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Employees Must Be Held Accountable

It's never easy to tell someone she's not doing a good job. It's uncomfortable to ask someone why he didn't do what he said he was going to do. Before you do either, know what you're going to say.

Here are three effective steps to take as you prepare to hold an employee accountable:

- First, review the agreement you made with the person. Did you make your expectations clear? Did the other person agree to the work, or did you tell her she should or had to? Did you overlook unmet agreements in the past, which might have led the person to expect you would overlook it this time, too? In what ways did you contribute to the poor results you have to address?
- Second, identify the problem. Is it an unmet deadline? Low productivity? Sloppy work? Where is the gap in performance that you want to discuss during a conversation about accountability? Prepare to give specific examples.
- Third, schedule a time for your conversation. Don't do it when you're in a hurry or the other person is running off to a meeting. Find a quiet, private place where nobody will overhear or interrupt your discussion.

Here are Four Guidelines for Your Conversation:

- *State the purpose of the conversation.* Let the person know that you are not there to place blame or find fault. You want the meeting to be constructive rather than combative. Focus on mutual benefits: Let's figure out what happened so the project will be a success. That's what's important to both of us.
- *Compare what you both agreed to with what actually happened.* Do this without using the word should. Shoulds are all about blame. Instead, focus on facts and What Is, not What Should Be. Explain how the person's actions affected you and others. This is also a good time to own up to your own role in the problem.
- *Listen to the other person's response—without interrupting.* If you listen patiently, you'll probably learn what went wrong. Tip: People who refuse to hold themselves accountable very often pretend to be confused or even unaware of the things you are holding them accountable for. Don't fall for it, but hold your tongue until the other person has had her say. Don't jump to conclusions, but ask questions if you need clarification.
- *Make a new agreement—one that is perfectly clear—and move forward.* High performance and accountability revolve around clear agreements. Ask the other person to suggest ways to rectify the situation, and clearly state the consequences if the new agreement isn't met. Talk about how to avoid the same problems this time around and in the future. Invite the person to summarize what you talked about and write it down.

Source: <http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/43001/employees-must-be-held-accountable>

Tips for Working more Effectively with Difficult Employees



As every manager knows, some employees are more difficult to work with than others. More difficult to manage individuals can take extra time and effort, be less cooperative, and are often a source of frustration for their supervisors.

Of course there are many reasons that an individual employee can be difficult to manage. Some are due to temporary circumstances or stressors (i.e. a personal issue that the employee is dealing with), and others are ongoing and appear to be driven by the employee's personality (chronic negativity, self-centeredness, etc.).

Whether these challenges are temporary or long-term in nature, below are several tips for working more effectively with a difficult to manage individual:

- *Be extra Prepared for the Interactions* – To minimize the stress of interacting with a challenging individual, make a point to pick the right time and place to talk. Make sure that you're in a good place mentally and emotionally – if you're not, put off the conversation if possible. Be sensitive to the mood of the employee as well. If they seem upset or agitated, it's probably also wise to pick a different time to talk.
- *Take a Positive Approach* – Although it's human nature to minimize contact with individuals that are harder to work with, try not to avoid these employees. That can make things worse. They need your time and attention. Try to stay positive and encouraging as you interact with them. Optimism can be contagious – some of it will rub off on the employee and potentially help them to become a more cooperative and productive team member over time.
- *Be more of a Coach than a Boss* – Instead of using a directive management approach when interacting, introduce the task, problem, or performance to be discussed and ask the employee for their input. This approach helps many individuals to feel more valued and respected, which can lead to them to being more engaged in the work and easier to deal with.
- *Thoughtfully Respond, Instead of Emotionally React* – When you're confronted by a difficult to manage individual, discipline yourself to stay calm emotionally so you can respond thoughtfully. If you find yourself getting overly emotional, consider putting off the conversation if possible.

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Ask Your EAP!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to the EAP for a management consultation.



Q. We just hired a new account executive. It was not easy—we had 98 applications. I want to start this relationship off right. What is the first conversation I should have with the new employee?

A. There is at least one discussion you should have with your employee that most managers do not have: why we picked you. It sounds obvious, but this discussion can go a long way toward establishing a future relationship of clear expectations that match a vision you have for your employee's contribution to the organization. It makes that vision more likely to come to fruition. Most employers assume the employee who is hired knows the answer to this question, but they don't (not really). Your discussion should be more than, "You were the best pick," "You stood out," or "We liked your experience and your energy." Go deeper. Tell the employee your hopes and dreams for the position. Paint the vision and describe the mountaintop you hope to have your employee ascend with you. This vision becomes an anchor your employee will not forget.

Q. I admit that I am an irritable manager. I can be friendly, and I do have people who love me, but work stress puts me in an irritable, short-tempered, impatient mood, and makes me intolerant of interruptions, etc. I would visit the EAP, but honestly, I don't think anything would change.

A. An irritable disposition can be caused by many health and psychological factors. Sorting those things out is your task. You want to change, so your battle is already half won. Since you are self-aware, you have likely unsuccessfully attempted to change the undesirable behavior along the way. If that's the case, seeing your medical doctor so you can receive a proper evaluation is the next step or perhaps request an assessment for an EAP clinician. Other health, wellness, or mental health professionals can offer advice as well. Here is a checklist of issues to consider: 1) sleep disturbances; 2) healthy eating, diet, and food allergy issues; 3) exercise and relaxation habits; 4) thinking habits and how you reflexively respond to everyday stress. Getting help in this last department may require professional counseling with practical tips for making the changes you want, but you should also consider books like "Attitude Is Everything" by Jeff Keller or similar titles that are typically filled with solid common sense. You can make a lot of headway for about ten bucks.

Q. I am a new supervisor and want to know right now what the pitfalls are for people like me. I have 40 employees, and many of them have been around for years. I can almost feel the tension in the air that I have to prove something to get their respect.

A. You are new to the work unit, and your employees know it, of course, so your number one mistake will be communicating in some way that you know everything, either accidentally or nonverbally. Sending this message will set you up for a rough ride in the months ahead. To reduce the likelihood of that, you do not have to admit that you are not knowledgeable about the work and operations of your unit—you simply need to be a good listener and ask questions. Treat employees like they are valuable resources for you, be respectful, and be thankful for their ability get you oriented. You've probably heard that old quip or seen it on T-shirts, "Those who think they know everything are annoying to those of us who do." Your goal is to help ensure that this doesn't become your reality.

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