



Notifying the Employee

- * Meeting should be private and uninterrupted.
- * Get directly to the point, announce the action calmly, stick with the script, control the meeting, keep the person focused.
- * Do not make any comments, even if well intended, that could compromise the decision; stay away from discussions that could confuse the primary message (this is not about employee performance or personal issues).
- * Be direct and firm. Ensure that the employee knows the decision is final, also be sensitive to the employee's situation.
- * Don't blame others for the actions being taken.
- * Don't become defensive, argumentative or confrontational---your role is not to justify the decision that has been made.
- * Listen. Document anything that could lead to a potential problem and advise your pastoral leader immediately.
- * Offer support and encouragement. Exit the employee in a dignified manner.

What problems may occur

The employee may exhibit the following response/behavior:

- * become resistant, defensive and/or non-accepting of the action;
- * may want to plead a case or bargain for another opportunity;
- * may want to speak with a "decision-maker";
- * may ask the "why me?" questions;
- * may threaten a lawsuit or other retaliation;
- * will try to make the issue personal or about performance;
- * may argue about a person being retained who they believe is less capable, has less tenure, etc.
- * may exhibit other types of emotion.

How to deal with the problems

- * Stay in control of the meeting and your emotions at all times; get the discussion focused back on the employee.
- * Let employee know that he/she is free to make whatever contacts they feel appropriate, but

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that their employment is being terminated.

- * Reiterate that the decision is not about performance or about other employees.

Possible questions employee might ask

- * Why me?
- * Who made this decision?
- * Who can I talk to get this decision changed?
- * Are there any jobs in the parish/archdiocese?
- * Can I keep my job if I take a pay cut?
- * Who else is being released?

A response should be only that “the decisions were difficult ones and many good people were affected.” Many will press to know who is being retained, as they will often want to compare themselves and make a case for their retention. This too is not unusual, but you cannot comment. All these questions are normal, but there are no specific answers you can provide. The decisions as to who would be released and all other related decisions were made and the decisions are final.

Understanding Employee Reactions to Separation

Be prepared. As the supervisor/manager, you must be calm and in control at all times. Upon being told of a job loss, people may react in very different ways and emotions can vary widely. It is difficult to predict how an individual will react, but you should always anticipate some level of emotion. Most reactions displayed are normal, such as surprise, feeling hurt and disappointment. Other reactions can be more aggressive, such as statements that they have been betrayed, wronged or even discriminated against.

You as a supervisor/manager may be challenged by some responses. As best you can, be patient, acknowledge a person’s feelings, be understanding and encouraging and, above all, remain in control. Don’t be threatened or condone anger that is uncontrolled and do not allow yourself to become argumentative or confrontational.

Call for assistance and/or end the meeting if necessary.

How to talk to employees who are staying

- * Hold a staff meeting, with discretion, inform staff about the actions that have taken place; understand that people have lost friends and may have their own anxieties; get people (re)focused quickly.
- * Be honest about what you know and can share; discuss workload and/or support concerns,



needs, focus on the positives.

- * Do not assume “business as usual” acceptance.
- * Thank people for their continued support; restate the mission and goals of the parish; make no promises or guarantees about the future.
- * Be accessible to your staff; don’t exhibit a bunker mentality.
- * Never make any disparaging remarks about anyone leaving the company.

Role Play

Rehearse your comments so that you can deliver the message without having to read the text. Practice and rehearse speaking slowly, clearly and making direct eye contact; this will help ensure the message is received without confusion. It is important that you be very direct and specific. There should be no doubt about the purpose of the meeting:

- a) job elimination
- b) the effective date
- c) the next steps to be taken

Suggested Script

1. Put the person at ease. (No small talk, no humor, no business discussion.)

Manager: *Hi, Hillary, please have a seat.*

2. Set the stage.

Manager: *As we have discussed in other meetings/at the parish annual meeting, because of our financial condition, it is necessary to eliminate some positions.*

Briefly pause.

Over the last few weeks, the pastor has made very difficult decisions regarding our situation. I must unfortunately inform you that your position is being eliminated.

Briefly pause.

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This decision was made after a long and careful review of many options, realizing that many good people would be affected. This has been a very difficult decision and was not easily made

Pause and listen.

Hillary, I know this is difficult news. Is everything I've said clear to you?

NOTE: This is generally when the person will ask the “why questions” or other questions that were previously noted in this guide. Go back and review the possible questions and responses.

After listening for a few minutes (do not let the person go on at length), continue.

Manager: *I can appreciate your feelings and disappointment. Many of us are very sorry these actions are necessary. What is most important at this point is for me to discuss your pay and benefits continuation plan that will help you in this transition period.*

Let employee know they are free to contact Human Resources if they have any questions after receiving the materials. Once you determine the most appropriate manner for the person to exit, provide support and encouragement and thank the person for her/his courtesy.

The decision about the employee's last day of work should be determined prior to the meeting. Employee's can be paid in lieu of work, and the pastoral leader can decide that the day they are informed is their last day. Or, the employee can be offered the option of working through the 20 days (or however much is appropriate) with the understanding that they can take time as needed to work on their job search. This will depend on local conditions. Regardless, the employee should be given the rest of the day off to absorb the news.

If you have concerns about communicating this information appropriately to parishioners, please contact the Office of Human Resources.

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