

FEAR OF FIRING

In business today there seems to exist a definite fear of firing employees who are unsatisfactory and fail to meet company expectations. A good explanation could be the fear of lawsuits, costs of retraining, and/or unemployment costs. However, in some cases business owners and managers lack the fortitude and gumption required. They're afraid of the unpleasant task and want to avoid the confrontation that may arise. As consumers, this becomes apparent through the customer service we are sometimes subjected to. How many times do we have to ask someone to please take our hard earned dollars when they're done with a personal phone call? How often do we wait for an answer to a billing inquiry because the person taking our call is poorly trained and doesn't understand the question?

As a business owner for over twenty years I have terminated my share of employees. In an interview regarding employee terminations, I was asked if I ever felt bad about firing someone. My answer was "Never." If done correctly, employees are aware their position is in jeopardy, either through evaluations, disciplinary actions, or employee manuals that clearly state rules and regulations. An employee who is not performing is usually not happy with their position or is simply unable to carry out the tasks which they were hired to achieve. By terminating them, they now have the opportunity to find a position for which they are better suited. More importantly, business boundaries are established to the rest of the staff and company standards are reiterated. There are those who would view my position as heartless and callous, I view it as being consistent and fair to the employees who are meeting or exceeding company expectations.

As in every team there will sometimes be a chink in the chain. As team Captain, the task of doing what is in the best interest of the team rests with the position. If there is a chink in the chain and it can't be straightened out, it must be eliminated for the good of the entire chain. Far too many Captains run from the unpleasant, or turn a blind eye to a bad situation in the hopes it will improve. When management has done all that can be done then management must make the hard decision to act and be loyal to the team and get rid of the weak link or the "CHINK" IN THE CHAIN. Once the weak link is eliminated, a message has been sent to the rest of the team. Management will have the reputation for acting in a credible and consistent manner. Managers are not in the position to be popular or even liked, they exist to manage. Simply said, a manager is someone who is responsible for directing and controlling the work and personnel of a business, or of a particular department within a business.

Company lay-offs are the exception; they are always unpleasant and in most cases just as hard to deliver as to receive. The two occasions where it was necessary that I laid off personnel, I felt it gave new meaning to the saying: "it's lonely at the top."

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