

John handled the problem magnificently. He did not use the conventional procedure of calling the employee into his office and giving him, first, the bad news and then, second, fifteen or thirty days to move out.

Instead, he did two unusual things. First, he explained why it would be to the employee's personal advantage to find a new situation where his aptitudes and interests would be more useful. He worked with the employee and put him in touch with a reputable vocational guidance consultant. Next, he did something else above and beyond the call of duty. He helped the employee find a new job by setting up interviews with executives in other companies where the employee's skills were needed. In just eighteen days after the "dismissal" conference the employee was relocated in a very promising situation.

This dismissal procedure intrigued me, so I asked John to explain his thinking behind it. He explained it this way: "There's an old maxim I've formed and held in my mind," he began. "Whoever is under a man's power is under his protection, too. We never should have hired this man in the first place because he's not cut out for this kind of work. But since we did, the least I could do was help him to relocate.

"Anybody," John continued, "can hire a man. But the test of leadership is how one handles the dismissal. By helping that employee relocate before he left us built up a feeling of job security in everyone in my department. I let them know by example that no one gets dumped on the street as long as I'm here."

Make no mistake. John's be-human brand of leadership paid off. There were no secret gossip sessions about John. He received unquestioned loyalty and support. He had maximum job security because he gave maximum job security to his subordinates.