

# When Terminations Go Wrong



Debbie Pickus

# WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

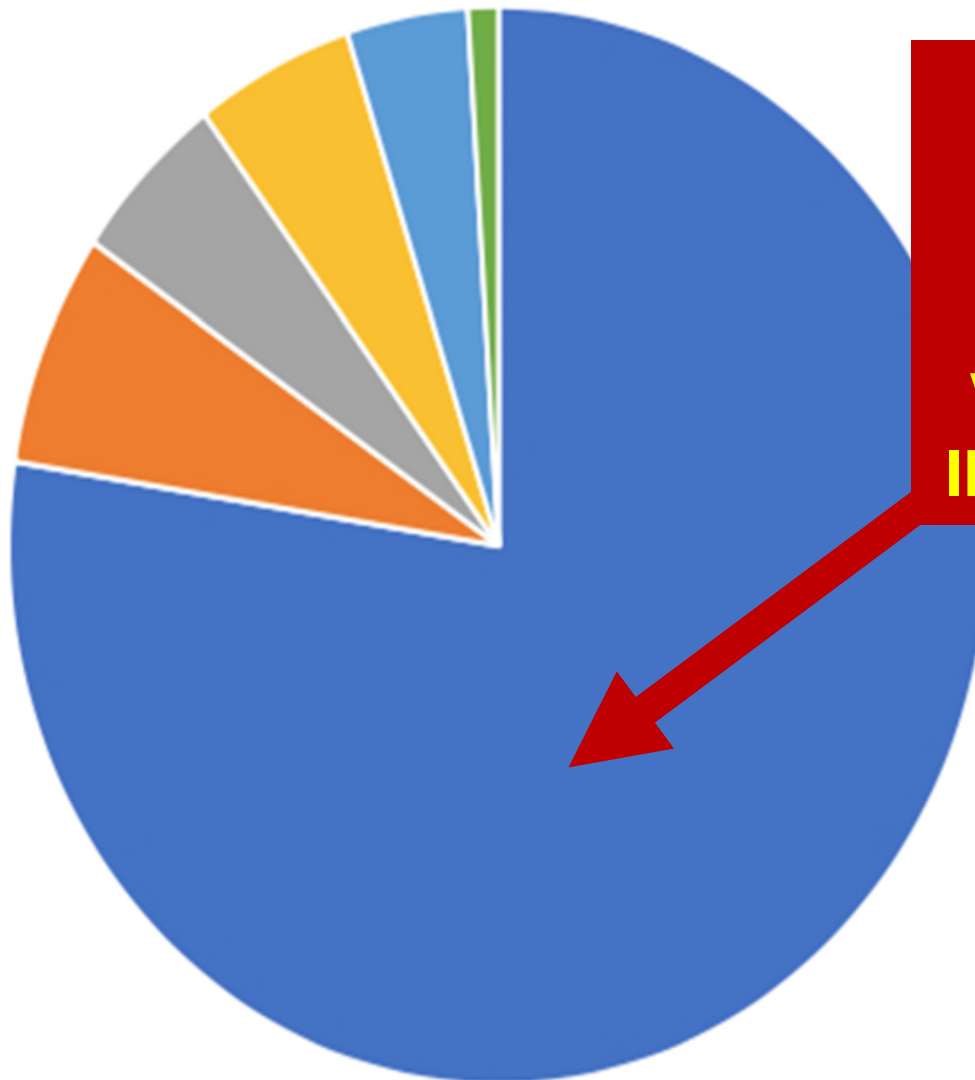
The Cost of Workplace Violence  
\$120 billion in annual losses are  
attributed to workplace assaults

Domestic Violence Issues brought  
into the workplace cost nearly  
\$727 million in lost productivity

**\*Dept of Justice**



# Weapon Type



**MORE THAN  $\frac{3}{4}$  (77.5%) OF ALL INCIDENTS OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE DO NOT INVOLVE A WEAPON**

**NO WEAPON = 77.5 %  
Other Weapon = 7.0 %  
GUNS = 5.25 %  
Knife = 5.25 %  
Unknown = 4.0 %  
Unknown Weapon = 1.0 %**

