet. This page can be copied and distributed to participants when the program is being used for training. Part Two contains a summary of material covered in the program as it relates to these questions.

Handouts and Photocopying Rights

Handouts pages that are part of the training are located throughout the program booklets. There are approximately three to five activities contained in “Part Three: Working with the Material” section of each program booklet. Trainers need only to decide which of the activities and exercises would be relevant for individual distribution, and have copies made. With the purchase of the MILLENNIUM—Leadership Capsules for the 21st Century series, Quality Media Resources, Inc. grants you license to make as many copies of this guide or the handout pages as you need for your organization. However, copying the videos is illegal.

Bibliography for MILLENNIUM

The bibliography includes works that relate to leadership and working in the 21st century. It is not a definitive list, but rather is intended to assist individuals or teams of workers who are interested in expanding their understanding and knowledge about leadership, and related leadership topics for the 21st century workplace.

MILLENNIUM—

Leadership Capsules for the 21st Century

Capsule #6—Ending Employment Relationships

Part One: Reflecting on Ending Employment Relationships

“Ending Employment Relationships,” the sixth capsule in the *Millennium* series deals with the following concepts:

- Changing work situations are being driven by new technologies and a revolution in the delivery of information.
- Ending work situations in organizations is occurring more frequently now than ever before in history.
- Determining goals in terminating our work relationships.
- Helping leaders learn how to end work relationships for the benefit of all parties involved in the termination.
- Exploring alternatives to termination.
- Practicing skills that help leaders responsibly end work relationships.

Reflecting on Personal Ideas

When you started out in your first job did you ever anticipate that it wasn't going to last forever? Today few people in their forties or fifties ever thought that they would be moving in and out of different work situations. Yet, we know that there are more and more of us who are changing careers with more frequency than we ever expected, and future forecasters predict that fifty percent of the jobs that will be done in the 21st century haven't even been created. We are living in a time of discontinuity. Technological advancement, simplified communicational delivery systems, and global interdependency and networking are changing what we do and how we do it.

Knowing why things are happening doesn't always make the impact they have on our life more palatable. Losing work, or being in a leadership position that requires you to facilitate the termination of another person's job is difficult. It will continue to be difficult if we don't shift the paradigm into new ways of thinking, visioning and acting.

However, people are resilient and creative. When pushed to the edge they know how to get out of a jam. Nonetheless, not too many of us are planners. Even though we know that everything around is changing, we still continue acting as if these changes won't affect us. How many of us have been proven wrong?

The activities below have two foci: considering work and the security that it affords us, and reflecting on our skills and seeing how they can be improved and multiplied in the future. As we enter the 21st century we have to consider all of our options. As a leader, helping others end their employment, or realizing that our own work is ending with an organization, the level of stress and frustration dealing with these situations can be high. One of the only ways of lessening the angst that we feel is to realize that change is here to stay, and with it comes demands that we may never have envisioned in the past.

Talk with the Animals

Handout 1

This is an old Yoruba tale from West Africa. It provides a glimpse into helping us see that not all of our fates are prescribed in stone, or for that matter, pots of palm oil. Taking care of ourselves and seeing that our lives are secure takes more than talk, hoping for miracles or relying on the ingenuity of someone else.

One day, out of frustration, all of the animals came together. There was monkey, goat, sheep, elephant, tiger and many others, chattering away. First spoke elephant, “We know why we are here, it’s that large pack of animals, the humans—they’re killing and maiming us.” It is obvious, said the alligator, “they have no respect for us.” “What can we do?” hooted the old owl. Then quietly, the sparrow chirped up, “what if we become humans, then all of our problems would be solved. We’d have nothing to fear again.” But how could this happen? There was much pondering, and many sighs before zebra spoke, “Let’s go to the Creator, and ask for help.”

“Who will go,?” said the giraffe. “Let us choose lots,” said the goat. “The ones with the longest sticks, can go.”

So off the animals went to see the Creator. When they arrived at the entrance to the sky, the Creator welcomed them and listened to their stories of how humans were killing animals and using their parts to decorate their homes. They told how some humans were putting animals in cages—forcing them to stay there for no reason that the animals knew. The Creator saw the fear in some of their eyes when they told how humans even had no respect for the largest animals of the jungle. “What do you want me to do?” asked the Creator. In unison, the animals all replied, “change us into humans.” “Why?” asked the Creator. “Because then we will be just like them, and they won’t bother us again,” spoke up lion.

