

Timely Tips: Saying Farewell the Mindful Way



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Goodbye May *Not* Be Forever

During these times of uncertainty, an employee may leave a current job due to a layoff, a voluntary buyout, a new opportunity, an offer of early retirement, or the decision to retire. When an employee departs from your organization, it may be easy to think one may never connect in the future. However, our work world grows ever smaller, and colleagues who move on may turn up in the future in one's professional network, or even once again in the same organization. Thus, sharing notes of congratulation represent a small but potentially critical way to maintain connection with colleagues now and in future.

Why Communicate Mindfully?

Now more than ever, leaders must communicate to share expectations, form and maintain partnerships, and brand their style, all of which can foster engagement not only within a department or organization, but with employees, business colleagues, vendors and contractors, and other stakeholders.

Successful Notes

Make your notes memorable! The key to success is to take time to formulate a clear message that connects to the recipient on a personal level. In the real examples here, similar effort was spent to compose a note of farewell, but the message's impact on the recipient may differ greatly.

Which Note Would You Like To Receive?

Leader	Message to Departing Employee
1	Immediate note of congratulations and invitation to an on-line staff meeting event to thank the employee for service to the unit.
2	Short note of congratulations to the employee: "We will miss you, and good luck!" that also included a request for service.
3	One month after the employee's announcement, a note indicating that the employee's decision to leave must have been difficult and that the employee will be missed.
4	Two days after the announcement, a standard (not personalized) one line note of congratulations and good luck.
5	Two weeks after announcement, a one-line unsigned note of congratulations.
6	One day after the announcement, a personal note valuing the employee's service and thanking employee for the long-term partnership.

"Timely, Tailored, and Treasured"

There are a few takeaways for action based on these examples that may be summed up as "Timely, Tailored, and Treasured".

Timely is Best: Leader 1's note was sent immediately, and the recipient felt special as a result. Leader 3's note arrived over a month after the employee shared news of leaving, which conveyed an impression that that leader did not really care about the employee.

Avoid the "Canned" Approach: Though timely, Leaders 4 and 5 both shared standard language in their notes. That may work fine in cases where the leader does not have a close working relationship with the recipient but may backfire when the employee has provided long-term service and even unconsciously hopes for recognition.

Keep it Personal: In contrast, Leader 6 included a specific example of the employee's service in the note. Though Leader 2's note was heartfelt it also included a request for assistance which diluted the strength of the appreciative message. Requests for ongoing deliverables and/or questions regarding future coverage should be shared under separate cover.

Assume Nothing: These days, notes may be sent by text or chat or email, so wording can be very easily misconstrued. Leader 3 shared an assumption in the note that the employee had a tough time deciding to leave. Including a presumption of a person's logic infuses the communication with a sense of elitism.

Above and Beyond: In addition to congratulations, Leader 1 also included an invitation for the employee to visit a staff gathering so that a whole team could express thanks for a job well-done.

Following this simple model below may help you to generate a note that is personal and kind that can be sent quickly and be well received.

"Timely, Tailored, and Treasured"

Timely	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I just received your announcement and want to reach back out to you as soon as possible. (Include apology if delayed)</i>• <i>Thank you for sharing your recent news with me! (more personal)</i>
Tailored	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>It has been great working with you __ (name the time range; more personal).</i>• <i>I appreciate __ (include specific example of the service provided).</i>• <i>Don't forget to sign your name; include a closing like "With gratitude".</i>
Treasured	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>We will miss your __ (include specific example like team participation).</i>• <i>Please keep in touch! (Add Linked-in invite if desired)</i>• <i>Invite employee to your staff meeting so others may also express appreciation.</i>• <i>Re-send your congratulatory message to others on your team and copy in the departing employee for greater impact.</i>• <i>Include a graphic design like a congratulations meme (align with organizational custom).</i>

This win-win approach to saying a robust good-bye can serve to enhance your personal brand and ensure and engaged employee and future contact. Everyday communication can be easy and successful despite the challenges of remote work and social distance.

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*Want more Timely Tips? Visit Susan at **susangriegler.com***