**SOURCE: DOJ & OSHA**

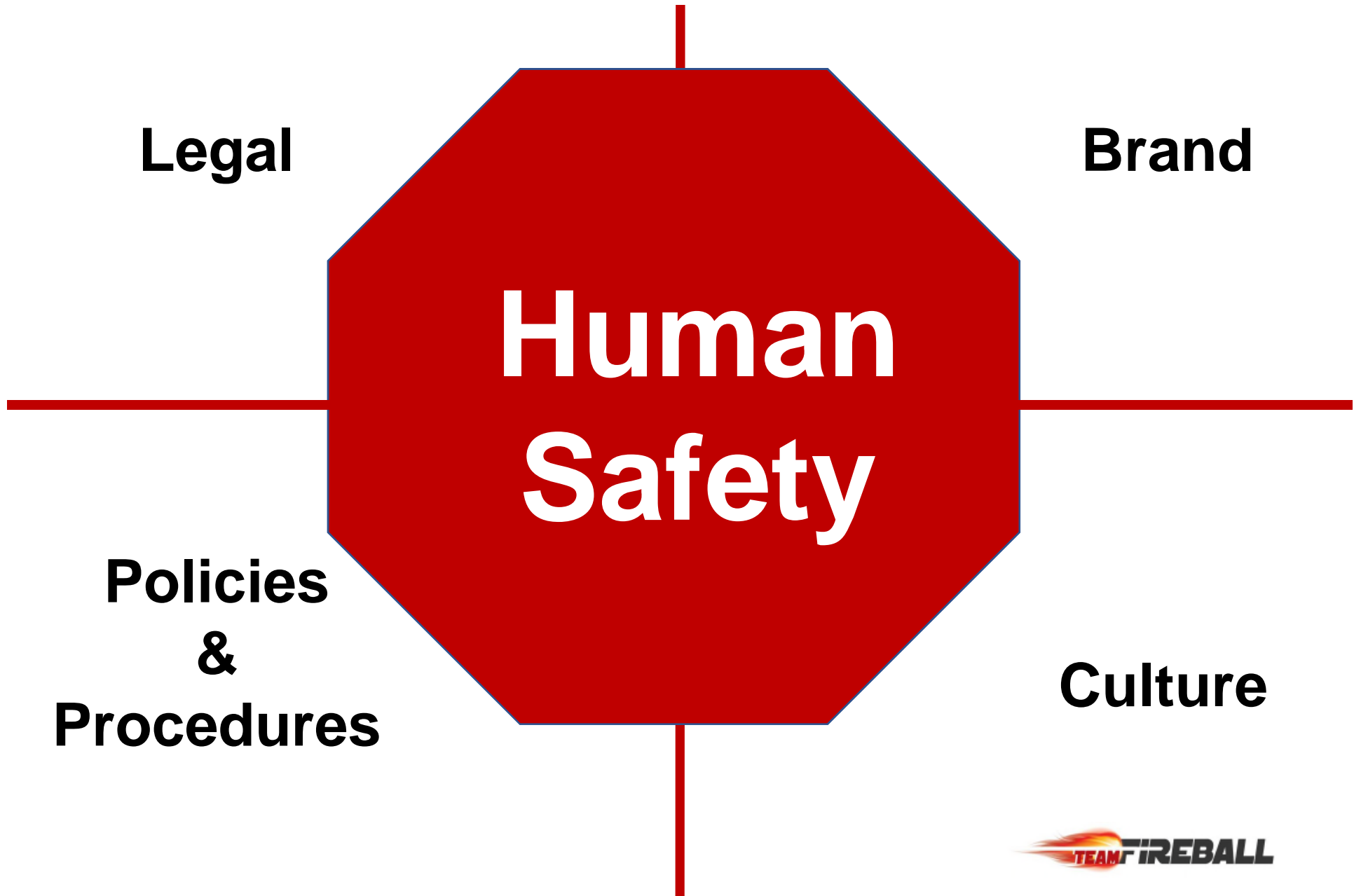
■ NO WEAPON ■ OTHER WEAPON ■ GUN ■ KNIFE ■ IDK? ■ UNKNOWN



***“BRAND NEW  
MANAGER”***



# FIVE ASPECTS OF TERMINATIONS



***“WE LOST  
HER?”***

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

MANAGEMENT

## Bosses Seek a Kinder Way to Fire People

In the wake of a workplace shooting in Aurora, Ill., employers are trying to be more sensitive in how they let go of personnel

By **Casey Cottner**

Is there a better and more humane way to fire workers? A reckoning of sorts is under way in human resources departments as executives ponder how best to terminate staffers, remaining sensitive to their needs while avoiding the potential for a conflict—or even violence. The risk was made clear again in February when a worker who had just been fired killed five people at a factory in Aurora, Ill. That prompted HR practitioners to re-evaluate their policies and reach out to peers for advice, said John Baldino, president of human resources consulting firm Humareso and head of a Society for Human Resources Management chapter near Philadelphia.

"There's been some re-thinking of terminations across the board," he said. Much is up for debate, including the proper day to let an employee go, whether to have security escorts present and how long to maintain a fired worker's benefits as a way to help smooth rattled nerves, companies and consultants say.

