

Leaving with Dignity - - Quick Guide

New Beginnings Following Termination of Employment

This Quick Guide deals with the basic issues surrounding the termination of employment and the recovery process. The first part discusses "forethought" -- preparing thoughts and considering necessary actions if the possibility of your termination ever arose. The second part focuses on the "new beginning" . . . coping after a termination and getting on with the job search process.

When a person is called into the boss's office and told that his/her services at the company are no longer required, what does the person do that first hour after

being dismissed / let go / terminated / fired? Below are some of the reactions and suggestions as to their appropriateness.

There is greater ease of transition for the employee following a termination if an outplacement counsellor is in attendance. This consulting is confidential and paid by the company.



W.N. ASSOCIATES INC.

**Consultants in Human
Resources Management**

SUGGESTIONS TO THE TERMINATED EMPLOYEE

1. **Maintain / regain composure.** Say only what is necessary. Because this is a corporate information-giving meeting, your main purpose becomes getting relevant information from the terminating manager including a severance offer or letter of termination (that is usually presented).
2. **Receive the letter of termination.** Do not sign the letter or a 'Release' until you have given yourself time to reflect on the terms. If necessary, check with a knowledgeable advisor.
3. **Request personal items** from your office before leaving the building: coat, hat, purse, umbrella, boots, briefcase, glasses, keys, lunch, etc.
4. **Arrange for a convenient time to return to clear** your desk/office if there are a large number of items such as books, plants, pictures and files to retrieve. Some companies prefer to do their own packing and deliver your personal items to your home after your exit.
5. Because a degree of shock may be present, memory suffers. **Make written notes** for your reference and organize your thoughts (a to-do list).
6. Talk to the outplacement counsellor in private.
7. **Return** company keys, cards, Blackberry, cell phone, pager, or any other **company property**.
8. Anticipate questions about your dismissal from family and friends. **Prepare a brief response** that will be acceptable, credible and consistent.
9. Plan how you will leave the building and **how you will get home**. Often a taxi is provided.
10. **Leave with dignity** and a resolve to initiate a job search strategy the following day.
11. With **concentration** level being at a low following the termination of employment, a counsellor will assess whether the person can operate a vehicle to drive home. Even when a decision to drive is made, a worthwhile reminder is to **BE CAUTIOUS**. The counsellor might say, "**Delay any thoughts about the job loss until you get home. On the way, watch out for pedestrians, traffic signs/signals, little children, and other vehicles.**"

INAPPROPRIATE REACTIONS BRING CONSEQUENCES

- The decision to let an employee go is always finalized and confirmed prior to the termination meeting so it is **fruitless for the person to ask to keep his/her job** at the company. Under these circumstances, the person is not expected to complete any further assignments. Some firms may require that a terminated employee work a notice period but this will depend on specific circumstances at the company, company policy, the relationship between employee and the company and the person's ability to function effectively during the notice period.
- **Swearing in anger** or expressing anger in violent or other inappropriate ways is a reaction that is counterproductive. Hopefully the person will save this release until the meeting with the outplacement counsellor where communication is confidential within a calm atmosphere.
- **Shock, hurt and disappointment are natural** in this situation and how these are expressed at the time of notification is important. Some people cry, others make excuses, some remain stoic, and a few run away. Most ask a few important questions and try to adjust. The meeting will take only a few minutes before the manager exits and you meet the Outplacement Counsellor if provided.
- Some people try to rationalize their dismissal by blaming others. **Accusations**, while understandable given the heightened emotions, are out of place and may be interpreted as sour grapes. A counsellor will likely provide a reminder that prospective employers may ask the former boss for a reference.
- **Threatening** to do some damage to information, other people, oneself or company property is a dangerous and unreasonable response. Strong feelings tend to subside later but any threat or action WILL BE remembered. The employee is likewise reminded by the counsellor to keep a professional and dignified demeanour and not to say anything that will jeopardize the severance payment or future negotiations should they result.

**Never destroy or threaten to destroy
company files or property.**

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WHAT'S NEXT?

Your manager just left a meeting with you, having informed you that your services were no longer required - your employment was terminated - you've been "let go" - "terminated without cause". In a single moment, your life changed. Now the immediate challenge is

to look forward while clearing up loose ends. While each individual situation is personal and unique, some general aspects are reviewed below.

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT

When an outplacement Counsellor has been contracted to assist you, there are a number of reasons why spending some time with the counsellor immediately following a termination of employment can benefit you. Employees in this situation experience a variety of emotions from shock to anger to worry even if there have been indications that a termination was imminent.

Whether or not you have the benefit of assistance, by taking a few moments to compose, you are better able to navigate through the rest of the day. Most counsellors have dealt with numerous people and their reactions, so it is likely that the counsellor can help you through some of the immediate issues facing you. As well, you have an opportunity to write a "To Do" list to prioritize whatever activities have to be completed immediately.

LEAVE WITH DIGNITY

Housekeeping and exit from the company come next. Return any company property such as keys, security passes, computer passwords and so on. Arrange an appropriate time to retrieve personal property from your work area. So as not to jeopardize your dignified exit from the company, it is always best to ensure that only your own possessions are packed up and that you do not

say or do anything that you might regret. You might check with your manager regarding items you are unclear about before taking them. If you have company items at home, you can usually arrange to have them returned later. Calm yourself and leave the company property comfortably. You can always say goodbye to colleagues later when you are composed.

WHAT YOU WILL SAY

Decide what you will say to your immediate family. Rather than raising their anxiety level, be sure to present a clear message and have a balanced response to their questions. Also, prepare an

honest and well-thought-out response for those in your network of friends that will ask, **"What happened?"**

FINANCIAL ASPECTS

Take the Letter of Termination along with any personal financial information to an independent financial consultant who can help

you with information about the process for sheltering funds, investing, and budgeting.

SIGN-OFF

You may want to discuss the severance with an advisor so that you clearly understand all the legal issues and terms of the Release form that often accompanies the termination letter. It is not advisable to sign the Release or agree to the terms on the day

of your termination. Reflect on whether the severance amount is fair and reasonable. Compare this to the time and costs involved in a legal solution. Give yourself time to reflect.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (E.I.), HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CANADA

You can register online or in person. The Employment Insurance Internet reporting service allows you to register and submit your E.I. report using the Internet. http://www100.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/ae-ei/dem-app/interdec_info.shtml#What

When you first visit your local E.I. office (formerly Unemployment Insurance), take your documents with you. The Record of Employment, valid identification, your SIN, a recent pay stub and

the Letter of Termination will be useful in responding to questions from the E.I. counsellor. There may be a time lapse before you are allowed to collect E.I. benefits depending on your severance package; however, there are services and programs sponsored by E.I. to assist with elements of the job search.

THE JOB SEARCH

Your outplacement counsellor will collaborate with you on the job search including the marketing and selling strategies that work for

you. **LOOK TO THE FUTURE, LEARN FROM THE PAST, CONCENTRATE ON THE TASK AT HAND, AND GOOD LUCK!**

Willis M.L. Newton

"Willis has a reputation for building strong, confidential client relationships based on trust and mutual respect."

"I found Willis to be a client-oriented professional and trusted coach."

"As head of W.N. Associates, Willis delivers results for complex and involved assignments."