

Bok commends Harvard for taking action to reform legal system's failings. "New knowledge," he says, is needed: e.g. how much money is spent on the legal system vs. forces that inhibit litigation?

"We ignore the social sciences at our peril, for their techniques grow steadily more refined. Business school professors begin to have more intricate theories of competitive markets that might help legal analysts predict the effects of changes in our antitrust laws. Scholars in schools of public policy and education develop more sophisticated methods of program evaluation that could help implement sunset laws or detect the secondary & tertiary effects of legal rules on human behavior. As yet, this work is largely overlooked by our great schools of law." (For copy of report, write prr.)

"The modern public relations practitioner is a societal technician with the skills to bring about accommodation in the court of public opinion."

-- Edward L. Bernays
(For whatever it's worth, both ELB & Harvard reside in Cambridge, Mass.)

SEMANTICS MAY STEER BEHAVIOR:
HOSPITAL DEPT'S NAME LEADS
TO OPERATIONAL ADVANCES

Presbyterian Hospital (NYC) has a public interest department. Name was originally chosen as a euphemism for pr. But dep't has evolved so that the name has "become more meaningful," director Paul

Zucker told prr. "One of our primary responsibilities is coordination of health education activities at the medical center, including setting up closed circuit tv for patients. We're working on a network of health promotion centers in the community." Dep't also handles the traditional areas of media relations & publications.

8-person unit shares responsibility for marketing with the planning dep't, community relations with the patient relations dep't, and works with "a group of 35 top managers involved in Little League, Chamber of Commerce, just about any org'n you can think of in this area. And we're working with our community to renovate the local subway station." Fundraising, grant writing, some gov't rels are part of the dept's array of responsibilities.

ITEM OF INTEREST FOR PROFESSIONALS

"Public relations on a first-name basis sometimes backfires. Education, training, achievement place some people in positions of authority that have traditionally been recognized thru titles -- Dr. for physicians & professors, Mr/Mrs for superiors, etc. The flip side is these individuals referring to clients, students & patients by their first-names. Rash of newspaper articles suggests controversy is imminent in the medical field over doctors, nurses & medical secretaries utilizing patients' first names when the reverse practice is "distasteful." It's ok for the doc to call you Joe, but wrong for you to call him Jim rather than Dr. Jones. Could the same be true for organizations whose management hierarchy stresses formality for only elite employees? What effect can informal vs. formal address have on productivity or public relationships? (Write prr for copy of article.)

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

CLOSED. Cockfield Brown (Quebec), once the largest Canadian advertising/public relations agency.

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KNOWING HOW TO FIRE PEOPLE WHEN IT HAS TO BE DONE
LETS YOU RUN A BETTER SHOP & COUNSEL FELLOW MANAGERS (PART III);
THE ALTERNATIVE IS LOW MORALE, EX-EMPLOYEES HURTING YOUR REPUTATION

Ex-employees have great credibility in the court of public opinion. But do you want them to speak for your organization? To avoid making a bad situation worse, it's vital to know how to handle the unpleasant, emotional task of firing. "Firing is probably the most distasteful act a manager must perform. But there are times when it must be done," opines Jim Files, Northern Arizona U (Flagstaff).

Don't Hesitate Once the decision has been made that an employee is not performing adequately, terminate him or her ASAP, advises Chet Burger, mgmt consultant & author of Creative Firing. "When a termination is necessary, almost invariably the boss does it too late. The reason is most people don't like unpleasant confrontation. And there's nothing more unpleasant than a firing. Most bosses delay & delay, hoping somehow the situation will solve itself. But it only worsens. It never gets better."

Norm Teich, pres, Teich Communications (Dallas), recounts just such a bad experience: "One of my staff (at a now non-existent agency) badly fouled up an important client project. Worse, it was the most recent of a series of foul-ups over many months. He and I both were ready for him to be fired. He knew it. I knew it. Everyone knew it! But doing so required going thru my boss and to his boss. They vacillated & procrastinated.

"Two to three weeks elapsed, and I came to the conclusion it wasn't going to happen. The staffer -- ready for the axe to fall -- came to the same conclusion and returned to some semblance of stability. Then I was told to fire him! You can imagine the bitterness with which my staffer met that announcement. It was extremely unpleasant. Moreso because it could have been avoided." The moral? "When it's time to fire someone, do it! Waiting, vacillating, procrastinating, making excuses only makes the situation worse. Be as sympathetic as the situation calls for, but do it!"

When To Do It "The time of day, day of week, and even week of month should be guided, at least in part, by the level of employee being terminated," Files finds. "My experience is that the higher the employee is placed in the organization, the less significant timing becomes. This is because the employee wants to find comparable employment & responsibilities. Lower-placed jobs at the semi-skilled

"If you don't terminate an unsatisfactory employee, you demoralize the good employees. They'll say 'Why should I work so hard if the other guy isn't working and getting away with it?' So you have a responsibility to the good employees to terminate the non-performer," Chet Burger told prr.

level are pretty much the same everywhere which suggests 'get them out as quickly as possible' to prevent sabotage of product, equipment & morale."

