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## ASK BUSINESS ON MAIN

Find out what other business leaders are asking in our Q&As, answered by Business on Main contributors, or suggest a question of your own.

### FEATURED Q&A

**Q:** I have an employee who just isn't working out. He's such a nice person, but he isn't getting the job done. How do I go about breaking the news to him?

**A:** We all want to work with nice people. It makes going to work and doing our jobs much more enjoyable. But, of course, being nice just isn't enough. It does make it harder, though, when an employer must have the difficult conversation necessary for letting a nice person go.

Whenever we need to have difficult conversations, such as telling a nice person that he or she is simply not working out as an employee, it's important to be as honest as possible. That being said, getting to the point where you need to let someone go assumes that you've had a number of conversations before this final one.

In fact, it's extremely important that you have laid out, well in advance of letting the person go, where the employee has fallen short and have helped to develop strategies to overcome his or her difficulties. You don't want to leave yourself open to a disgruntled ex-employee who didn't feel as though he or she was given a fair shot. But if you've tried strategies to help your employee improve his or her performance, then it might be time to have that tough conversation.

When kicking off the conversation in these situations, start with the positive — what the employee has done and what you valued most about the person's time as an employee at your company. Then transition the conversation to areas of growth and challenges and why it's necessary to let the person go. You want to be able to give employees feedback and guidance that they can use in the future to help them succeed in a future job. It may be that they're in the wrong job, in which case you can help steer them in the right direction.

If you're willing to provide a positive recommendation, let your employee know. Indicate that while he or she didn't work out at our company, it doesn't mean that there isn't a better fit elsewhere. Lastly, don't be too hard on yourself for not making the right hire in the first place. Remember that we all learn more from our mistakes and failures than from our successes.

— *Toddi Gutner*



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