Conventional wisdom long held that Fridays were the best time to lay off staffers since the day frequently coincided with the end of a pay period and gave workers a weekend to gather their thoughts.

Now, some say end-of-week firings should be avoided. When Bubba Fatula, a former law-enforcement official who is director of threat preparedness at Gittings Protective Security Inc., conducts active-shooter training for HR staffers, he advises them to conduct terminations midweek. Letting a person go on a Wednesday gives them time to contact other employers and look for work during business hours



the following days, he said. Rachel Bitte, chief people officer at recruiting software company Jobvite Inc., says there is no magic day to let a person go, but she prefers Tuesday through Thursday. Those days allow terminated employees to follow up during business hours with questions about benefits after the job loss and give remaining staffers who may be worried about their own roles time to ask questions and get reassurance.

A Friday firing, in contrast, gives people "the whole weekend to potentially stew," Ms. Bitte says. Empathy is also key, longtime industry practitioners say. Unless someone is fired for egregious conduct, Suzanne Gleason, division director of staffing firm Global Employment Solutions, said she asks employees how she

can assist them in finding another job.

"Help keep the integrity of the person intact," she said. Beth Steinberg, chief people officer at Zenefits, a human-resources-technology firm, estimates she has conducted thousands of terminations over her career, which includes a decade-long stint at retailer Nordstrom Inc. She can count on one hand the situations when someone became angry or seemed shocked.

"When you're dealing with terminations, you have to be clear, you have to be compassionate," she said. "If you do that, most people understand."

Some HR officials don't feel comfortable ordering an employee off premises immediately, unless it is necessary. Ms. Steinberg said she recently got a call from a

peer at another company who was upset that her firm was coaching HR staffers to walk people out following a firing, and not giving them time to clean up their desk or say goodbye. Ms. Stein-

**Extending health insurance past termination acts as a soft landing.**

berg advises companies give employees options, barring a security concern.

In contentious situations, Ms. Steinberg will give her phone number to employees and encourage them to call or text with questions. If she fears there may be mental health or anger issues, she

uses language such as "I can imagine this might be difficult for you," and refers them to resources still covered by their health benefits, such as an employee assistance program.

Extending health insurance past termination to give people and their families time to schedule doctor's appointments acts as a soft landing for a terminated employee, says Gregory DeLapp, chief executive of the Employee Assistance Professionals Association, a membership organization.

When Mr. DeLapp worked in HR at a Pennsylvania manufacturer, he would sometimes give workers months of benefits following termination. The tactic was useful in defusing tense situations and helping anxious people who might be prone to lashing out, he says.

Mr. DeLapp said he has handled a range of difficult firings, including one involving an employee who used a weapons-grade laser to burn a hole in a sign at the manufacturing plant, among the actions that led to his firing. Flanning was essential, he said. The manager had to be coached on what to say during the termination, security officials had to be prepped in advance and Mr. DeLapp found a neutral place to conduct the firing that was private, but still visible, should security officials need to intervene.

He said he appealed to the employee, saying: "At the end of this you're going to land on your feet. You're not going to be with the company, and we're not going to have a problem. Are we clear?" The employee nodded. During the conversation, the employee also raised his voice but, ultimately, agreed to be escorted to his car by security. Mr. DeLapp called the next day to check-in and to go over the details of his insurance coverage and 401(k) plan.

Most terminations don't result in violence, although firms that train HR teams on preventing workplace incidents say they have seen an uptick in inquiries following the Aurora shooting.

Team Fireball Inc., in the Chicago area, offers training on how to keep firings from going awry. It coaches companies to conduct terminations near an exit and in a quieter part of the office to prevent a "walk of shame" by the worker who has been let go, said Debbie Pickus, chief executive. The training also teaches HR staffers in basic self-defense and how to move their body to create a barrier between them and the employee, if needed.

