

Staff Resignation...Kinda

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Kelly, a staff person of several years, came to Chris one day: “Chris, I’ve become really passionate about health care. I really think that I want to get into helping elderly and I have an opportunity to take some classes towards a degree. This program also offers an internship so that I can really understand what it’s all about. But, I’m not sure and I don’t want to leave the Club, nor put you in a tough spot. I’d like to take class and perform some internship work for the next six months, while still holding down my full-time role with you. What do you think?”

Chris is a firm believer in supporting good people and supports Kelly’s desire. Together they worked out an adjusted schedule to accommodate a new career internship, as well as study class material, and perform work at the previous high level. Over the course of six months Kelly remained highly engaged and proficient at work and was able to more fully understand the new career opportunity. During this time, Chris was keeping an eye out for a replacement, not searching, but watching. An exceptionally qualified candidate appeared; Chris engaged this person in serious talks ending up with an offer of employment. When Kelly was notified that the replacement was found, and the time had come to move to the new career, Kelly was devastated. Now, Chris is the “bad guy.”

We posed this situation to about 200 managers from across the country asking how they would have handled the situation and how they would now handle the consequences. We received some very interesting responses.

Most all were in support of the effort Chris has shown. This show of support was aptly captured by one respondent who wrote, “First off, I salute the manager for supporting the employee's preparation for a new career. All of us want the very best for our team and if that employee's deeply embedded life interests direct him away from clubdom, then supporting that journey is the right thing to do.”

In a bit of foreshadowing, a common theme was “No good deed goes unpunished,” one respondent also cautioned, “I have learned over time, as I am sure many have, that being the nice guy tends to come back and haunt you more times than not.” Unfortunately, like many instances of starting out with great intentions, things go off-kilter in the end. The risk that Chris took was that there might be confusion at the end of term. As one respondent noted, “If the ousted person was popular with his fellow staff colleagues, don't expect his friends to understand, so the GM could be “the bad guy” to a larger group of employees for a while (and the transition of the new employee might be a bit more challenging). This captures the issue that both Chris and the replacement will have a hard time of it.

However, one respondent was clear that, “We have a policy that when an employee gives notice we tend to pay them out their notice and part ways either immediately or within a week after the notice, even if they are great employees. It just keeps things simple and no drama.

In summary:

- The manager must always put the club’s well-being first
- Some form of understanding should have been memorialized at the start
- A shorter time-frame may have been a better alternative, perhaps three months
- The search for a replacement and the finding of that replacement should have been discussed at length during the weekly / daily mentor meetings and should have been NO surprise to Kelly
- When the engagement with the potential replacement became serious, Kelly should have been informed and a decision made as to whether Kelly would remain with the club.

As one respondent wrote, great leaders “exercise empathy, support, patience, and mentorship.” The case above is one of many that managers face. Sometimes just trying to be a “nice guy” has unintended (and possibly negative) consequences. Thought needs to be given to all decisions, talking with one of your peers might be helpful, even when the decision looks easy.

J. Lee Stall, CCM, CCE is the general manager of New Orleans Lawn Tennis Club and can be reached at 504-899-1572 or via email: jleestall@noltc.com. MacDonald Niven, MA, MCM, CCE is with Niven Research and general manager of Oldfield Club, Okatie, SC and can be reached at (510)-439-8522 or via email: mac@niven.cc.