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**The Mathis Group's**

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# Messenger

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## Ten Laws for Managing Terminations

*By Dr. Keith Mathis*

This month we are finishing our series of how to manage terminations by looking at laws nine and ten. These laws will help ease the tension associated with terminations and assure that the proper guidelines were followed.

### **9. Keep the interview time short.**

Keep the termination interview as brief as possible. Schedule enough time to explain everything and allow questions, but keep the meeting short. Two simple steps will help you behave in a professional manner during the session.

### ***Have all documents ready before the interview.***

You are in the last stages of dealing with the disruptive employee. This interview should not come as a surprise. If you have been using progressive discipline, he or she will have understood that past behavior was being monitored, and if changes did not take place, more serious discipline would be used.



It was common many years ago to call employees to the personnel office and keep them sitting outside in the hall all day long only to be terminated at the end of the day. This kind of conduct would upset employees because they had all day to dwell on the firing that was about to happen. Put

everything in place for this meeting, including a letter of termination, an exit interview checklist, and a salary check if appropriate.

### ***Allow the employee the opportunity to resign.***

In many situations, employees will not allow you to terminate them. They will walk into the meeting with a letter of resignation. This opens the way for the employee to report to the next employer stating they quit their past job. If the employee

resigns, the letter should be kept in the human resource file. If the employee had not resigned, you should also document the effective date of the termination. Detail the information that will prevent the employee from being subsequently rehired.

### **10. Terminate as a last resort after all has been tried.**

Before you decide to terminate the employee, you need to consider every other option. Only in extreme circumstance should a person be terminated without warning or progressive discipline.

As was mentioned previously, these situations would include such things as violence or theft.

Termination should be the last resort for several reasons.

### ***It reduces potential risk in a lawsuit.***

When we use every possible method to turn the employee around before termination, we reduce the potential that the employee will sue. This is important because today there is no guarantee the worker will not try to get back at the company by litigation.

Employees sometimes sue as a way of getting their point heard or to express hostile feelings. This is more likely if the employer or supervisor abused them through unfair practices and treatment. Using multiple approaches will clarify to the employee that you went the extra mile and gave him or her numerous chances to change. You resorted to termination only after repeated efforts on your part resulted in no significant change in the employee.

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(continued from page 1 *Ten Laws for Managing Terminations*)

## *You might even turn them around.*

Many workers will turn around when they understand their behaviors must change, or dismissal will follow. On occasion, you will discover you have a good employee who is enslaved by a pattern of bad habits. Progressive discipline in this case will serve to separate the good employee from the bad.

Some managers do not want to take the time to turn the employee around. They want the employee out of the way as fast as possible. This is a dangerous attitude. In addition to being costly, it may set the company up for wrongful termination charges. These types of terminations are commonly challenged when management removes an employee too quickly.

## *You are sending trained and skilled employees to your competition.*

Training employees today is expensive and time consuming. We must make sure we are not terminating employees until we know they will not change. When we terminate too fast, we are only training employees with skills they will take to our competitor. This forces us to start over with new employees. This waste in time and money should be avoided when possible.

## *You want to make sure you have tried every possible way to salvage the employee prior to terminating them.*

Did we take steps of action to keep the employee? This can be demonstrated by the way we coached and counseled the employee as well as by the progressive discipline we used. As we coach, counsel, and mentor employees, we usually see a large percentage of them change for the better. By doing this, we are showing a strong commitment to their future destiny with the organization.

For managers to successfully achieve their objectives, they must be fully committed to and motivated for top performance. Much of the key to getting them into this frame of mind consists of ensuring they understand the whys and benefits of MBO, both to their organizations and to them individually (McConkey, D., 1983, AMACOM, p. 238).

## *You need to give them reasonable time to change.*

Progressive discipline will not be effective if we take an employee through the process too quickly. We must give the employee a reasonable amount of time to make the needed changes. A reasonable period can mean different things to different staff members.

*Your attitude will determine your  
altitude!*

*Joyce B. Brown*

The following questions will help you determine what is appropriate:

1. How long has the employee worked for me?
2. Is the employee on probation?
3. How hard is it to replace this level of employee?
4. Is the employee impacting other workers with his or her disobedience or unacceptable performance?
5. Is hostility being shown by the employee?

We hope the ten laws for managing terminations that we have outlined the past several months have been beneficial to you. The importance of following the proper procedures during a termination cannot be stressed enough. Through the correct course of action many costly and potentially hazardous problems will be avoided.



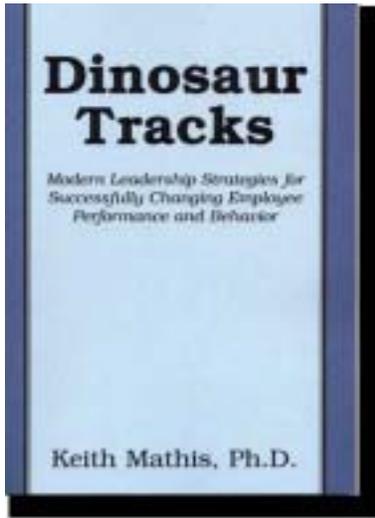
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Dr. Keith Mathis is founder of The Mathis Group, a training and consulting company based in St. Louis, Missouri. Keith also serves as an adjunct professor of business/management with Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Keith is a member of the National Speakers' Association, American Society of Training and Development, and the World Futurists' Society. Keith holds a Bachelors in Behavioral Science, a Masters in Management, and a Ph.D. in Administration Management with a specialty in Organizational Behavior and Development.

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