

Notes on termination

7 personal reminders for terminating an employee at a startup

1. Prepare in advance. Write out your script for the termination conversation. Pre-write your email to the company. Have a colleague or trusted advisor review it. Practice saying it.
2. If you don't have a plan for or culture of progressive discipline: this is your wake-up call. If employees know this person was given feedback, they'll feel OK (maybe sad). If they don't know, then they'll feel anxious.
3. Try to anticipate their anxiety and address it where appropriate. For example, if the termination wasn't tied to company cash flow, remind the team how many months of runway the company has.
4. Speaking of anxiety: be prompt. The reason you prepare in advance is so that the moment their Slack access is shut down or their emails start to bounce, or if they don't show up for 11:45 am standup, then everyone knows the reason.
5. Are there other leaders, managers, or trusted insiders in the company? If possible, bring them into the decision process (either before or after). They can reinforce your message and normalize the situation ("Not every great person is right for every company").
6. Listen a lot. Listen in 1:1s. You may not be able to solve every problem raised and terminating people never feels good. But this is an awesome chance to remind your employees that you genuinely care about them and are interested in them.
7. Don't be angry. Use this moment to show compassion and generosity towards your colleagues, your employees, the person being let go, and yourself.

This template was put together by [Joshua Herzig-Marx](#) and more are available [here](#). I provide coaching and support to founders, solo PMs, and first-time Heads of Product. [If you want to talk, grab some time!](#)