

YOU'RE FIRED!

TEN TIPS

FOR TRANQUIL TERMINATIONS

BY ROSEMARIE PAINE

WHETHER YOU HAVE TWO EMPLOYEES OR TWO HUNDRED, FIRING SOMEONE IS ALWAYS AN UNPLEASANT AND DIFFICULT TASK. FIRING AN EMPLOYEE AFFECTS EVERYONE: THE BOSS, THE FIRED PERSON, AND THE REST OF THE STAFF. THERE ARE THINGS THAT YOU CAN DO TO MAKE THAT EVENT LESS DISRUPTIVE.

1. PLAN AHEAD

Be smart when you hire. Taking time in hiring is one of the best ways to avoid a difficult termination – or a termination at all. One of the biggest mistakes that many companies make is to hire hastily and to fill a position with the wrong person. Take time to assess your company's needs to ensure that the person being hired will be able to fulfill the position and is aware of the position's requirements.

Be clear in your expectations and demands. Give your employees clear job descriptions and task instructions. Provide feedback so employees know when they are meeting the job requirements — and

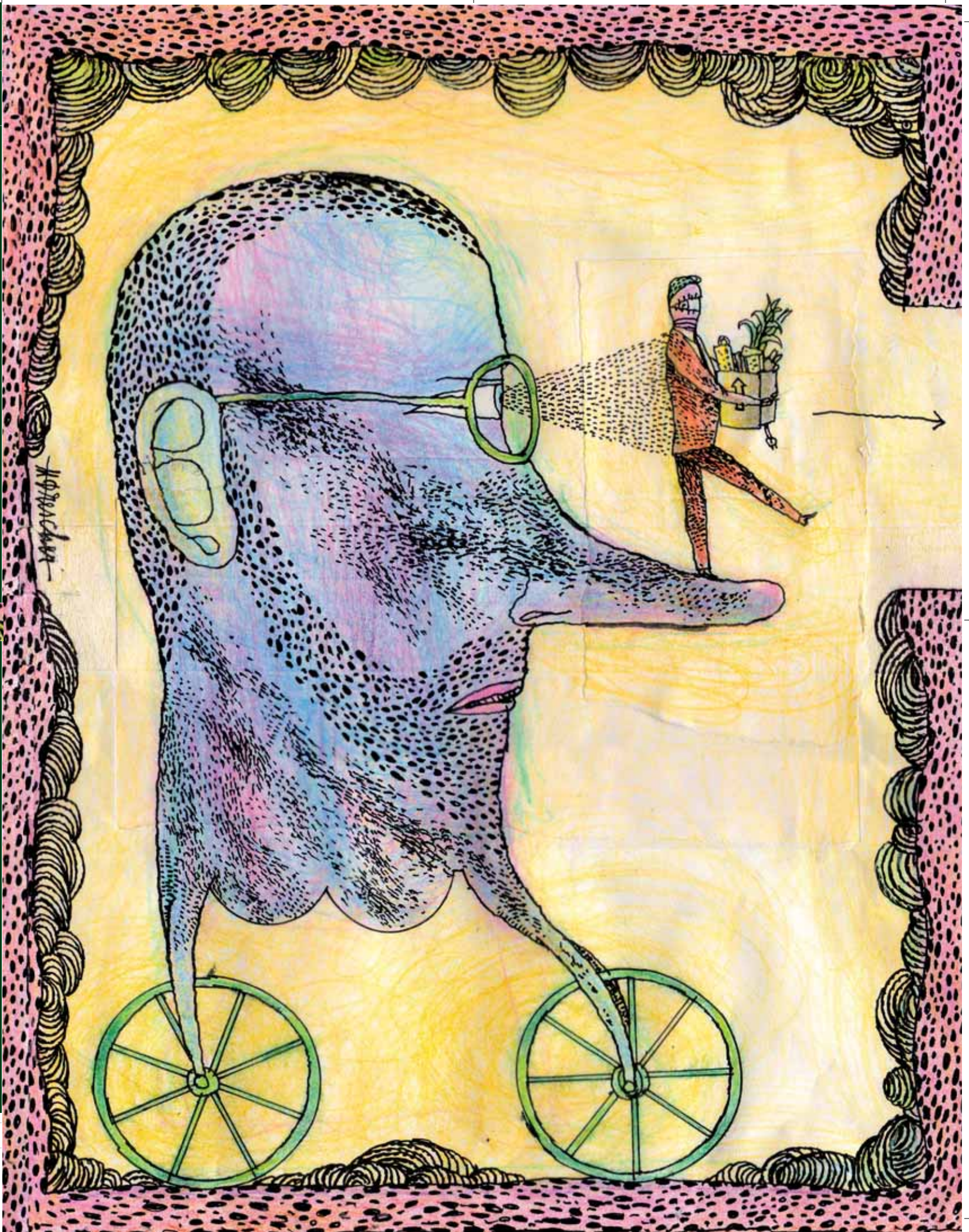
when they are not.

