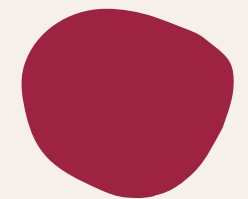




The letting-go guide

**FOR REMOTE
PEOPLE
MANAGERS**



Introduction	3
Remote communication processes for letting go of employees	4
Preparing the employee before the meeting begins	6
How to prepare yourself for the meeting	7
Running the meeting	10
Meeting followup	11

Introduction

A painful reality of managing is parting ways with employees.

Sometimes even due to circumstances out of your control, you'll be forced to part ways even with high-performing employees. Letting go of valued employees has an impact on company culture. You're taking them away from friends and colleagues, and you may even be interrupting relationships with clients. You're also letting go of the hard work that was done when onboarding and training, and even serving as a mentor.

“Remote separation is hard, but it doesn't have to be any less empathetic than a face-to-face conversation. This is a hurdle, but with the right preparation can be managed well and with respect.”

Nirit Peled Muntz, Chief People Officer, Hibob

Imagine all this over the phone or video chat after months or years of sitting side-by-side.

While your traditionally location-based organization hopefully has processes in place for letting go of employees, they may not easily translate to a remote environment.

The separation process generally includes several touchpoints, allowing employees ample time and opportunities to say goodbye; however, the remote process can feel painful, rushed, and overly formal. This is why we need to take extra care to separate from employees respectfully and with empathy—especially in these trying times, when many of us are forced to part with employees due to budget cuts and loss of business.

Let's discuss:

- Addressing remote communication differences
- Preparing employees for separation
- The remote offboarding process

Remote communication processes for letting go of employees

The remote separation process should be as close to your organization's original process as possible. Letting employees go is about more than "conscious uncoupling;" there are legal elements as well that must be addressed clearly and formally, even more so than in a traditional office environment.

Since you may not physically see the employee again, at least not in this capacity, meetings will have to be formally scheduled and come with a finalized agenda for each one.

These meetings should include:

- Formal notice
- Offboarding
- Technical details, such as returning equipment and collecting their final paycheck

It is critical that there is absolutely no ambiguity in this process; employees shouldn't be in limbo about the separation process, or even worse, whether or not they've formally let go.



“

The first rule of remote separation is not to surprise the impacted employee. This is effective for every work environment, but especially with remote.

”

Preparing the employee before the meeting begins

The first rule of remote separation is not to surprise the impacted employee, especially in the event of an unwanted firing (i.e. due to budget cuts). The less wanted the parting is the more likely they'll be surprised, meaning they have to be prepared from the moment they get an invitation to the call.

The meeting name. Though it doesn't have to be ominous, the title should indicate that this won't be an easy conversation. Something like "Impact of organizational changes (video call)" will make it clear to the employee that there is a difficult situation at hand.

The meeting setting. Make it clear to your employee that this call is going to be a video call, so they should be

somewhere quiet and private. You want them to attend the call in the proper setting.

The meeting timing. Don't leave the employee in limbo before the call. Send the invitation with as little lead time as possible—the morning of, for example. Otherwise, you'll leave the employee to stew and overthink, which is the opposite of what a respectful, kind process should look like.

Answering pre-meeting questions. It's to be expected that the employee will have questions about this invitation. If they ask for more details or context, tell them the meeting will discuss the impact of organizational changes on their role. This will set the stage for your conversation, and help make sure they're not surprised by anything to be said.

How to prepare yourself for the meeting

Coming to the meeting prepared with all of the information your employee needs will make this painful conversation more human. By having the conversation laid out in your head, you'll be able to lead more naturally and gracefully.

To respect the employee and their time, make sure you have a functioning headset, good internet, a private space, and no other conflicting obligations or messaging apps open.

“
Come to the separation meeting prepared with all of the information your employee needs. It will allow you to focus on them and be empathetic.
”



Some of the information you may need:

Legal and company policies. What are the legal standards for terminating an employee relationship? Make sure that you use proper phrasing and send all necessary documents to avoid problems later on. It's advisable to have an HR representative on the call to make sure everything is covered from a legal standpoint.

Reason for separation. Whether the parting is due to poor performance, budget cuts, changes in leadership/direction, or any other reason within or outside of your and the employee's control, make sure you're prepared with the organization justification clearly articulated. If the parting is a result of performance issues, for example, be ready to discuss past interventions and efforts to improve. If the issue is budget cuts, share as candidly as possible the organizational struggles that have led to this decision, and whether or not there is a possibility of returning.

Terms of separation. Once you've given notice to the employee, there are still a number of procedural elements that need to be addressed.

