

# “that’s what she said”

a ford & harrison blog about the popular television series “the office”

## Saying Goodbye

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It’s “déjà vu all over again” for this blogger, who already saw and wrote about tonight’s episode of The Office — both [when it was being filmed](#) and [as it later aired](#). What then to post? Well, for good or ill, recent events in the broadcasting world have shed light on an important and recurring topic in our area of practice: ending an employment relationship. Or, in more colloquial terms, we might describe it as “saying goodbye.”

“Beware the Ides of March,” the soothsayer warned Caesar, not long before Brutus et alia facilitated the Roman dictator’s permanent “goodbye” (or “vale”) in 44 B.C. And now, with the ides still a few days away in 2011 A.D., the month of March has already offered up three high-profile examples of other “goodbyes” in the public arena. While lacking complete information about the separations in question, we can look to their published accounts as representing a broad spectrum of employee departures. In order of ascending preference:

**The Crash and Burn.** Surely the star actor in a [highly successful sitcom](#) is guaranteed his role as long as he wants it, right? Not quite. While good ratings (and profits) can

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certainly help when it comes to job security, every employer has its limits. For example, when a worker calls out his boss in the press or repeatedly engages in illegal activity, his past contributions may not be enough to prevent the relationship from [coming to an end](#). The aftermath often involves [contentious litigation](#), in which the only “winners” are those paid to conduct it.

**The Awkward Nudge.** Job security also can be ephemeral behind the camera (or microphone). Even in the C-suite, [unguarded comments](#) or [controversial actions](#) can lead to a parting of ways. While the “goodbye” in such situations is usually [stated with care](#), it is rarely the ending either side had hoped for. Confidential separation agreements can soften the financial blow for the employee, avoid legal claims against the employer, and help both parties move on in a face-saving manner.

**The Graceful Exit.** In a perfect world, every employee would leave on his or her own terms, following a mutually productive relationship. Although we’ll have to wait and see exactly how [Michael Scott’s character](#) rides off into the Scranton sunset, we know that the actor who plays him is bidding us adieu (or, as Mikonos would say, “αντίο”) at the top of his game. Word on the street is that [Steve Carell](#) recently [called it a wrap](#) on the Van Nuys set of *The Office*. Those of us who have enjoyed his run want to thank him for making us laugh, giving us great material for this blog, and showing us an admirable way of saying “goodbye.”