Plan out the logistics. Once you have decided that an employee is not working out and must be terminated, take the time to plan the termination meeting. Think ahead as to how the employee will be told, when the employee will be told, and where the meeting will take place. Have another individual present, if possible, to act as a witness and assist in the process. Give some consideration as to how your other employees will react and how to best address that situation. You want your staff to know that the termination was appropriate for the business and the terminated employee was treated fairly and courteously.

Talk it over with your lawyer. If you have questions regarding a decision to terminate, talking to your lawyer is a good way to ensure that you have acted in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. This will give you additional confidence in your decision-making, and it will prevent you from making unnecessary and potentially costly mistakes.

2. FOLLOW THE CHAIN-OF-COMMAND

Some companies have an HR Department, some have a committee, and some just have “the boss.” It is important that your employees know who has the authority to terminate an employee (and who doesn't). Even more important, that person should be the one who conveys the decision to the terminated employee. Following the “chain-of-command” ensures that your company has thought through the termination decision.



THE LEGAL DEPT

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3. DON'T PROCRASTINATE

Keeping an employee long after the work relationship has deteriorated is not beneficial to anyone. Don't procrastinate in the decision to terminate someone who is not working out. Timely firing accomplishes much: It rids the company of a non-productive employee, it allows the non-productive employee to move on with his or her life, and it lets your productive employees know that hard work is appreciated and a non-productive employee will not be tolerated.

4. SECURE THE SCENE

A terminated employee may have confidential information, access to your computer network, or simply a key to the office. When you plan a termination, consider what steps you must take to ensure that your business and your office will be secure when the employee is terminated. If you are terminating a computer specialist, you may want to secure your computer network before termination.

5. BE CALM, COOL AND COLLECTED — AND STAY THAT WAY

Terminating an employee is stressful and sometimes emotional too. Very rare is the employee who will not be upset, and rarer still is the employer who is not likely to have some feelings of sympathy. Resist the temptation to show your human side by breaking down into tears along with the employee. That helps no one, and it only fuels an already emotional situation. It is appropriate to be human and that includes being polite, courteous and professional. Write out what you plan to say and practice by running it through a few times.

6. BE BRIEF

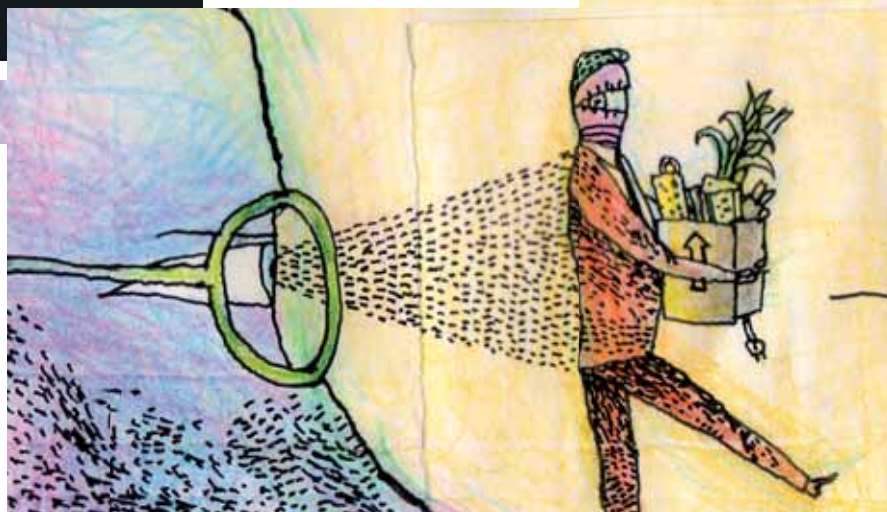
The decision has already been made to terminate. The actual termination should not be an in depth review of past poor performance, nor should it evolve into a negotiation to stay. The meeting itself should be short and to the point. Remember, stick to what you have prepared in advance.

7. DOCUMENT THE FILE

Maintain employee files in order to appropriately document past performance (good and bad), as well as employee history. Document the termination as well.

8. OFFER A SEVERANCE

Severance for a terminated employee is often a wise use of company funds. You are not rewarding a nonproductive employee: you are showing your remaining employees that you are generous and fair-minded.



9. RELAX, REVIEW, AND REFINE

After the termination meeting, collect your thoughts. Document your file in order to assure that you have an accurate record of what occurred. Spend some time to reassess what happened; despite all the planning and preparation, did something come up that you did not expect? What have you learned from the process? Take the lessons you have learned and refine your employee procedures.

10. MOVE ON

Although it will be tempting to do so, do not join in any discussion of the firing, even if you feel that the situation is being wrongfully portrayed. Send out one simple message to your staff, and then engage no further. **CC**

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