“I will help you,” said the Creator, “but you must remember that your destiny is yours for the making. Words are easy to say, but you must act on your needs—that will make the difference.” The Creator continued by giving instructions to the animals. “Tomorrow evening when it is dark go to the big village, where the humans live. At the crossroads you will see a huge pot of palm oil. Take your paws and rub it all over your body. You will change into whatever you need to be. But you won’t change into humans.”

The animals thanked the Creator and scurried off to wait for the next day. All night long they paced back and forth, worrying if the palm oil would work. What if the Creator had made a mistake? Why wouldn’t they be able to turn into humans? What would they become? Night turned into day, and still they paced and worried. The sun was high, and it was very hot when suddenly monkey remembered that they needed to go into town. He led the way.

When the animals came upon the pot they found that all of the oil had dried up in the heat of the day. Sadly, the animals remembered the words of the Creator—“you must act on your needs.” They had been too busy worrying to think about what was happening to the oil in the hot sun.

The Moral of the Story

What will it take to be secure in the future? What's your pot of palm oil?

We need to envision a picture of security that encompasses our whole selves—work, health, skills, technology, shelter and finances. But the real security of the future will not just be individual. It will rest on the security of others. The animals had the right idea—they approached their problem as a group. However, the solution to their problem was a little convoluted.

Certainly their first mistake was to think their security rested in being something they couldn't be. The second—they didn't act on their needs. The third—they didn't trust in their ability to change. What's the moral of the story? Security is something more than what's in the pot of palm oil. Perhaps that realization alone can help each of us take a closer look at our own needs.

Security has lots of different meanings.

Security is about reducing anxiety and increasing safety. It is about protecting ourselves financially and physically. And it is about providing a plan to believe in our own abilities. No matter how much we may try to convince ourselves and others differently, the majority of our destinies is ours for the making.

So how do we go about practicing security in our lives? Below is a list of a few things to consider. Write out your responses to each. Determine which are more perplexing or problematic for you? Which are the ones you should think about doing immediately. Which are the most important to you professionally?

1. What does security mean to you in your current work?
2. How will your work change over the next few years?
3. What skills have you always wanted to work on? How can they be used in your work now and in your future work?
4. What do you need to do to plan ahead two years? 5 years?

Talk with Ourselves

Handout 2

Occasionally we all think back to the traumatic moments we have experienced in our lives. At the time the event was occurring, you might have been fearful, even wondering “how can I get out of this one?”. Somehow you managed to pull through—and you were the stronger for it. True? More than likely it is.

Pick a crisis in your life. Preferably one that is related to work. Answer the following questions:

1. What sustained you during that crisis?
2. What skills did you use to help you get through the crisis?
3. What were the lessons learned from this experience?
4. How are you using these lessons today to help yourself? To help others?
5. If you aren't using these lessons, how can you start using them now?

Talk with Others

Handout 3

The one thing about being a leader is being honest. It's about tapping into helping people understand what is going on around them. With the kinds of changes we have been experiencing, and the escalation of these changes in the future, people's lives are always going to be changing. Individuals need to think about change, need to know how to work with it, anticipate it, and they need people who they consider to be their leaders to help them learn how to cope with the future, and prepare for it.

Consider the questions below. After answering them, determine how you can help communicate with people in a more straightforward and frequent manner.

Talk with Others Survey

Mark yes or no on the survey.

	Yes	No
1. Do people who work with you know how the organization is doing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do most people feel secure in their job?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do most people have a coach?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do most people have a mentor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Is performance feedback a regular built in part of the work routine in your organization?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Are people offered avenues to build their skills and learn new ones?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do people share ideas and concerns within their team and with you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do people talk about the future, and how it will impact their lives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ideally, the answer to all questions should be yes. If they weren't, what can you do to change that? Record your ideas below. Prioritize your ideas. Consider how others can be brought into the process of helping to transform your "no's" into "yes's."

Plan of Action

1. What do I need to do differently?
 -
 -
 -
2. What do I need to do to involve others in changing the way that we communicate at work?
3. What do I need to do to help people continue learning and growing in new and better ways?
4. What do I need to do to see that a coaching and mentoring system is put in place?
5. What do I need to do to help people understand what is happening with the organization?

