



PETRA PEOPLE

HOW TO KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO FIRE AN EMPLOYEE



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LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

Terminating a problem employee on your team can be an expensive solution. Sometimes it's necessary, but it may not have to be if you take the steps necessary to get ahead of problems.

At Petra Coach, I work with my member companies and their leaders to navigate numerous issues, and the most common concerns center around people. This might seem obvious, as every organization is made up of people, but with a focus on clients, quarterly goals and the daily ins and outs of business, the human element can get lost. As a result, there are conflicts, misunderstandings and other issues that, if not dealt with in a professional, adult manner, can become destructive to the core of an organization.

The problem usually involves a manager who – in wanting to avoid conflict – will try to put a Band-Aid on the problem rather than finding a long-term fix. Without addressing the specific issue with the person (or persons) involved, you're unlikely to change the underlying attitudes and habits that led to the behavior. That means that, even if this current problem seems to go away, another one will soon present itself.

The best way to manage problems is to head them off before they happen. And that means hiring and managing well. Here are four ways to improve your hiring and management process to retain top talent and grow them into leaders:

REFINE YOUR HIRING PROCESS

Do you have a hiring process in place that allows you to find A-players? If not, you need one so you can steer clear of what I call "strays" – hires that don't necessarily fit the company's hiring criteria but get hired anyway. These stray hires actually harm your team – slowing regular workflows and requiring the rest of your team to do "repair work." Problems will come up among the best people at the most high-functioning of organizations, so don't go looking for additional complications. Set up a simple, reliable process and then stick to it to find the right people for your business.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTINCTS

When reviewing resumes for an open position, it's easy to get lost in the line-by-line details. Even if someone looks perfect on paper and presents well in an interview, remember to follow your gut. It might seem prudent to rely solely on the information and superlatives that candidates present, but it's impossible to know all of the circumstances around those career victories. It could be that the candidate claimed to have done something on his own that was actually accomplished by a larger team. Or perhaps a certain project took multiple rounds of revisions. You'll never receive that information, so you've got to ask questions and trust your instincts about a candidate. Even if you're in a time crunch, it's better to pass on a potential hire that you're unsure about than make the hire and regret it once they come on board.

TAKE YOUR TIME AND CREATE A HIRING BENCH

It's never good to hire under pressure. You're not ready to make an important hire unless you've taken the time to fully vet qualified candidates and make a thoughtful, informed decision. Before you're in a crunch, begin building a "virtual bench" of potential hires. These aren't all people you might hire right away, but you stay in touch with them and can contact them when it's time to hire and/or if a position suddenly becomes available. A hiring bench will give your hiring team a head start on the process, and it will increase the amount of time you'll have to make your final decision. You can use that extra time to meet separately with the potential hire or even have the candidate shadow a member of your team for the day to let them get to know your company better.

ASK "WHO?"

With a solid team in place, issues will still come up. When that happens, it's not efficient to ask only "what" happened and seek to find out "why." You've got to ask "who?" right away. "Who can we turn to for answers or an explanation?" This will allow you to find a specific person to handle any questions you might have, and root out problematic team members who may be causing issues. It can be difficult to face "people issues" head on, but hesitating to identify problematic team members by repetitively giving short-term solutions to problems will only hinder your company's growth. Identify the problem and make changes accordingly.

KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO TERMINATE

Once you've addressed a team member's problematic behavior directly, keep a close eye – at least in the short-term – to gauge if there has been any improvement. If not, it's best to let the team member go. Keeping a person on board who is not performing to company standards is always destructive. Not only will it negatively impact your team's productivity, it will also hurt company culture if such behavior is seen as tolerated. That said, you must always make changes of this sort by preparing for the conversation and with clear communication. You should begin by informing the team member that the company's decision to let him go is firm. Explain specifically how his actions led to this decision and – if applicable – offer to refer him to a different kind of job where his skills might be better matched. The exiting team member will respect the fact that leaders have been straightforward and transparent.

Finally, make sure that you communicate with the team and have a plan in place that ensures remaining employees feel comfortable with the decision and are clear on any transition plans. Use your hiring bench to fill gaps when you can and explain shifts in responsibility among the team as clearly as possible. Also, understand that your team may not recover immediately from the shock of any departure and that you may need to take time with individual team members to process the change.

By following these steps, you'll show your organization that you're a leader who's willing to make changes when necessary, and that you've got the best interest of the company – and the team as a whole – in mind when making decisions. And, by following the steps above, you'll not only improve the effectiveness of your team, but also allow those who may not be thriving in your organization to find a better fit elsewhere.

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THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.

Looking to change your business life - forever?

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

PETRA COACH

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