

# **STYBEL PEABODY & ASSOCIATES, INC.**

## BEST PRACTICES: EMPLOYEE TERMINATIONS:

Start with the Stybel Peabody CALIFORNIA MANAGEMENT REVIEW article, "Planning Executive Dismissals: How to Fire a Friend:"

<http://www.stybelpeabody.com/newsite/pdf/howtofireafriend.pdf>

---

Stybel Peabody would create a letter with the headline: "Our loss could be your gain..." and send it out to the chief HR officers of thirty prospect organizations within the region. Stybel Peabody would do the research regarding who gets the letter.

In many cases, the people who get the letter are chief hr officers who have retained us for their own situations.

We would craft the letter and you would review. We could sign the letter for you. You give us the stationary and we will type it up. We will identify Stybel Peabody as the source for interested parties to get more information about the talent available and stress that there is no charge to link available talent to these interested parties.

All the preparation is done before termination meeting. The letters go out after the meetings.

---

Removing access to the computer system while in the room is proper risk management practice. But there is no reason why people cannot be allowed to remove personal belongings from offices in a dignified manner. They can remove their belongings when they are ready.

Give a time two week time frame and ask them to work with security.

Stress that the purpose of using security is to protect both the organization and the individual from charges of theft of university property.

---

---

---

TWO OF SIX

Consider allowing employees to use a lawyer of their choice to review the legal document they are being asked to sign. Consider a maximum fee of \$300. Invoices can go to Stybel Peabody and we can pay.

This allows people to shop for a competent attorney rather than to find someone who takes it on a contingency basis or reflexively use someone who handled a real estate closing.

The use of competent attorneys protects both parties under conditions that some employees may not feel they can afford to hire one.

---

At the Associate Director level, consider allowing people a choice of two firms. When people are fired they feel they have lost control over their professional lives. What's wrong with this statement: "You have lost control over your professional life and we have selected the firm that will help you regain it."

People are more committed to the decisions they make when they have some free choice in the decision.

Outplacement is a professional service. Like any professional service the chemistry between client and consultant may be more important than the firm chosen to provide it.

Let the person make a decision.

From a corporate perspective, this issue balances giving people options over their lives versus potential administrative ease in dealing with one vendor.

"Doing the right thing" consistent with our corporate culture should trump administrative ease. And it probably won't make much difference in terms of total outplacement costs.

---

Ask the outplacement firm to initiate the first call. Do not put it in the hands of the employee to make the first call. Employees may have conflicting feelings about reaching out for help from a company associated with the firm that fired them. Remove the conflict by having the outplacement firm make the first move.

If an employee does not make use of outplacement service in six months the probability is that they will not make use of it at all. A six month period makes sense.

---

## THREE OF SIX

Within that time, there may be people who want to spend the summer with their children or take care of family matters. These personal decisions should be respected.

## SCRIPT USED IN A RECENT TERMINATION

### BEFORE THE MEETING:

---

Make sure that there are taxi vouchers to allow employees without cars to be able to move their things without having to stumble down subway stairs or risk theft of their personal belongings.

Vouchers can be given to Warren Radtke, Larry Stybel and Maryanne Peabody (the consultants who will be there). At the end of the day, we will return unused vouchers to Mary's assistant.

### ARRANGING FOR 1:1 MEETINGS:

The office should have a box of tissues within each reach of the person. There should be no barriers between the person and the door in case the employee wishes to exit quickly.

If there is the least concern about violence, retain a private security guard to wear civilian clothes and be stationed in the waiting room, quietly reading a newspaper. Ask for a security guard who physically fits into the community rather than someone who looks out of place in it.

In the event of a yell, the security person will be right there. The use of a buzzer to alert security guards on another floor seems inappropriate for a true crisis.

Start the meetings with employees **least** likely to have negative emotional reactions. Save those most likely to have negative emotional reactions for last. The rationale is that by the time they are called in, they are likely to know what the meeting is about before the meeting starts. In addition Mary will now have more experience handling such meetings.

FOUR OF SIX

Mary's meetings are apt to be very short. (3-5 minutes).

But our meetings may last longer. It will be uncomfortable for people to wait to hear if they are being fired.

It will be more uncomfortable for people to be fired and then wait for a meeting with us. They may want to immediately go home and we can schedule a time to meet later.

PROPOSED SCRIPT FOR MARY:

"I have some bad news. (PREPARE THE PERSON FOR AN UNHAPPY CONVERSATION).

It is my responsibility as CEO to align our resources in line with our fiscal reality. You know what that reality is.

That alignment must require fewer employees. Your job is going to be eliminated.

This is not your fault.

Today is your last day of work.

And that is the end of the bad news.

The good news is that we want to honor you for the work you have done. We want to help you to move to a new chapter in your professional life.

Here is a package which outlines what we are prepared to provide. Please review when you are ready.

"I want to introduce someone to you.  
(Bring Larry or Maryanne or Warren).

(Shake the employee's hand. We move the employee out of your office.)

FIVE OF SIX

WHILE EMPLOYEE IS IN THE ROOM WITH YOU

Have computer access codes removed.

AFTER ALL TERMINATED EMPLOYEES LEAVE:

Hold a meeting with those members of the community still around. Mention that tomorrow a letter is going out to the heads of human resource of other institutions in the region letting them know that “our loss could be their gain.”

Explain the assistance and give no assurance that “it is over.”

Say nothing more than what you said in the room about “alignment” and “honoring” service and “it is not their fault.” Assume that every word you say goes back to the employees who have been terminated.

Key words: alignment, honor, not your fault.

QUESTIONS:

Who asks for credit cards, keys, etc. We can do that.

IF THE EMPLOYEE WANTS TO ARGUE ABOUT THE JUSTICE OF THE DECISION:

“The purpose of this meeting is to inform you that today is your last day of work. If you want to discuss anything else, you can call my assistant and schedule an appointment next week or the week after.”

The employee might initiate a call within the next two weeks for a 1:1 discussion but the odds are low.

SIX OF SIX

ABOUT STYBEL PEABODY ASSOCIATES, INC.

Stybel Peabody Associates, an Arbora Global Company, was founded in 1979. Clients include five of the seven largest institutions of higher education in Massachusetts, 70% of Boston's largest twenty law firms, and two of the Big Four CPA firms. Clients include 21% of the one hundred companies named by FORTUNE MAGAZINE as "Best Employers in the United States."

It has been voted "Best Outplacement Firm" by the readers of Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly for four years out of the last four.

We have the industry's best web based platforms to assist people with their job search.

There are 250 Arbora consultants in 25 U.S. cities and 31 countries.

[www.careercertification.org](http://www.careercertification.org) is the global nonprofit that certifies excellence in all aspects of career management and leadership development. There are 221 Fellows from 23 countries. There are more Arbora Global partners who are Fellows than any global career management firm.

Links of possible interest:

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/platform-success>

<http://hbr.org/search/stybel/>

<http://www.stybelpeabody.com/newsite/team.php>