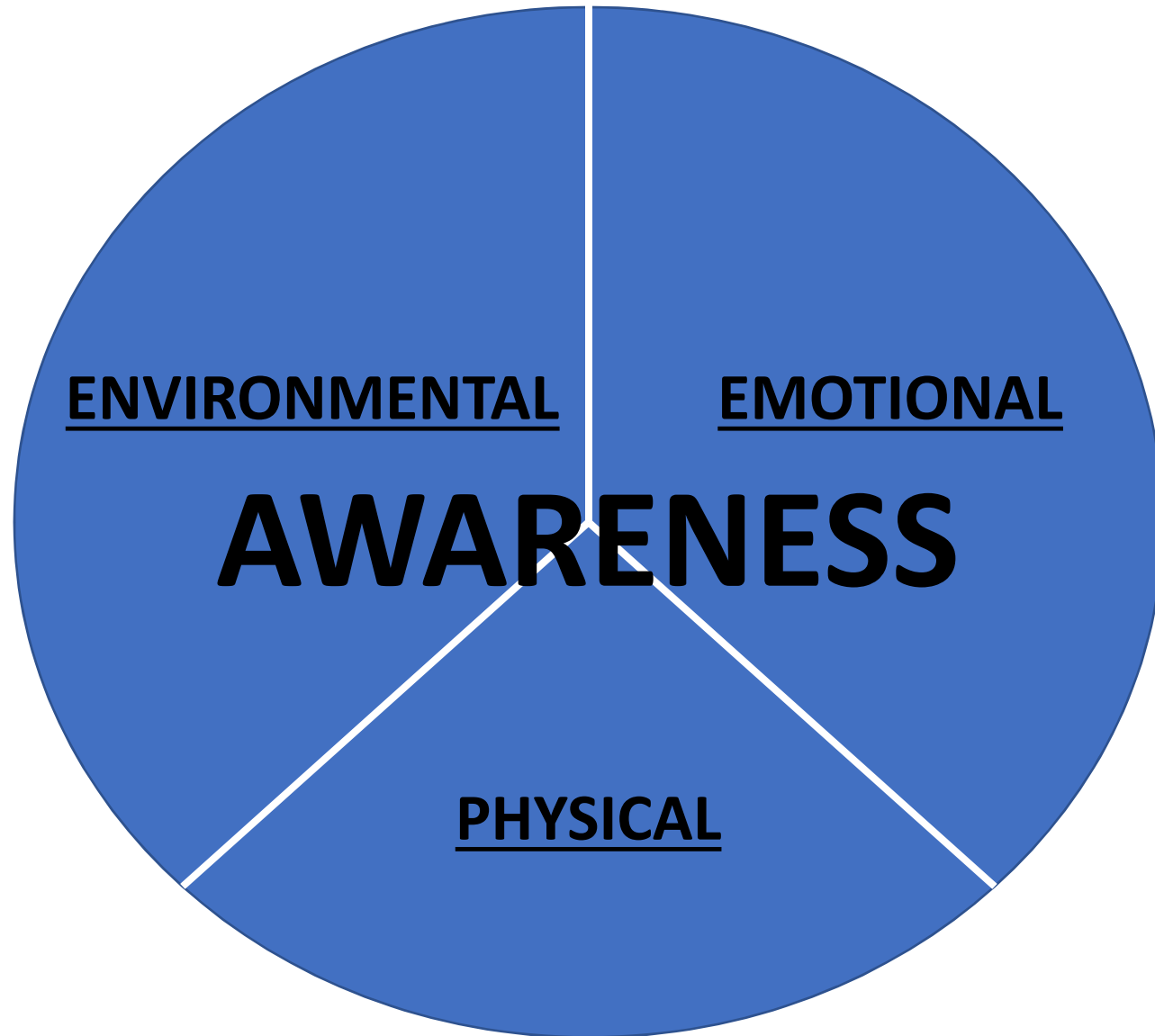
"You have to pay attention to this," she said. "Sadly, it's reality."

GLOBAL



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MENTAL







**YOUR GUT IS  
ALWAYS  
RIGHT**

**WWW.TEAM-FIREBALL.COM**

**REBALL**

# Intuition or GUT manifests itself differently in all of us

- Nagging feelings
- Persistent thoughts
- Gut feelings
- Doubt
- Hesitation
- Dark humor
- Suspicion
- Apprehension
- Anxiety
- Hunches
- Fear
- Hair stands up on arms or neck

## ***NEVER IGNORE THIS FEELING***

Like animals, we are blessed with an internal alarm system to protect us from danger, but since we also have higher level thinking, we often disregard or override it.



**TEAM FIREBALL**

# Emotional Awareness

Nervousness: Tension in body, chair rocking, wringing hands, shaking sweating, chewing nails, hands in pockets

Anger/Hostility: Aggressions, defensiveness, clenched fists, withdrawal, tenseness/locked jaw

Dishonesty: secretive, shifting or wandering eyes, sweating, shaking, fidgeting, slouched posture

# Physical Awareness

Your own physical strengths, weaknesses, capabilities and characteristics:

Height, weight, energy, strength, speed.

Could you run?

Move a desk in front of a door?

Pick up a chair?

Fight off someone who grabs you?

What are theirs?

# Environmental Awareness

Where are you sitting?

Where is the employee sitting?

What barriers are between you?

