

LESSONS LEARNED | GERSON ROSENBLUM

Two Weeks' Notice

The truth is simple: It's virtually impossible to replace valued employees in two weeks. It's a token courtesy, usually offered in hopes of leaving on good terms. But the fact remains — most employers will find themselves in a difficult position when having to replace someone quickly.

I certainly faced this more times than I care to recall. It aggravated me, challenged me and created hardships. One day I decided that enough was enough, and I think you'll benefit from this lesson learned.



Create a culture where employee departures are no longer a last-minute surprise

My goal was to create a culture where employee departures were no longer a last-minute surprise. People leave jobs for all sorts of reasons. Often these are exciting next chapters in their lives.

The first step in making this work is accepting that, with most employees, you are on a collision course with the day that they eventually leave you.

Once you take that as a given, you are in a position to address it head on. Rather than continuing to operate under the flawed belief that employees will never leave and pretend that it won't happen, you can do something very remarkable — you can *talk* about it!

The road to eliminating last-minute departures is through solid communication. Here's how I addressed it successfully in my own business:

TELL EMPLOYEES HOW YOU FEEL

I can't help but wonder if employees are under the false belief that you'll be happy that they're leaving. So, you need to dispel this misconception. If you'd be just as happy if they left, then fire them. But if you value them, you have to say so.

The success (or failure) of your business is in their hands. They are an important key to your performance, so they deserve to know that's how you feel.

Explain how hard they would be to replace. Valued and integral employees don't grow on trees. You know this but your employees don't — unless you tell them. Be specific.

Tell them that it took months to find them. It will be eye-opening to them. Tell them that you can't easily replace them and that the search to do so could take months.

CONNECT THE DOTS

Even though this may seem like spoon feeding, you have to spell this out. Tell your employees that because they're important to your business, you're confident that you could never replace them with the "traditional" two weeks' notice. Tell them that you expect lots of notice. And the longer they've been with you, the more notice you'll need because the more valuable they are to you (not to mention the extra income they've earned with you).

Naysayers will discount this by stating that this gives too much power to employees and inflates their egos. My feeling, as well as my experience, is that employees appreciate the spirit with which this is intended. If someone is unreasonably egocentric, they'll be that way no matter what you say. But most people will respond positively to this approach and be motivated by your stated belief in them.

Treat someone with respect, and you can expect to get it back many times over — including when the time comes for them to leave.

You will be elated the first time you have the opportunity to enjoy the luxury of several months' notice. **MI**

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