- **When is the employee's last day?** Make sure the employee knows when their last day is, including the hour. This is especially important when the employee is given short notice so they will have enough time to say goodbye to their colleagues and clients.
- **How will system access be addressed?** Make sure to give employees adequate time to back up any files they may need and send any messages they have left in draft mode. It's basic respect.
- **How will handover be structured?** Make clear to the employee how they will be offboarded and when, both in terms of equipment and open tasks.
- **How will the employee return their equipment?** Make sure the employee knows what to return, when, and how to avoid misunderstandings and potential legal complications.
- **What will their severance pay be?** This isn't just a professional shock; the financial implications of this conversation are significant. Make sure the employee knows how much they'll be getting paid and when to expect payment.



Prepare yourself before the meeting and make sure you leave enough time for the employee to ask questions and share thoughts.

Running the meeting

Prepare yourself to speak concisely, and to allow the employee to ask any questions and share any thoughts they have. Expect to see a wide range of emotions—anything from complete acceptance with no pushback, all the way to extreme anger or grief. In the face of all this, make sure to stay focused and keep your cool. Be the people leader your employees need you to be.

The unique circumstance of separation from remote minimizes our ability to show empathy via our body language as we might be accustomed to, but you'll still be on video, where your face can be seen and voice can be heard. Take advantage of what you can by maintaining eye contact and using hand gestures however possible.

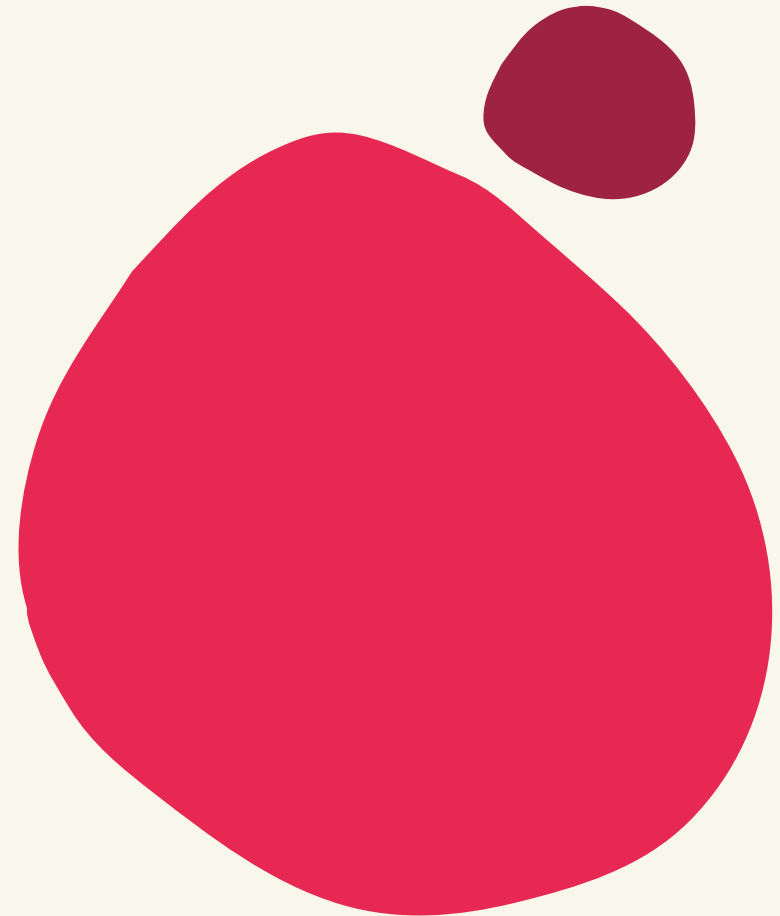
“
You should expect to see a wide range of emotions during the separation meeting. Make sure to maintain your composure. Be the people leader your employees need you to be.
”

Meeting followup

After the initial conversation, you should immediately follow with a written conversation summary via email detailing the separation process and reasoning, along with timelines and expectations.

Plan a second call where you and the employee will address any lingering issues, including how and when to tell teammates. This is when you should reiterate how grateful you are for the chance to have worked together and, if the parting is amicable, offer to provide a reference or stay in touch.

Remote firing is hard, but it doesn't have to be any less empathetic than a face-to-face conversation. Remember to be sensitive, and to treat others how you'd like to be treated. This is a hurdle, but it's not the end of the world.



In 2020, it's time to make smarter decisions
when it comes to your people and organization.

To learn more about hibob and our data-driven tools,
get in touch with us at

contact@hibob.com

SCHEDULE A DEMO



NEW YORK

205 Hudson St.
New York, NY 10013

T: (+1) 855 426 6627

LONDON

Boundary House
91-93 Charterhouse St.
London EC1M 6HR, UK

T: (+44) 0203 006 2303

TEL AVIV

28 Ben Avigdor St.
Tel Aviv 6721848

T: (+972) 73 265 2595