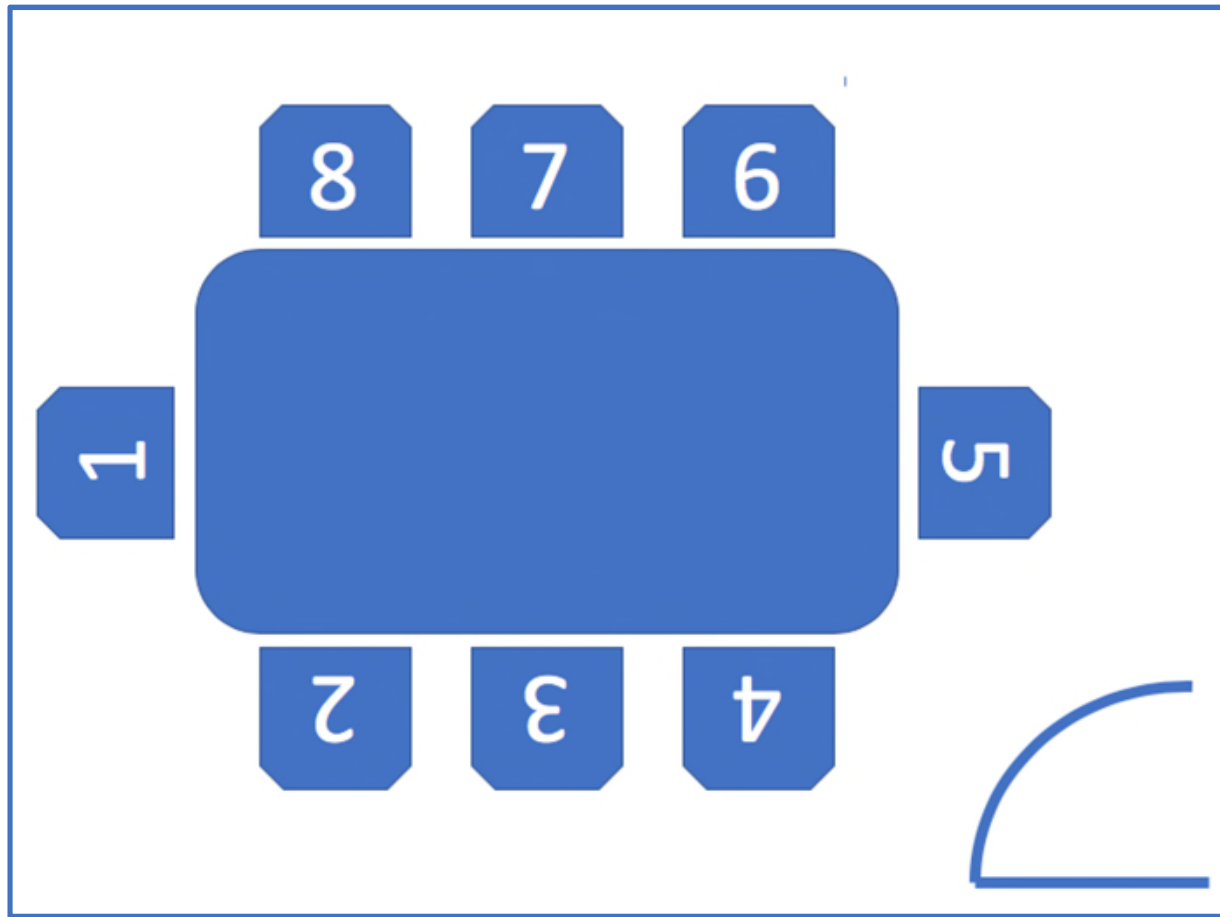
Where is the actual room in relation to the rest of the building?

Is there security and how close or far are they?

