



3-9-17

FORMULA

when pondering termination

3

CHECKS

Have you earned the right to decide?

9

QUESTIONS

Is it truly time to move on?

17

WORDS

How to act, fast and respectfully.

What you tolerate, you endorse.

A DECISION FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERS

BEN WARD

BEFORE YOU DECIDE

One of the hardest things a leader does is decide whether someone *stays or goes.*

Most leaders stay too long with the wrong people. They hope it turns around. They avoid the decision. And while they wait, the rest of the team watches.

What you tolerate, you endorse. When you keep someone who is not meeting the standard, you have told the whole team the standard is optional.

3

THE 3 CHECKS

TO HELP YOU DECIDE NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Have I set **clear expectations**?
- ✓ Have I **taught them clearly** what was expected, in a way that is unmistakable?
- ✓ Have I provided **specific, helpful correction** when expectations have not been met?

→ If you can say **yes to all three** and the gap persists, **move on to the 9 questions.**

REMEMBER

The 3 Checks are about you, not them. They confirm you have done your part as a leader (set the standard, taught it clearly, and corrected fairly) before the decision becomes theirs to own.

9

THE 9 QUESTIONS

ASK YOURSELF ABOUT THEM. IS IT TIME TO MOVE ON?

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- 01** Do I fully understand what **good performance** looks like in this role?
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- 02** Have I given this person the **tools, coaching, and clarity** they need to succeed?
- If the honest answer is no, fix that first.
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- 03** Do I believe this person **can't or won't improve** as fast as the team needs?
-
- 04** Knowing what I know now, **would I hire this person again?**
- KWINK Thinking. Knowing What I Know Now.
-
- 05** Do they **add energy** to the team, or drain it?
-
- 06** Will they be **blindsided** if I let them go?
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- 07** Is letting them go the **best move** for the business, the team, and for them?
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- 08** Do I need to replace them, and can I **find someone better?**
-
- 09** How quickly could I **ramp up** someone new?

A NOTE ON BEING JUSTIFIED

A leader doesn't need to be perfect to be justified in terminating someone. If the person has had sufficient chance, sufficient effort has been made to develop them, and they are still hurting the team's results and culture, **action cannot be procrastinated.**

17

THE 17 WORDS

FIRE FAST. RESPECTFULLY.

When the decision has been made, **rip the band-aid off**, respectfully and directly.

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

OR, WITH MORE CONTEXT

As you know, at [company] we are committed to [specific result]. This is our highest obligation. Unfortunately, the way you are currently doing your job prevents us from achieving this. I have tried to help, 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 general, always consult with an HR professional in your industry before proceeding.

EXERCISE

APPLY THE 3-9-17

Is there someone you’ve been unsure about for more than 30 days?

Can you honestly say yes to all three checks?

☐ Yes ☐ No. Which check fails?

After working through the 9 questions, what is your answer?

☐ Stay ☐ Go ☐ Need more time. Deadline:

“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**, and take that bus to the moon.”

JIM COLLINS, GOOD TO GREAT