Part Two: Watching The Video Capsule

Watch the video in its entirety. The questions below have been provided to help you center a discussion around the concepts it presents. When necessary, restructure and add to the questions in order for the discussion to best suit your own organization.

1. In today's organization, what are some of the reasons for terminating the employment relationship?

- Technological advances

In the face of technological advancement and the revolution in our communications systems, organizations' needs are changing. Jobs that in the past required simple manual skills and little, if any, interface with others, today require highly technical skills and interface with others not only in person but via a multitude of communication channels. In such a changing environment, an employee's job can often "out grow" the employee's skills. Where there is no longer a match between the two, the organization (or the individual) may decide to terminate the employment relationship.

- Organizational restructuring

At the same time as the 21st-century organization is racing to keep up with technological advancements, these organizations are finding the need to restructure, consolidate, or merge with other organizations in order to remain competitive. As a part of this restructuring, jobs are often restructured, consolidated, or eliminated as part of the effort to make the organization operate as effectively and efficiently as possible. This often results in the termination of employment relationships that no longer benefit the organization.

- Individual change

Similarly, we as individuals have needs that may no longer be met by the organizations in which we work. This can happen because of changes in our personal lives or changes in our organizations with which we are not comfortable. In either case, we too are often faced with the decision of terminating the employment relationship and "moving on" in order to ensure our own happiness and fulfillment.

In short, we are faced with terminating the employment relationship when the needs of either the organization or the individual can no longer be met by continuing the relationship.

2. What are a leader's goals in ending an employment relationship?

First and foremost, the goal of a leader in terminating the employment relationship is to strengthen the organization. If this cannot be accomplished via the termination, the termination is not the appropriate vehicle for change.

Second, the leader's goal is to help the individual open new doors that better utilize his/her skills. Leaders recognize that today's employee may be tomorrow's customer.

3. What are appropriate criteria for terminating the employment relationship?

The employment relationship should be terminated for one of two objective, job-related reasons: (1) performance issues, or (2) job elimination.

- **Performance** The mere fact that a leader does not like the person or the person's style are not appropriate job-related factors. Similarly, an employee should not be terminated because of stereotypical notions (e.g., terminating an older employee with performance issues because "you can't teach an old dog new tricks") or for other unlawful reasons (e.g., because the employee blew the whistle on what the employee believed to be an unlawful practice).

Rather, a termination based on performance should simply be a reflection of the individual's inability to get his/her job done in the manner the organization sees as necessary. Except in the cases of gross misconduct, the individual should have been given an opportunity to change.
- **Job elimination** In circumstances where several incumbents hold the same position, it is again important that job performance be a factor in the termination decision. Other factors could include: longevity with the organization and growth potential.

4. How do you determine that an employee who is to be terminated is being treated fairly?

Let there be no surprises! The termination decision should never be a surprise to the terminated employee. If it is for performance-related reasons, the individual should have been counseled and warned about these issues long before the termination decision. If it is for gross misconduct, the individual should have known that such conduct would result in termination.

5. What are the alternatives to terminating the employment relationship?

Often the employee's values and work ethic match that of the organization's, but the employee's skills do not match the organization's needs. In such circumstances it may be worthwhile to the organization to consider alternatives to terminating the employment relationship. These might include:

- **Training** Training the employee so that (s)he can learn the skills needed or learn new skills to perform other positions in the organization.
- **Reassignment** Transferring the employee to a vacant position for which (s)he is already qualified. This could be in the same department or another branch of the organization.
- **Restructure position** Restructuring the employee's job so that (s)he can continue to perform those functions (s)he does well and others can assume responsibility for the functions the employee lacks the skill to perform.
- **Voluntary resignation** Consider allowing the employee to resign in lieu of termination. This will better enable the employee to get future employment because (s)he will not have to indicate on employment applications and in interviews that (s)he was terminated.
- **Create a job bank** When reducing the work force to meet the organization's needs, consider creating a job bank or clearing house. Maintain resumes of individuals who have been laid off so that others in the organization can rely on this job bank to find reliable, qualified employees for open positions in the organization.

