



HOW DO YOU HANDLE A PROBLEM WITH SOMEONE ON YOUR STAFF?

By Patti Komara

When I first started in business, I used to avoid addressing problems with my staff. I was a people-pleaser, and I wanted everyone to be happy and like me. But the reality is, if you're the leader and you're not addressing problems within your staff, the person you're avoiding may be happy, but the others are not. Your lack of leadership is holding everyone back.

I realized my staff needed to respect me. They didn't have to like me. I hoped they did, but I realized I couldn't control that. The conversation you need to have with them might actually strengthen the relationship. Think about the tough conversation you need to have right now, the one you've probably been putting off.

NOW, TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Plan to meet privately, ASAP.

Whenever you come across a significant problem, you want to address it at the first possible opportunity. Maybe it's been going on too long right now. You can't change that, but you can keep from letting more time go to waste.

2. Assume good motives.

Go in with a good attitude and assume their intentions are good, but the system must not be working. Give him or her the benefit of the doubt.

3. Offer specific observations.

It's hard for people to change in response to general comments. Statements such as, "Your performance hasn't been very good lately," or "You don't get along with others," aren't helpful. Instead, say, "You haven't put the equipment back in the right place the last week, and you yelled at Emily last night in front of parents." Once you've described the poor behavior specifically and explained its negative impact, this will help them know what needs to change and why.

4. Hear them out.

Ask for their side of the story. There may be additional factors in play: Maybe the employee has been late for work because her car was totaled. Maybe he isn't performing well because a loved one has cancer, or he has been sick himself—you really never know. From time-to-time, you can solve a work issue by helping someone get through a personal problem. That's a powerful tool.


5. Agree on a course of action.

If you don't define a solution and agree to what needs to happen in the future, then both you and the other person will be frustrated. They can't hit a target that hasn't been identified.

6. Validate the person, and commit to help.

If at all possible, you want to encourage your staffer to change and grow through a particular situation and let them know they have a future with your company once these changes are made.

Assure them that they have intrinsic value and are more valuable than the work they perform. If the employee has been successful in the past, mention that. If the two of you have had a good relationship in the past, recall that. If you believe the person can grow and change, express that. The worst that can happen is you will lose a person who's hurting the team (or that can be the best thing that could happen).

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be," Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said, "and you help them become what they are capable of being." 

Patti Komara is the founder of Tumblebear Connection. Tumblebear Connection offers a large variety of products in hard copy, e-book, and video download formats including 21 topics on how to run a successful gymnastics school.

