

When is it Time to Let Someone Go?

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I once heard Zig Ziglar say one thing is worse than training a person and then seeing them leave and that is not training them and having them stay. In the best of worlds, we want to retain the people we bring on, whether paid or volunteer. I have seen both extremes: letting people go quickly without careful and prayerful due process and the other extreme of never letting anyone go regardless of how bad it gets. There's got to be a better way than either of these, there is. I saw a short post by Rick Warren where he said, "*Hire slowly and fire quickly.*" I believe he was saying we should take ample time before bringing someone on and when it is clear they need to go, don't take an inordinate amount of time making the decision, as it hurts team morale and the person in question. If we hire slowly, we will have to fire less often. Sometimes we hire when in crisis mode and don't do our homework.

But there always come times when we need to let someone go. Here are some possible grounds for making that decision. This is by no means exhaustive, just a few reasons:

1. Noncompliance

You have seen ample evidence over a reasonable length of time that they cannot, or will not, comply with directives/expectations/orders/policy or they are not upholding the group's/company's values. This is a behavioral issue. There are two kinds of people who are hard to have around: those who won't do what they're told and those who only do what they're told. The former has to do with a rebellious, defiant spirit due to either pride or insecurity. The latter has to do with not being a creative and thinking initiator.

2. Dishonesty

They have demonstrated on multiple occasions that they can't be trusted to tell the truth or have stolen from the company/church and lied about it, blamed others, or tried to cover it up. They may have lied to you and to their co-workers, and most know of their blatant dishonesty.

3. Laziness

This comes down to having no desire to really work. They just have a poor work ethic. They don't possess a heart and desire to work hard and with excellence. Their coffee and lunch breaks are longer than desirable and when they do work, they are not very energetic. Their heart is just not in it, for whatever reason

4. Incompetence

You are dealing with a person who either is incapable of doing what they have been asked to do or who doesn't know how to do it. I love John Maxwell's three T's on this and have shared it hundreds of times with those I coach:

- **Training:** Ask yourself if their poor performance is due to a lack of training; and, if so, give them the necessary training so that they can become competent in their assigned responsibilities.
- **Transfer:** If it becomes clear that their current role doesn't fit who they are and that training will not make a difference, ask yourself if there is another role in the organization which may be a better fit.
- **Terminate:** If training won't help and you have no other spot for them, then termination is your last option. But don't go here too quickly without first considering training or transferring.

When you have come, to the conclusion that you need to let a person go, please:

1. Explore the legal ramifications of what you are about to do
2. Keep a written record of conversations and details of how they are not making it.
Don't surprise them out of the blue
3. Make sure you are honest with them and don't gloss over things to make them feel better. Shoot straight as to why they are being let go so they can learn from the experience and do better in the future
4. Treat them with dignity and grace...truth, but in grace
5. Do what you can do to help them take next steps in finding employment