

## How not to conduct a termination meeting

I am always amazed at how unprofessionally managers sometimes conduct termination conversations. With the right approach, they could help the person concerned to process the resignation well and to be ready for the job market quickly. The following example, which happened two years ago, shows how it should definitely not be done.

*Peter Näf*

A client told me in outplacement how her superior had dismissed her. She had worked for many years in an international company, for some time with a new superior who worked in the head office abroad. The cooperation had been difficult, especially as the supervisor's expectations had been unclear.

The superior had announced a visit to Switzerland and asked the employee to reserve a table for a joint dinner. She was looking forward to the opportunity to improve the working relationship through a personal exchange in an informal setting.

### Communicate bad news immediately

The conversation during dinner was very pleasant. They chatted about many things and found some common interests. My client was happy about the sociable exchange, which she expected would also improve their cooperation.

Later, her supervisor ordered the bill, paid it and then told her that he was giving her notice. It had nothing to do with her performance and he had always appreciated working with her. He was happy to recommend her and to support her in her internal job search. However, he did not consider her suitable for the current job. My client was completely confused and did not understand

the world any more.

I suppose that the manager wanted to express his appreciation for his employee with the dinner. In addition, he probably tried to make the bad news more bearable by giving her lots of good messages, as Erin Meyer describes in her book «The Culture Map» as an Anglo-Saxon communication custom. And last but not least, he probably wanted to protect himself by trying to avoid the negative emotions of his employee.

### Well-meant is the opposite of good

He achieved the opposite: his employee was completely relaxed in this setting and thus defenceless; the dismissal therefore hit her like a dagger strike. For a long time, she was unable to properly categorise the news because of his contradictory signals. And even weeks later she flinched when people met her with kindness, expecting the delivery of bad news.

Let's not fool ourselves: A dismissal is and remains an ugly conversation with the aim of respectfully but unmistakably delivering bad news. This is the only way for those affected to begin to process it psychologically. Painful feelings cannot be avoided; loss and grief are part of human life and we all have to learn to deal with them.

But we can expect managers to be able to conduct an announcement conversation professionally and to bear their own emotions as well as the emotions of those affected. And it would be urgently indicated to train them accordingly if necessary.

[#outplacement](#) [#application](#) [#50plus](#)

Please find further articles on career topics on my homepage

<https://karrierecoaching.ch/en/articles/>