6. What procedures should be followed when ending an employment relationship?

- **Review the record** Review the documentation in the employee's file to ensure that it supports the termination decision.
- **Follow progressive discipline steps** Review the organization's discipline/termination policies, if any. Ask yourself if you have given the employee every opportunity to change his/her performance. If you have used progressive discipline or counseling, the employee should be aware of his/her performance issues and the fact that the failure to change them can and will result in termination.
- **Second opinion** Consider a "second opinion" by a human resource professional or another manager to evaluate the reasons for termination and consistency in treatment with similarly situated employees.
- **Severance package** If the employee is to receive a severance package, it should be put in writing and shared with the employee in the termination interview.
- **Avoid loose ends** Try to settle all matters in the termination interview, such as: the employee's last day of work; when the employee will get his/her final pay check; eligibility for bonus or other forms of incentive compensation; amount of severance pay, if any; rights to convert life and/or medical insurance coverage; repayment arrangements for outstanding loans; any agreements with respect to confidentiality of information and post-employment restrictions; return of property, credit cards, keys, books, materials; re-employment rights, if any; and how responses to post-employment inquiries will be handled.

7. How should the final decision to end the employment relationship be presented to the employee?

Although it is an unpleasant and difficult job, the termination decision should be communicated in a person-to-person termination interview. Put yourself in the shoes of the person being terminated: What would you want said to you? What would you not want to be said? When and where would you like to have the decision presented?

Treat the employee with respect and dignity. The termination interview should be conducted one-on-one or with another management witness. Select a quiet, private spot away from telephones and interruptions. Maintain a professional and even-tempered approach. Do not intentionally embarrass or distress the employee. Give the employee

time to pull himself or herself together before leaving. Remember: The employee is not a bad person because (s)he could not meet the organization's expectations.

Be clear and direct. As soon as the employee has been comfortably seated, get right to the point, but do so in a kind and supportive way. Clearly communicate that the employee is being terminated. Briefly describe what led to the decision. Be factual in discussing the reasons for termination.

Be open and honest. Give the honest and specific reasons for termination.

Be empathetic. Try to ease the blow by honestly pointing out that the termination is a mutual disappointment. Remind the individual that (s)he has strengths but that those strengths are not what the organization needs. Beware, however, of going overboard in any "apology" or "praise" for the employee. This could confuse the employee as to why (s)he is being terminated (e.g., "if I'm so great, why are you terminating me").

Listen. Allow the employee to vent his/her frustrations or feelings; do not attempt to convince the employee that (s)he is wrong and you are right.

Review severance package. Briefly review with the employee his/her severance package, if one it to be provided. Impress upon the person the importance of carefully reading it later.

Tie-up loose ends. Make arrangements to collect the organization's property in the employee's possession, including computer equipment, keys, credit cards, and documents. The employee should turn in these items to you by the end of the day.

Say thank you! In concluding the interview, remember to thank the terminated employee for his/her service to the organization.

8. What should happen in a successful termination discussion with the employee?

Both you and the employee should be able to leave the interview with your self-esteem intact.

9. What needs to be done after the termination?

Communicating the termination decision. It is important to consider what will be said to the remaining employees about the termination of the employment of one of their colleagues. While the specific reasons for termination are often confidential, the fact of the person's departure is not. Colleagues need to be given an opportunity to react to the news and then to look forward to considering who will assume the terminated employee's tasks, what will be delegated, when the transfer of duties will occur, etc.

Remember: The remaining employees will judge your organization by how fairly they perceive you have treated others, including those who have been terminated.

The exit interview. The termination interview can be an emotional experience. Neither you nor the person being terminated are in a position to "look forward." For this reason it is helpful to conduct an "exit interview" with a terminated employee. Use this interview to ask the employee for feedback: What could the organization do differently? How does the employee feel about her/his employment with the organization? What are the individual's strengths and how can they be better used in future employment?

Part Three: Working with the Material

The activities that follow are intended to help you terminate the employment relationship in a fair and constructive manner. They can be done individually or used with a team of individuals who are involved in the termination process.

How Would You Feel?

Handout 5

List the feelings that you might experience if you had just been told that your employment was terminated?

-
-
-
-
-

Some of these feelings are inherent in the experience and nothing can be done to alleviate them. Others are the result of what the organization has or has not done. For each feeling you listed, identify what, if anything, the organization could do to alleviate or even eliminate the feeling.

