

Handling Employee Exits

Every business owner, senior executive or manager at some point has had to deal with the departure of a key person. When informed by an employee that they are resigning, the first reaction for any leader is to take it personally, although in many cases, it isn't personal at all. In a recent Inc. magazine article, entrepreneur and author, Margaret Heffernan says that before you resign yourself to what appears inevitable, you should consider these points.

Is Leaving the Answer?

Is a move to another employer essential to this individual's professional development? Are there other opportunities or needs within the business that might supply the same challenge? Many people believe they have to leave to grow, but it isn't always true. Check assumptions now before it's too late.

It's Not You; It's Me

Are there issues within the business that are driving talent away? If there are, however painful it is, you'll need to recognize them as early as possible. Sometimes the problem is other people; sometimes it is you. Now is the time to find out. The great benefit of departing employees is that, without an agenda, they may now tell you the unvarnished truth.

Once It's Settled

Should the exit be fast or slow? There aren't any golden rules and there are many ways for people to leave. Do your best to make this period fruitful and positive for everyone, however annoyed or frustrated you feel. Sometimes, people just need to move on and in many cases you want them to, so opportunities can be created for new hires and internal candidates. But however you spin it, departures are emotional, and it's foolish to imagine otherwise.

And one last consideration: people usually stay friends with some of their former colleagues. Never imagine that just because someone has left, their influence has gone. Employees are typically more loyal to each other than to a company, which is all the more reason to make every departure as positive as possible.