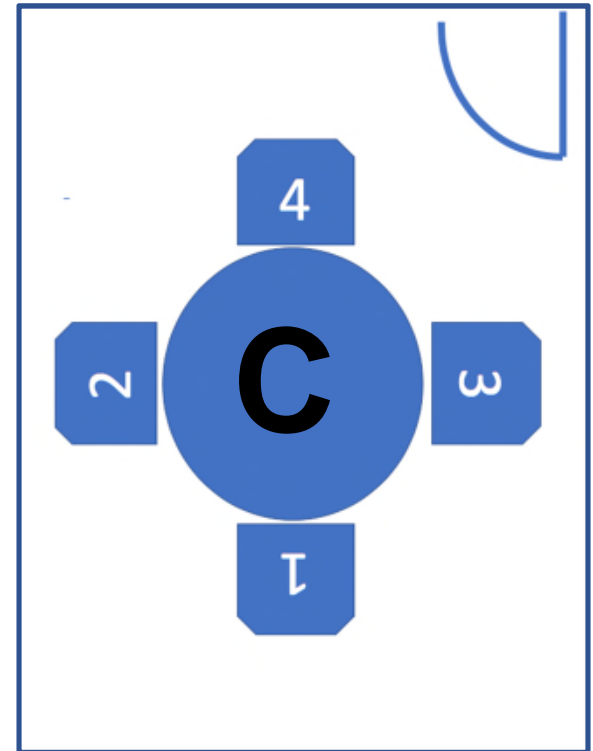
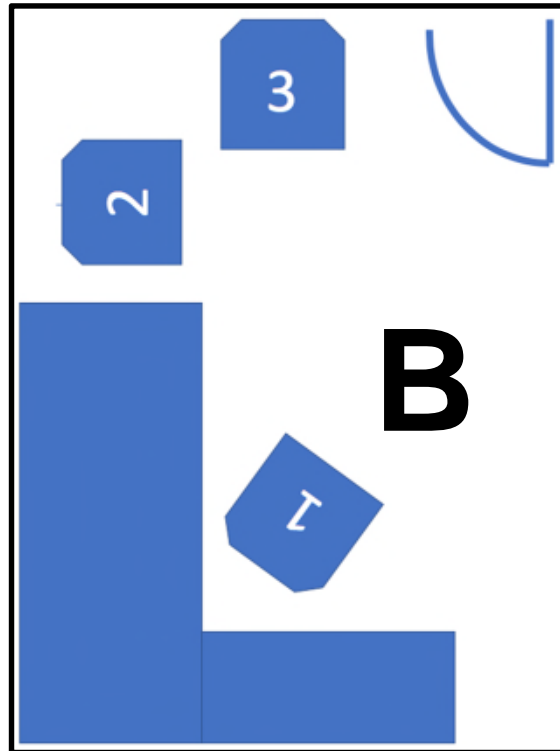
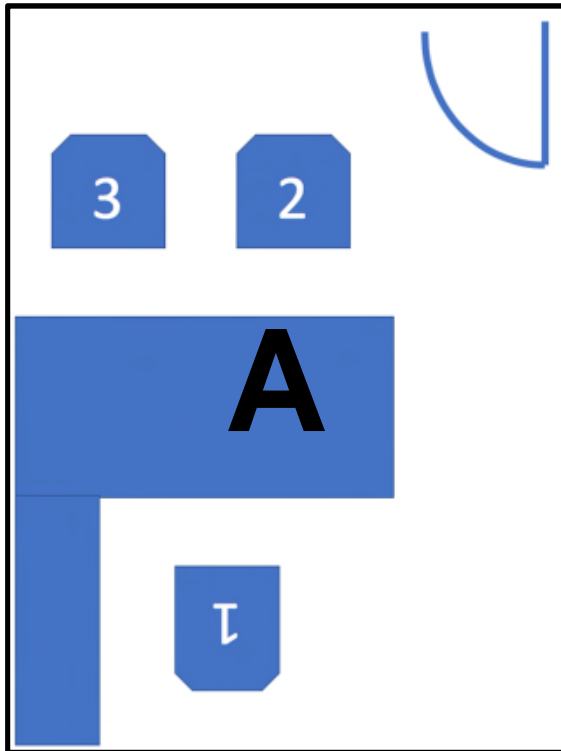
What is in the room that could be used as a weapon, for you or against you?

Where are the exits? Is there only one?

