

Things to consider when firing a leader

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Every type of organization has a designated top leader with some subordinate leaders peppered throughout. And as we’ve all seen, some leaders are more effective than others, some are just so-so, and others are darn right bad or toxic.

If a leader has sole power and jurisdiction over an organization, watch out. Although some are great leaders, most in this leadership situation have a tendency to not care about people as much as they should. They will typically lead with an iron fist or act out according to how they feel on a given day. They will smoke cigarettes in the building, bark out bullying comments, throw temper tantrums, or fire workers on the slightest whim over something trivial. With these kinds of bad leaders, you have to tread lightly, avoiding the egg shells.

If you work for a bad leader, you have to grow super thick skin, deal with a potential value war inside your conscience, become tolerant and patient (for the end of the day so you can get out of there), or perhaps you may need to consider finding a new place of employment. Bad leaders with dictator status normally can’t be fired unless they break the law.

Other leaders, ones accountable to a higher leader or corporate board, don’t have the option of being such a dictator. They normally can’t violate safety or health policies because they want to or don’t care about people. They generally can’t call others stupid or yell at them to shut up. However, it doesn’t

mean it never happens. Some still get away with demeaning people on their individual teams, but typically only in environments that they have control over, like a department staff meeting or in their own specific office. Again, with these kinds of poor leaders, you must tread carefully around them, but don’t let them have such an adverse effect on you that it impacts your health or your personal life. Remember, they have some in charge of them too, and hopefully, it’s just a matter of time before a good top-level leader puts them in their place, or better yet, gets rid of them. In the meantime, you have to execute your duties as best as you can because it’s not quite so easy for top-level leaders to simply fire a subordinate leader. It takes time and very careful actions.

There will be occasional times when a leader’s incompetence, disrespectful behavior, dishonesty, or unwillingness to lead will result in some type of consequence or punishment. In extreme cases, it can result in the leader being fired or relieved of the leadership position. Before firing a leader, though, there are things to consider.

First, when do you do it? And how? And that answer is: very seldom, and very carefully, primarily because of its impact on respect for authority and confidence in organizational leadership. If you fire a leader because he or she fails to meet your own personal standards, watch out. You may not “like” them as a person, but their skill and will may have earned the confidence and respect of those underneath them. On the other hand, if you fire a leader who meets neither

your standards nor theirs, you build confidence in organizational leadership and respect for the organization’s chain of command. Here are some guidelines for this tricky how-to:

- 1) Fire any leader who lies on significant matters.
- 2) Fire a leader who is consistently “unable and unwilling.”
- 3) Fire a leader whose performance over time begins to lower the skill, will, and teamwork of their people.
- 4) Fire a leader whose errors have a serious negative impact on the effectiveness of the organization.

And always, in all cases, do it very carefully.

Lastly, if you appointed someone as a leader then realize they may not be competent for the position, do one of these two things:

- 1) Get the person trained. Leadership seminars or coaches can help immensely. Or maybe the leader needs technical training to have a better understanding of issues for which they are responsible. Either way, provide them with extra knowledge to properly make decisions and to provide guidance.
- 2) Reassign the person to another position within the organization or help transfer them to another organization that better suits them. Place them in a position where their talents or strengths can be put to better use.

It is never easy addressing negative leadership issues, but sometimes you have to put an end to the madness! Always be willing to do what is right, necessary, and in the best interest of the organization.

~ The End ~