

# The 3-9-17 Formula

*To fire someone the right way*

## **“3-9-17” Strategic tips for firing**

**3 Checks** to check yourself on as a leader when a change might be needed

**9 Questions** to ask yourself before pulling the trigger to let someone go

**17 Words** when decision has been made to fire someone (clear and respectful)

*“The secret to success is getting the right people on the bus, **the wrong people off the bus**, and the right people in the right seats on the bus—and take that bus to the moon” -Jim Collins, “Good to Great*

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**3 Checks** when you feel like there needs to be a change

**1. Check that clear EXPECTATIONS have been set with clear results.**

- a. Have I been crystal clear on what I expect from this person
- b. What have I done to ensure clear communication around expectations?

**2. Check for clear TEACHING in the area(s) needing improvement**

- a. 4 Keys for effective coaching and teaching (Align, Lift, Challenge, G.O.O.W.)
- b. Simple documentation (what, when, where, why)

**3. Check that you’ve offered clear CORRECTION in underperforming areas**

- a. Soft like a Brick (In the spirit of helpfulness, Clear is Kind)
- b. Clear detailed documentation

**9 Questions** to ask yourself before letting someone go:

1. Do I fully understand what good performance looks like in their role?
2. Have I given them the tools, coaching, and clarity they need to succeed?
3. Will they be blindsided if I let them go?
4. Do I believe this person can’t or won’t improve as fast as the team/company needs?
5. How is this person affecting team morale?
6. Would I hire them again today? KWINK thinking—Knowing what I now Know....
7. Do I need to replace them? (And can I find someone better?)
8. How quickly could I ramp up someone new? If replacing them will take months and create chaos, you might need a transition plan first.
9. Is letting them go the best move for the business, the team, and for them? The final gut check. If it’s the right move across the board, you know what to do.

***Note: A leader doesn’t need to be perfect to be justified in terminating someone. If the person has had sufficient chance, and sufficient effort to grow and develop them, and they are still hurting the result needed by the team, action cannot be procrastinated.***

# Fire FAST!

## When termination is necessary

**What to say and how to say it—when decision has been made to let someone go...**

*Rip the Band-Aid off! (Respectfully)*

*Use these 17 words (3 phrases) to fire someone respectfully:*

*“I’m concerned about your performance, we need to make a change,  
I’m going to let you go.”*

*Another example (5 phrases)*

*In a spirit of helpfulness and respect, explain:*

*“As you know, at \_\_\_\_\_ we are committed to \_\_\_\_\_ (Insert specific result) \_\_\_\_\_. This is our highest obligation.*

*Unfortunately, the way you are doing your job prevents us from accomplishing this.*

*I have tried to help you on this, and it hasn’t made enough difference.*

*Therefore, I need to make a change.*

*I wish you all the best, but I can no longer employ you here.”*

In rare instances, a mistake or behavior problem may be serious enough that it would warrant immediate termination. In such a case, be sure to document the incident and your reason for choosing termination.

The nature of the incident should make termination self-evident, but it is still important to keep a thorough record of why you chose to terminate.

*In general, you should always consult with an HR professional in your industry and the area you live as you begin going down this road.*