

When a Long Term Employee Leaves:

How to channel your energy into the replacement process

By Derek Howard

Many times circumstances beyond your control mandate that a key member of your staff must leave. The employee may be just as shocked as you are. It could be the result of a family illness, retirement, or just a plain old better offer.

After you have picked your jaw up off of the ground, what next?

The most important thing to remember is to focus and channel your energy and effort into an orderly replacement process. Almost all hiring managers experience a degree of emotions ranging from anger, financial worries, perception concerns and fear when presented with a major staff change.

Most companies will conduct an exit interview and have a termination checklist that covers the employment and human resource aspects of the position. Where does that leave you? By having a replacement plan of action to follow, you will find that the process and transition will be much easier. To get you started on your disciplined approach try the following:

1. Pull out the exiting employee's personnel file. Review the original resume. Determine what it was about the individual's experience that caught your eye to begin with. Could they do everything they said? Do you need someone who can do more?
2. Review the job description. Do any changes need to be made? What new software, policies, and procedures have taken place since the position was last filled?
3. Review and update any employment contracts or agreements for any additions or deletions.
4. Solicit input and research the salary range of position. There are many resources available to determine the current market value. Most staffing agencies have this information readily available.
5. Determine your best resource for filling the position. What will it cost you to have the position open? What will be the out of pocket cost to train an individual? Do you have time to work on filling the position? Do you have any industry contacts for referrals? Advertising can be a hit or miss proposition. Your success depends on whether that ideal applicant just happens to be job hunting at the moment. Staffing agencies with on staff recruiters may be a viable and cost effective option, since they do not charge a fee if you do not hire an employee through them. Could a temporary or contract employee help you out in the interim?

6. Do your own needs analysis of this position. What was it that this person did for you that was critical to your day-to-day objectives? What did you like or dislike about this person? What were the person's true strengths and weaknesses?

If you focus on accomplishing one item at a time, you will find that you are already engaged in the process minus the emotions. This will be a time when you will need to do an "emotional" check up on yourself as well. Understand you have a job to do and want to do it with the least possible impact. Your professionalism will serve you well when it is time to graciously say good bye and thank the individual leaving for their contribution to your company.

By following a simple plan of action, you will find the emotional end of things will take care of themselves and you will be in the best position to move forward with your plan for a replacement.

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