

4 Steps to Ensure Firing Someone Doesn't Come as a Surprise

Step 1: Start with Regular Coaching

Coaching shouldn't only happen when someone makes a mistake. Hold regular conversations that focus on goals, growth, and how each team member defines success. When coaching is routine, performance conversations feel supportive, not punitive.

Step 2: Look for Progress, Not Just Compliance

Short-term changes under pressure don't mean lasting improvement. Pay attention to steady effort and real progress instead of temporary fixes. Lasting growth happens when new habits take root, not when someone just avoids consequences.

Step 3: Make the Process Clear

Firing feels harsh when it's a surprise. Keep expectations visible through consistent conversations so the outcome is never a shock. When people know what good looks like and see they're not moving toward it, they can't claim they didn't know.

Step 4: Decide Together on Next Steps

Involve the employee in thinking through their future. If the role isn't the right fit, support them in moving on and agree on a clear timeline. Treating it as a joint decision protects your team's culture and helps them move forward with dignity.