List the feelings that you might have as a manager when you tell an employee that (s)he is being terminated?

-
-
-
-
-

Again, some of these feelings are inherent in the task of communicating the termination decision. Others can be “managed.” For each feeling you listed, is there something you could do as a manager to alleviate or eliminate the feeling?

How Would You Want To Be Treated? Handout 6

How would you want to be treated in the termination interview? List your ideas.

How would you not want to be treated in the termination process?

What Should and Should Not Be Handout 7

Visualize the “perfect” termination interview where the termination is for poor performance. Then list what it should be and what it should not be.

What I should Say

What I should not Say

What I should Do

What I should not do

Termination due to Layoff

Handout 8

What might you say or do differently if the employee is being terminated because of job elimination rather than for poor job performance?

What I should Say

What I should not Say

What I should Do

What I should not do

Treating Employees Fairly

Handout 9

The termination should be carried out in a fair and consistent manner. If you are considering the termination of an employee for violating organizational rules or policies, ask yourself the following questions. If you answer “no” to any of these questions, consider whether termination is appropriate at this point in time.

	Yes	No
Did the employee violate a rule, directive, policy or order?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the rule valid and reasonable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the employee aware of the rule?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the employee know he was violating it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the employee receive adequate warning or notice and opportunity to correct his/her behavior and comply with the rule?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have other employees been terminated for violating the same rule?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the employee treated fairly and with no discrimination?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you follow the required disciplinary procedure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the penalty fit the “crime?”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did someone else review the discipline?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What Went Wrong?

Handout 10

Consider the following situation and then answer the questions below:

Walter, Accounting Services Supervisor, has been frustrated with Constancia's (an accounting specialist who is hispanic and just turned 51) performance for sometime. Because of his travel schedule, he has not had time to discuss his concerns with her. He is now back in the office for the next two weeks and decides it is time to "take on this problem."

Walter speaks to Constancia about her performance. Walter tells her she needs to get reports out more quickly. Constancia replies that she is doing the best she can without any support staff. Walter states that, nevertheless, Constancia must do better. Constancia says that this is the first she has heard of this problem, noting that she received a high rating on her last SDR. She asks for recommendations. Walter has none.

Walter then gets busy and is out of the office everyday for almost one month. When he returns, he finds that Constancia is late in completing the project reports for that month. Walter decides that he must have someone more reliable than Constancia and decides to "let her go."

Walter meets with Constancia and tells her that he has "counseled" her about her shortcomings. Constancia says she recalls no counseling discussions. Looking at her personnel file, Walter realizes that he did not document their earlier discussion. He does remind her that in August they discussed the need to get reports out more quickly, and that she is now late with the project reports.

Constancia begins to get upset when she sees what is coming. Walter does not want to devastate her, so he says that he has to make personnel cuts and that he is laying her off.

The next day Walter asks his secretary to complete a requisition form for a new accounting specialist.

1. Was Constancia's termination justified?
2. What should Walter have done prior to terminating Constancia?
3. What are the legal implications of this termination?

The Difficult Interview

Handout 11

Read the following scenario and prepare your outline for the termination interview. Ask another colleague to role-play with you so that you can try your skills in a safe environment. After you have “terminated” your colleague, ask them for their feedback on how they felt, what you did well, and what you could have done differently.

One of your employees has been plagued with high numbers of employee and customer complaints about her abrupt and abusive style of communication. You have counseled this employee on a number of occasions, given her customer service training, and given her timelines in which to improve—all to no avail. You recognize that you have probably tolerated this manager’s performance longer than you should have because you like her and wanted to see her succeed. You have finally determined, however, that the employee does not have the skills necessary for her customer service manager’s position and you see that you have no choice but to terminate her employment.

Questions for Watching the Video

Handout 4

1. In today's organization, what are some of the reasons for terminating the employment relationship?
2. What are a leader's goals in ending an employment relationship?
3. What are appropriate criteria for terminating the employment relationship?
4. How do you determine that an employee who is to be terminated is being treated fairly?
5. What are the alternatives to terminating the employment relationship?
6. What procedures should be followed when ending an employment relationship?
7. How should the final decision to end the employment relationship be presented to the employee?
8. What should happen in a successful termination discussion with the employee?
9. What needs to be done after the termination?

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