

## **Terminating Employment of a Poor Performer—Part 2**

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Today's article is an extension of last week's. We continue in a disciplinary conversation with the poor performer. (Missed last week's article? Contact me--see below.)

Identify a time period (minimum of a month, maybe three to six months) during which you will monitor very closely the process and the results for the identified tasks. Tell the employee that if the actual performance equals or exceeds the desired performance for that period, you will reduce the close supervision. If the performance continues to be unacceptable, you will take further disciplinary action, up to and including termination. (Be sure you say and write those final five words!)

Point out that the decision for future employment is up to the employee. If he performs as expected, he continues to be employed. If his performance remains unacceptable, he will have chosen to terminate his employment. Make it very clear that his future is his choice, not yours.

If his performance remains unacceptable, you'll be faced with the hard task of having to inform him that his employment is terminated. Prepare yourself to do that. If you so desire, you may explain that it will be a difficult experience because you like him, but you can't continue to keep employed someone who cannot or will not perform the functions for which the organization is paying.

Check with your HR department as to whether they prefer you have another manager witness this conversation. I suggest a second manager witness your dialogue and sign the document you are generating to record this disciplinary conversation.

If the employee refuses to sign, just write a statement that you have explained the requirements to the employee, that he appeared to understand, and that he refused to sign the document. Then you and the witness both sign your statement in front of the employee.

Report what you've done (and how it went) to your Human Resource contact. Inform him or her to be prepared for repercussions (unlikely but possible).

Now comes the really hard part. Discipline yourself to observe the employee's performance closely. I recommend at least twice a week, maybe even daily. Be prepared for complaints that you are picking on him. If that occurs, don't deny it. Point out that you are, indeed, watching him closely because of his past performance and because you want to see that he has changed and is now performing well.

If he performs well, DO NOT SAY anything that he might consider supersedes the agreement you generated earlier. If you do, you may negate everything you've generated to this point!

If the employee threatens that he's going to HR with his complaints, give him the name and phone number of the same person who has been supporting you! Then start watching him even closer! If he were performing exceptionally, he probably would not be worried about you watching him closely!

I have seen employees respond favorably to this clarification of their responsibilities. Some have become significant contributors to their organizations. The majority may fail to perform and wind up losing their jobs, but the many advantages to this approach justify the extra effort it requires.

I acknowledge that the guidance last week and this week has been only an overview. Your situation will be unique and probably has many special circumstances. That's why seeking collaborative help from your Human Resource organization on the front end is so valuable.

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Contact Dennis Hooper with questions at [dhooper2@juno.com](mailto:dhooper2@juno.com) or at (478)-988-0237. Do not consider these suggestions as your legal counsel! Seek your organization's Human Resource and legal counsel to help you formulate your specific plans.