

## *How to Dismiss an Employee with Dignity Without "Dying" in the Attempt*

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Employees who are dismissed are forced to face an uncertain situation that, in many cases, they did not even expect. For this reason, those responsible for communicating the decision must carefully measure their steps and anticipate any possible adverse reaction from the employee. It is their responsibility to ensure that the process is resolved quickly and as smoothly as possible for all parties involved. Laying off an employee is one of the most difficult tasks for a team leader or human resources manager, since, even in these times, the company must continue to provide positive employee experience. It is a process that must be approached with humanity, honesty, and maximum clarity.

But how does a company come to decide that the most appropriate course of action is the departure of a particular employee? Dismissal rarely occurs abruptly. Rather, it is usually the result of a lengthy process that begins when it becomes apparent that something is not functioning properly within the workforce.

Some of the most common causes include:

- A significant and prolonged decline in job performance.
- Difficulties in fulfilling the responsibilities associated with the position.
- The generation of internal conflicts and difficulties in teamwork.
- Breaches of contractual obligations or refusal to complete required training.
- The commission of a serious offense or repeated minor offenses.
- The need to undertake workforce restructuring.
- Changes in the company's commercial orientation.

Regardless of the reason, professionals responsible for managing and communicating a dismissal should follow a series of steps in order to avoid problems:

1. Plan dismissal: Once the decision to dismiss an employee has been made, the entire Human Resources department should be informed in order to expedite the employee's departure from the company. It is also advisable to prepare all documentation to be delivered to the employee as soon as possible.

2. Arrange a private meeting with the employee. Regardless of the size of the company, dismissal should be communicated in person. The employee should be called to a meeting immediately after the decision has been made. Delaying communication only increases the risk of leaks or rumors that may create tension within the workplace.

3. Confirm that the employee has been notified. Once the meeting has been concluded, the rest of the Human Resources department should be informed that the employee is aware of the decision, and the necessary procedures to terminate the employment contract should be completed immediately.

Alongside the planning of these steps, the Human Resources department must also pay particular attention to highly sensitive matters such as strict compliance with current labor legislation.

Although the process should be completed as quickly as possible, it is mandatory to comply with deadlines and all legal requirements. For example, the process should remain as confidential as possible and should not extend beyond the Human Resources department or company management. The employee must also receive written notification detailing the facts that justify the dismissal and the legal provisions upon which the company relies in making its decision.

#### Reasons for dismissal

Beyond legal issues concerning deadlines, requirements, and compensation, the person communicating the decision must be fully aware of the reasons behind it.

Vague references to poor performance or unsatisfactory results in a recent project are not sufficient. The individual responsible for communicating the dismissal must be capable of explaining clearly and concisely why the employee is being dismissed.

For this reason, it is advisable to carefully prepare what will be said without excessive rhetoric. This is not a speech but a communication that the employee does not wish to hear. Therefore, the explanation should rely directly on the reasons that justify the dismissal.

To obtain objective data regarding employee performance, organizations can rely on performance evaluations that measure the achievement of objectives, tasks, projects, and the employee's professional development.

At the same time, it is essential to be highly mindful of the way communication is delivered and to maintain an understanding attitude toward the employee. Knowing how to dismiss an employee correctly says a great deal about a company's values.

#### How to dismiss an employee: basic protocol

Throughout the process of deciding, planning, and communicating a dismissal, those responsible may make mistakes due to their desire to make things easier for the employee. However, good intentions cannot justify neglecting certain essential requirements. This is precisely why it is crucial to establish a clear protocol.

1. Be certain of the decision.
2. Maintain maximum confidentiality.
3. Have witnesses present.
4. Avoid beating around the bush during the meeting.
5. Justify the reasons for dismissal.
6. Be respectful but honest with the employee.
7. Listen to the employee.
8. Facilitate the employee's transition after dismissal.
9. Avoid arguments and thank the employees for their service.
10. Learn from potential organizational mistakes to minimize future dismissals.

#### How to dismiss an employee: the importance of the message

One of the most common mistakes when dismissing an employee is to assume that, because there is no easy way to do it, any method is acceptable. After all, the employee is likely to be upset, and company representatives may feel there is little they can do.

This view is profoundly mistaken. While the “what” of the message will inevitably be difficult for the employee to accept, special attention should be paid to the “how” and the “why.”

Being careful in the wording of the message and providing reasonable explanations help the employees understand why they have been dismissed. They may not express it during the meeting, but internally they will better understand what went wrong and may strive to improve in future employment situations.

It may also be beneficial to provide certain accommodation regarding the employees’ departure, such as establishing a timetable that is convenient for them within reasonable limits for the company.

Approaching the moment with dignity is essential. Dismissal is always an emotional blow for the employee. Thoughts such as “If I have been dismissed, it is because I have not performed my job well or because others can do it better” are likely to arise.

Consequently, the entire process should be carried out in a way that preserves the employee’s dignity.

Beyond legal and formal requirements, the company should behave with the utmost humanity toward all professionals, including difficult employees. Allowing the employee to say goodbye to colleagues, attending to reasonable final requests, and maintaining a united corporate image throughout the process are some of the keys to ensuring that the dismissal is as non-traumatic as possible for everyone involved. And if the reason for the layoffs is financial difficulties within the organization, we may need to bring those valuable employees back on board in the future if the company’s situation improves.

**Source:**

- Bizneo (2026). “Cómo despedir a alguien” Disponible: <https://www.bizneo.com/blog/como-despedir-a-alguien/> [04/06/2026].

- Factorial (2026). “Cómo despedir a un trabajador (y hacerlo bien)”. Disponible en: <https://factorial.es/blog/despedir-trabajador/> [04/06/2026].

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**Think about:** After reading the text, analyze the competencies that a manager should possess in order to dismiss an employee with dignity.

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