

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLIOM

# Don't Wait to Terminate

This past week, my wife landed in the hospital with a fairly serious but treatable ailment. The cause turned out to be a medication prescribed by one of her doctors. After leaving a message with that doctor's receptionist, my wife waited several days for a return call. Ultimately, she called back and found out the message had never been delivered. What would you do with the inept receptionist?

Managers face these quandaries regularly, and they're dreaded by all but the most hardened individuals. When all the training, multiple warnings and probations fail to correct a problem, do you find yourself continuing to make excuses for an employee? How many times have you uttered: "He's got a family," "She's a fixture around here," "I'm too short-handed" or, one of my personal favorites, "I think he's learned his lesson"?

You can build a beautiful facility in a perfect location, sell the best products, implement the greatest systems, use creative incentives and run world-class market-building programs. But nothing can destroy your business faster than employees allowed to perform poorly. No matter what you do right, you ultimately rely on your people to implement your plans. If they fail, you and your company fail.

By many accounts, I had a staff admired in many corners of the industry. Still, an occasional poor hiring decision brought a couple of rotten eggs into the mix. It's inevitable.

They say patience is a virtue, but if I had to do it over, I would have had a much shorter fuse.

## THE COST OF POOR PERFORMERS

As with the doctor's receptionist, a missed message can cost your company a sale or, worse, its reputation. An employee losing his or her patience with a customer can give you a reputation for mistreating customers. A promise

made and broken will lead customers to think your company's unreliable.

These single acts by single employees tend to take on a life of their own. One bad deed gets more lip service than countless jobs well done. Happy customers tend to say little. Dissatisfied customers will go on a mission to take you down. Their rants are likely to be directed toward friends, family and anyone who will listen on Facebook, Twitter or other online forums.

The problems don't stop there. Poor performers hurt morale. An employee allowed to show up late sends a message to others that lateness

is tolerated. An employee allowed to ignore a directive causes a breakdown of authority.

Left unchecked, the performance of otherwise stellar performers degrades as a result of your worst employees' actions, and a company with a mission of excellence mires in the realm of mediocrity. You get measured by your weakest link: the underachievers in the organization.

## THERE'S NO BETTER TIME

It's time to commit to jettisoning your company's dead weight. Do it now. Finding talent is never easy, but avoiding the search is nothing short of lazy. You owe it to culprits to provide appropriate training and normal guidance when they err. But you owe it to yourself, the other employees and your customers to purge the problem (doing it legally, of course) when other remedies fail.

Even if you've had problems finding help in the past, you'll likely discover that in the current economy one of the six million available folks out there is just right for your needs.

Oh, make that six million and one. The receptionist *has* to go. **MI**

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**Nothing can destroy an otherwise great business faster than poor performers. Don't wait to pitch the dead weight**