

Five Things Never to Say When You Lose a Job

Sheryl Spanier

People sometimes say the stupidest things when they lose a job—and they end up regretting it. Words said in frustration can burn bridges with employers and/or colleagues you may need later on.

Among the things not to say on your way out the door...

"This place is going under anyway." Voicing doubt about the firm's future is a bad idea even if it's true. This will only cause pain and worry for those who hear the gloomy prediction—particularly if there's a chance that you're right—and inflicting that will make you seem like a jerk. Also, former co-workers can be contacts for you if you leave on positive terms.

"I should have left years ago." Saying this makes people wonder, *So why did you stay so long?* It creates the impression that you have been a disgruntled employee who probably didn't give his/her all and casts a shadow over your accomplishments.

"Expect to hear from my lawyer." This is a foolish thing to say if you don't intend to call a lawyer because it will create an adversarial relationship between you and the former employer, virtually ensuring that you won't receive a positive reference or any consideration for future openings.

While it may be advisable to seek legal advice, especially if you are asked to sign any releases, keep these plans to yourself. If you believe that you were wrongfully terminated and truly intend to call a lawyer, it still is foolish to threaten legal action because it will inspire your boss to immediately call the company's lawyers, giving them additional time to prepare a defense.



"I quit before they could fire me." People like to say that they quit rather than admit that they were fired because quitting makes them seem less like helpless victims. But when you tell prospective employers that you quit, they wonder, *Why?*

Unless you are taking a better job, saying that you quit could make you seem impulsive, not in control—particularly in this weak job market.

Rather than say you were fired, consider saying, "I got caught up in the changes going on at the company, and now I'm looking for another opportunity." And rather than saying, "I quit," consider saying, "I had been trying to both do my job and search for the next opportunity, but there was no way to give both the attention they required."

"Let me give you some advice." Some well-meaning people try to offer constructive criticism to former co-workers as they leave a company. Trouble is, anything you say, helpful or not, is likely to be discounted by the person you're speaking with—after all, if you knew so much about working successfully for this company, why are you leaving? Besides, many people take constructive criticism poorly, so offering it risks damaging a relationship that might be a useful contact. Instead, pick the thing that this person does best, and tell him/her how much you admire him for it.

Bottom Line/Personal interviewed Sheryl Spanier, a career consultant and executive coach in New York City and coauthor of *Leave Happy: Making the Elegant Transition* (CreateSpace). www.SherylSpanier.com