***“He got up and locked the door”***

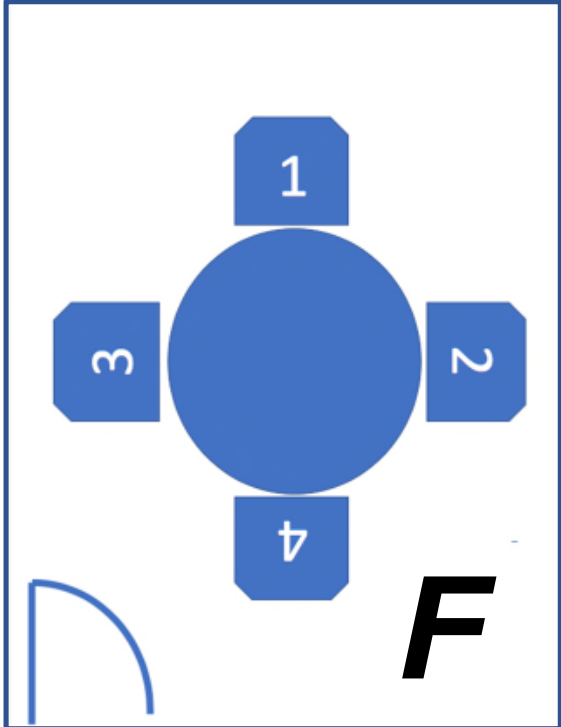
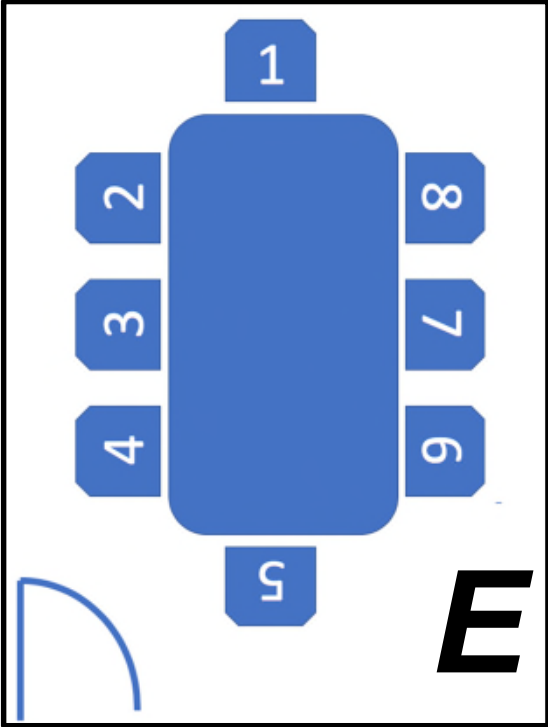
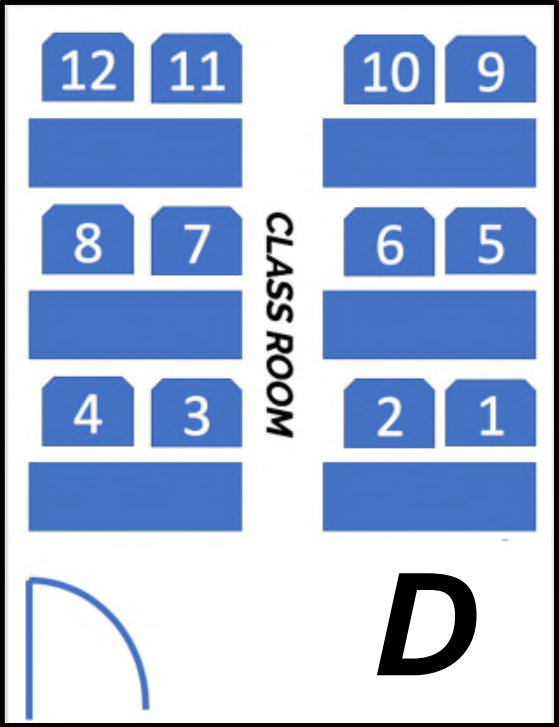


# TYPICAL OFFICE LAYOUTS





# CONFERENCE ROOMS



# GET ON UP

**A**



**B**



**C**



**D**



**E**



# **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

***Local Law Enforcement***

***Communications Plan***

***Technology***

***Clothing***

***What can be used as a  
weapon?***

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**[www.team-fireball.com](http://www.team-fireball.com)**



***Don't wait until something happens  
to find out what to do  
when something happens.....***



# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-debate-in-hr-whats-the-best-way-to-fire-someone-11554901200>

## MANAGEMENT & CAREERS

# The Debate in HR: What's the Best Way to Fire Someone?

Employers are trying to be more sensitive in how they handle terminations; Wednesdays or Fridays?

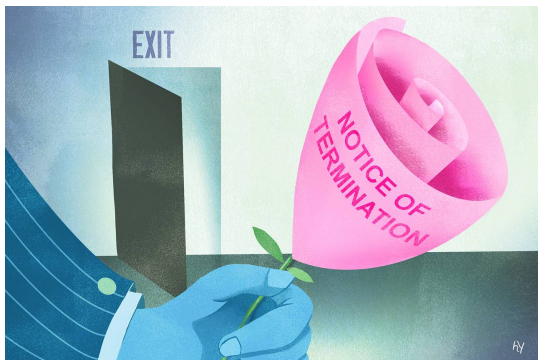


ILLUSTRATION: HEIDI YOUNGER

By *Chip Cutter*

April 10, 2019 9:00 a.m. ET

Is there a better and more humane way to fire workers?

A reckoning of sorts is under way in human resources departments as executives ponder how best to terminate staffers, remaining sensitive to their needs while avoiding the potential for a conflict—or even violence.

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*Have you ever been laid off or fired? What was the experience like, and what should companies do to change how they terminate employees? Join WSJ Reporter Chip Cutter in the conversation below.*

questions and get reassurance.

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In contentious situations, Ms. Steinberg will give her phone number to employees and encourage them to call or text with questions. If she fears there may be mental health or anger issues, she uses language such as “I can imagine this might be difficult for you,” and refers them to resources still covered by their health benefits, such as an employee assistance program.

