

Don't wear the wrong color to an employee termination conversation



When terminating an employee, you have a lot to consider. There are I's to dot, T's to cross, and policies to comply with. However, what you may not have considered is what you're going to wear.

Believe it or not, attire goes quite far in conveying the mindset of an individual and crafting how others perceive you. You need to appear self-assured in your decision yet cordial, compassionate yet firm, informative yet concise; and, your attire sets the initial tone for this. So, what should you wear? What should you avoid? Let's find out.

So, the big decision, what to wear? Here is a basic guide to apparel color for the termination.

The traditional black suit.

For all the devout neutralists out there, black attire is a steadfast choice for important managerial meetings. Traditionally, we have been taught that black suggests importance, indicates intelligence, and designates the control apex. And...it certainly does! Black is the color of sophistication, yet conservativeness. Often in meetings, it helps the wearer to be the focal point of conversations and decisions. Black is a good choice for a termination meeting, especially when paired with a pastel color.

It's ok to be blue.

The color blue echoes self-confidence which is key in captaining a termination proceeding. However, studies have indicated that blue also has a calming effect which is very useful in terminations that can venture into turbulent territory. Blue shades have also been synonymous with sympathy and courtesy which are qualities that you want to convey during your termination talk. Dark blue or navy has effects similar to wearing black — indicating authority. Subsequently, blue is a great color for meetings that may be tense.

No purple rain.

Individuals who opt for purple tend to appear more sensitive and emotional — definitely not qualities that a manager wishes to portray during a termination. Purple is often associated with difficult to manage and control situations. An employee may misconstrue the manager's handling of the proceedings. Unless you feel poised enough that your confidence will overcome any notions of sensitivity, purple should be avoided.

Yellow isn't mellow.

The first thought when you see yellow is sunshine and you are exactly correct! Yellow portrays images of happiness, sun, and flowers. Yellow can even stimulate your mood and lift your spirits. You may be asking then why not yellow? Despite the fact that yellow is a fun, creative color, this is still a termination proceeding after all! It is necessary to portray the seriousness of the conversation and not invoke senses of happiness and joy so yellow should be avoided.

Gray is ok.

Gray often conveys the identity of balance, which is great for a termination proceeding. As a manager during this situation, you need to assume a balanced appearance, one in which you are firm yet compassionate. Gray is a great color, known for its' neutrality and, best of all, it pairs well with many other options.

Get red out of your head!

Red often invokes ideologies of power and control. While terminations should have some measure of these elements, successful proceedings should also be non-confrontational. Avoid red where possible as it is considered a very unbalanced color and typically worn to make a statement or to energize situations. In terminations, the goal is to control the status quo while still making the employee feel at ease.

Keep it formal and make smart choices

Definitely maintain the formality of the situation by avoiding casual clothing items such as jeans and polo shirts. Patterns and designs on shirts can be distracting to the employee, so stick with solid colors so your conversation remains unhampered. Lastly, always air on the side of neutral by avoiding bright colors and selecting more pastel tones. Selecting attire is an everyday process, affected by our moods which fluctuate daily. It is essentially an extension of who we are and what we want the world to think when they see us. Consequently, there is no specific guidebook on attire for every situation, however, it is important to be cognizant of the image you want to portray.