Laurence Stybel, who recommends terminations be made on Fridays (pr 10/11/82), responds, "I'm delighted that someone disagreed with my recommendation. I certainly agree with prr that the entire area of dismissal needs a more open discussion. I am less concerned that people agree with what I have to say and more concerned that they really think things through."

How To Fire Counselor Peter Hollister recommends 7 steps: 1. Find out about jobs the employee may be qualified for and share them with the individual.

Often org'ns offer outplacement to terminated employees. Among Fortune 500 companies, over 75% use this service, reports an article by Stybel, "Muting Those Pink-Slip Blues." Helping the departing employee in this way aids morale/public image. Organization is perceived as acknowledging some sense of responsibility for an "unfortunate situation which did not work out." Outplacement also helps to "maintain morale of remaining employees, i.e. even though the company fires employees, it seeks to do so in a humane manner." (For copy of article, write prr.)

2. Consider the employee's contributions to the org'n & his/her marketability. A senior employee may need (& deserve) more severance pay & time than a relative newcomer. Talk with the personnel office about your options.

3. Have employee's records with you during the termination interview. While there shouldn't be any surprises by now, be prepared to patiently document your case if asked to by the employee.

"Recounting the employee's shortcomings & derelictions at the interview is destructive and I wouldn't do it," counsels Burger. "The employee's attitude is to protect his or her self-respect. You'll get into a confrontation that'll accomplish nothing. The idea that you can criticize a person's performance for his own good is nonsense. When you criticize people, they're going to protect their self-image. They'll criticize you right back."

4. Be direct, polite, gentle and listen. The interview can be completed in 15 minutes. After the interview, there should be no question about its content or conclusion.

5. Allow the employee to bow out gracefully. A voluntary resignation on the record is preferable to a firing. If a resignation is opted for, get a letter before day's end and accept it with your own letter immediately.

6. Do your best to part in a positive way. As traumatic as this experience is, it need not be bloody.

7. Remain accessible for the balance of the employee's time in the office. It's part of the manager's job to absorb reactions the former employee may have later in the day or week.

QUOTE

"We now know that the human being is a learning machine, and the problem is not to motivate people but to keep from turning them off. The quickest way to quench motivation is not to allow people to do what they've been trained to do. In other words, take the nurse in the hospital and make her spend 80% of her time on paperwork that has nothing to do with patient care."

-- Peter Drucker

You Can't Duck It "Firing is the territory of responsible managers if they are to remain responsible in their own assignments," says Files. "At the same time, a responsible manager will not indulge the act of terminating an employee without having tried, over time and with duly-recorded memoranda & personal documented conferences, to re-direct the talents of that person into acceptable performance on the job. The underlying assumption is that the act of firing someone is not a capricious, vindictive, or whimsical thing. The record justifies the act. The case is built. The decision is the result of careful thought and consideration. It's, therefore, irrevocable. But once that decision is made, it should be executed as forthrightly and cleanly as possible.

"There is no way, in my experience, to make anyone feel good about being fired, irrespective of whatever internal opportunities exist for such a person to ventilate frustrations or plead retention. It is a traumatic experience. I don't like to have to do it. But you have to develop a stomach for it when your profitability or effectiveness is threatened. And if you can't do it, you risk someone doing it to you -- directors, your own boss, perhaps even your customers," Files sums up.

REACTIONS TO JOB LOSS: THE ADJUSTMENT LADDER

Coping with job loss is a very gradual & individual experience. Everyone reacts differently. But there are steps in the adjustment process. The feelings involved are "normal."

Step 1: "I don't believe it" -- Usually filled with shock & denial. It's hard to adjust to the fact that you don't have to get up & go to work today.

Step 2: "Why me" -- It has finally sunk in. You have no job. Poor, poor me. Feeling depressed & very low on energy is normal.

Step 3: Bargaining -- "If only I could have convinced the boss how much I am needed." "If only I could get in and see the boss one more time." Still dwelling on what happened and not on what to do.

Step 4: Anger -- You may be angry at your boss, yourself or society in general for your lack of a job.

Step 5: Acceptance -- You've finally gotten thru feeling angry & sorry for yourself. You're now on the way to planning your next move -- either making a career switch, schooling or intense job hunting.

-- Family Services Of Greater Toledo

HARVARD PRES SAYS LAWYERS SHOULD ADOPT PR'S PHILOSOPHY, STOP IGNORING SOCIAL SCIENCES

Long-time beef of many pr pros is lawyers doing public relations. They often lack the communication/social science/mediation skills necessary for pr counsel. Now Harvard pres Derek Bok, in his annual report to the Board of Overseers, criticizes the costly & complicated legal system that emphasizes conflict rather than "the gentler arts of reconciliation and accommodation." He predicts "society's greatest opportunities will lie in tapping human inclinations toward collaboration and compromise rather than stirring our proclivities for competition and rivalry."