Companies can ease the pain of a termination by leaving benefits in place for a period of time, she said. Extending health insurance past termination to give people and their families time to schedule doctor’s appointments acts as a soft landing for a terminated employee, says Gregory DeLapp, chief executive of the Employee Assistance Professionals Association, a membership organization.

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## Careers

News and advice on careers, management and workplace trends, curated by Deputy Management Bureau Chief Vanessa Fuhrmans.

SIGN UP

PREVIEW →

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“You have to pay attention to this,” she said. “Sadly, it’s reality.”

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### IF YOU’VE BEEN LET GO...

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Plenty of people lose their jobs and recover, said executive coach Roberta Matuson. A termination can be a springboard to better pay or a more fulfilling position, particularly now, in a hot job market. “There has never been a better time to be unemployed, ever,” she said.

Here are five of her suggestions for how to respond to a firing:

- Ask for details. Get as much information as possible on why you are being fired; it could prove useful later.
- Don’t rush to sign anything. Take time to review documents your company presents.
- Negotiate everything. Your severance pay, health insurance and other benefits can all be negotiated.
- Think before you rant. It may be tempting to rail against your company or boss on social media; don’t. “What you said will get out there somehow, some way,” Ms. Matuson said.
- Focus on what’s next. After a firing, it’s easy to think, “nobody loves me, nobody’s going to hire me,” Ms. Matuson said. Put doubts aside and focus on your job search.

Write to Chip Cutter at [chip.cutter@wsj.com](mailto:chip.cutter@wsj.com)





**Employee Safety  
&  
Healthy Teams**



Team Fireball Inc was founded by Debbie Pickus in 2015 with the goal of providing activity focused team building programs for businesses & associations that improved the health and wellness of employees. With the increase in the public's awareness of workplace violence, Personal Safety training became the cornerstone of their business. The foundation of all our personal safety programs is awareness training.

***No amount of physical training can overcome a lack of awareness.***

The company's social conscience mission is to change the mindset, self esteem and belief systems of those who feel trapped by their circumstances.



Focusing primarily on the domestic violence community, Team Fireball brings its empowering programs into DV shelters and partners with corporations who share a similar mission



## Safe & Healthy Employee Programs



- When Terminations Go Wrong
  - Talk / Demo/Interactive
- Personal Safety Curriculum
  - Personal Safety Power Hour (Talk/Demo)
  - Flight or Fight Workshop (Hands-On)
  - Evasion & Strikes
  - Grabs & Holds
  - Weapons (optional)
- Healthy Teams
  - From Fitness Boxing to Board Breaking, Yoga to Salsa Dancing Lessons and more

## When Terminations Go Wrong



With the rise of workplace violence, the termination process has become more complex.



Having the skills and knowledge to prevent or minimize risks during a termination benefits everyone.

### **Attendees will learn:**

1. Strategies to prevent or reduce the occurrence of workplace violence during a termination therefore minimizing harm to the organization, its employees and themselves.
2. Personal safety skills related to physical, environmental, and emotional awareness.
3. Threat recognition and how to handle themselves in the event of a workplace violence threat either before, during or after a termination.

## Personal Safety Curriculum



Personal Safety  
Power Hour  
A 45-60 minute  
interactive personal  
safety talk, focusing on  
mental, environmental,  
emotional and physical  
awareness and  
demonstration of basic  
personal safety  
techniques.



Flight or Fight  
A 2-hour interactive personal  
safety awareness training  
coupled with hands-on  
instruction of personal safety  
techniques. Attendees will  
leave with 3-5 physical skills  
that could save their life in  
the event of violence both in  
and out of the workplace.  
Inclusive of all levels of  
physical fitness.



<https://vimeo.com/228717464>

<https://vimeo.com/261911641>

## Personal Safety Curriculum (continued)



This is Advanced Level Training that is divided into two sessions; Learning & Practice and Practical Application of Skills.

Each two hour session is split into three phases – Evasion & Strikes, Grabs & Holds and Weapons (optional).

In the two hour Learning & Practice session, the participant will learn and practice 3-5 defensive skills that they can then apply in the Practical Session.



Practical Application of Skills  
video

<https://vimeo.com/260500476>



## Healthy Teams



Team Building:  
A departure from the typical scavenger hunt, ropes course or trustfall. Boxing, yoga, salsa and more.



FireBall *fitCrawls*  
*"Variety is the spice of life"*  
Combine several of our healthy Team events into one fun fitness event for a taste of some different activities.  
2-3 choices recommended



BreakThroughs  
This board breaking, no bull taking, adrenaline boosting, barrier busting, mindset shifting, energy making, obstacle shattering event will leave your team fired up, motivated and ready to conquer the world



# Clients





***Don't wait until something happens  
to find out what to do  
when something happens.....***

***Debbie Pickus***