



HR Broadcast – When a key employee resigns

It is never a nice situation when a key employee resigns. You have to decide whether you would like the person to stay or whether you are ok with the fact that this employee is leaving you. Whatever your decision when faced with an employee's resignation, it is important to deal with matters quickly, and even more essential if you are considering an attempt to change their mind. Believe me, the closer it gets to their termination date, the less likely they will do a U-turn. In addition, other administrative factors will need to be considered in relation to the impending departure and keeping all of this confidential will be very difficult.

If you want to try and keep this employee I would set up a meeting with this person within 24 hours of receiving the resignation letter. You may want to do this by sending a letter or e-mail where you make the request to meet in order to discuss the reasons for leaving and any other matters that may be relevant to the decision to leave. You may wish to add in the communication that you would like to explore whether there is any possibility of persuading that person to change their mind. This will get the employee thinking about their position.

You don't have to try to persuade an employee to stay on - so it's entirely up to you whether this section is included. If you don't, the meeting will simply be to discuss the employee's reasons for leaving with a view to ensuring there are no issues or problems which you may have previously been unaware of.

At the meeting the aim is to discuss what has led to the resignation. When you have this information it will be easier for you to work out whether you can tempt the employee to stay. I tend to look at the following;

- If they want a career change or move to another part of the country then there is not a lot you can do about it.
- If it is about salary or benefits - is there anything you can do; pay a bonus? Enhance the benefits? Etc..
- Are they looking for more flexibility in their work? Could they work from a different location?
- Could some of their job duties or responsibilities be changed? Or are they feeling disenchanted at a lack of career progression? Some simple variations to their role can make an enormous difference
- Is the issue that they just don't get on with their colleagues or manager? In which case could you consider work location or changing the reporting structure?
- When I have been involved in these types of conversations, whilst I have asked for confidentiality it rarely happens, so be careful what is said and what you are agreeing to because if confidentiality is breached you may have set precedents that you don't wish to follow or indeed you may then have an army of employees demanding a pay rise.

If, after discussions, the decision is made to part company you should take time to remind the leaving employee of possible contractual clauses in the contract of employment; such as the duty of confidentiality and secrecy, obligations under any restrictive covenants and the return of Company property. You may also wish to consider, if your contract of employment allows for this, putting the employee on "garden leave".