

THE HR CONNECTION

Church, Engle & Associates

Recruitment Specialists & Human Resource Services

Vol. 1 March 2006



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Headaches:
Tips to minimize
problems

Improve Your Ability
to Give Constructive
Criticism

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Associates opens

Helpful Links:
[http://www.
workforce.com/
Workforce:](http://www.workforce.com/Workforce)
information on
employment law,
human resource
development, and
human resource
management.

Quote of the Day:
"Nothing is so
fatiguing as the
eternal hanging on
of an uncompleted
task." *William James*

Termination Headaches: Tips to Minimize Problems.

As we all know, involuntary terminations are often one of the most troublesome areas of human resource management. Concerns over litigation are foremost in our minds as we work our way through this process. While there are no guarantees that these concerns can be eliminated, there are some things we can do to minimize the mistakes that lead to undesirable results.

- **Follow your discipline and termination policies.** Employers that ignore their own policies are asking for problems. Make sure that managers are up to date on these critical policies and follow them. Provide training for managers and make sure they work with Human Resources before, during, and after the termination process.
- **Conduct a complete investigation** before considering the appropriate disciplinary action, especially if termination is a possibility. Often managers base disciplinary designs on second-hand information or a quick look at the situation. A full investigation is needed to determine what action is necessary, including a discussion with the employee in question. Provide the employee the opportunity to explain his/her side of the story and investigate information that the employee brings to light.

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Criticism, Methods to Improve Your Ability to be Constructive.

Here are some suggestions for giving criticism in a way that motivates others to do a better job.

- See yourself as a teacher or coach--as being helpful. Keep in mind that you're trying to help someone improve.
- Show you care. Express your sincere concern about sharing ways the other person can boost his or her success.
- Pick the right moment to offer criticism. Make sure the person hasn't just been shaken by some incident.
- Avoid telling people they "should do such and such" or "should have done such and such." The "shoulds" make you sound rigid and pedantic.
- Avoid giving the impression that you're more concerned with seeing your recommendation put into practice than in helping the other person improve. Show how the person will benefit from taking the actions you suggest.
- Give specific suggestions. Being vague might only make the situation worse by creating anxiety and doubt.
- Be sure you can take criticism yourself. If not, you may not be perceived as a credible source.

Source: How to Love the Job you Hate, By Jane Boucher, Thomas Nelson Publishers

Church, Engle & Associates are pleased to announce our opening and look forward to serving the Vermont business and non-profit community. Our goal is to provide expert recruitment and human resource services and exceptional customer support. As long-time Vermont residents, we have the knowledge of the Vermont community that only a Vermont business can provide. Partners Barbara S. Church and Keith J. Engle each bring over twenty-five years of human resource experience to Church, Engle & Associates. For more information about our business, please visit our web site at www.churchengle.com.



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The Vermont Department of Labor announced that the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for January, 2006 was 3.4 percent, down two tenths of a percentage point from the revised December, 2005 estimate. Unemployment rates for Vermont's 17 labor market areas ranged from 2.0 percent in Hartford to 6.4 percent in Newport and Swanton-Enosburg. Labor market area rates are not seasonally adjusted; for comparison, the unadjusted rate for Vermont was 4.1 percent. As shown below

Jan 06, Dec 05, Jan 05
Barre-Montpelier, 5.6, 3.7, 6.1

Bennington, 4.1, 3.4, 4.7

Bradford, 5.5, 3.6, 6.2

Brattleboro, 3.5, 3.1, 3.8

Burlington-South Burlington, 3.7, 3.1, 3.7

Hartford, 2.0, 1.7, 2.4

Manchester, 3.6, 3.5, 3.9

Middlebury, 4.3, 3.3, 3.9

Morristown-Stowe, 4.6, 3.8, 5.3

Newport, 6.4, 5.4, 7.1

Randolph, 4.3, 3.3, 4.5

Rutland, 3.8, 3.2, 3.9

Springfield, 4.0, 4.0, 4.0

St. Johnsbury, 5.0, 3.6, 5.4

Tips, continued from page 1

- **Meet and discuss.** The involved managers and Human Resources representative should meet to discuss the situation. Review and consider the information from the investigation, the employee's work record, past discipline, past evaluations, past practice on how such events have been handled, and company policies and procedures.

Think your decision through with all the above information in mind; be patient and reasonable in drawing conclusions and making a final determination. Consider the impact (if any) of laws prohibiting discrimination and conscious of the interactions between the Family and Medical Leave and Americans With Disabilities Acts, and various state laws including workers' compensation. And, finally, as needed, consult legal counsel before you take action.

- **Document, Document, Document.** Document the investigation results, how past performance or past practice support the decision. Document any meetings that were held with the employee in question or witnesses. Sometimes legal actions come to light years after the event and this will provide needed accurate records of the investigation and support your decision.

- **Plan the termination meeting.** Details are important. When and where will the termination meeting take place? It is often stated that Fridays are good days to let someone go. In my view, that is not the case. Important services, such as mental health counseling services or unemployment services are often not available on weekends, giving the individual no assistance in moving forward. Allowing terminated individuals the opportunity to access any employee assistance services is an excellent support strategy. Privacy is important both during and after the meeting and helps maintain the dignity of the person. Dignity and respect need to be conveyed throughout the process. Consider this in selecting a meeting location.

Who should be there? The meeting should be conducted by the employee's manager. Additional individuals, such as a HR representative or the manager's manager, can be included. The makeup of this meeting should be discussed and determined prior to the termination meeting. Having a second management member present can provide a witness to the process.

Have the final compensation ready. Having the final pay and benefit information available signals a end to the employee/employer relationship while allowing you to meet the state laws around timelines for pay at termination.

- **Give the employee the real reason for the termination.** Your documentation must support the real reason for the termination. Managers need to be trained and tactful in providing this information.

- **Confidentially.** Remember, this is not public information. Only those that have a "need to know" should have information about the termination and the individual involved.

- **How is your termination process working.** After each termination evaluate the process and see if any areas need improvement. Obtain feedback from the members of the management team that were involved and obtain suggestions for improvement.

Following these steps could reduce your chances of liability, ensure that your actions are documented, and, hopefully, make for a trouble-free termination process.

Keith J. Engle - Partner - Church, Engle & Associates.



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