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## HOW TO MANAGE DIFFICULT STAFF MEMBERS

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There can never be a definitive response to the question of how to manage difficult staff members. Each and every employee within a company is an individual, and as such will respond differently to a variety of stimuli. Encouragement may work with some, whereas others will respond better to the hairdryer treatment. However, as a guide, we have put together some top tips to help you along the way.

There will always be difficult staff members even in the most rewarding and high flying of careers. And as always, the buck stops with the management. The worst thing that can be done is to brush the problem of difficult staff members under the carpet and hope it goes away. It won't. The problem must be dealt with promptly and with professionalism, as it will only escalate if left unchecked.

Most employees can be difficult to manage from time to time. As individuals we all have our own idiosyncrasies, and of course we are all prone to bad days and good days. However, consistently difficult staff members are a completely different proposition, and each situation should be evaluated individually on its merits.

### **Deal with the facts**

The effective and successful management of your staff involves dealing with facts alone, ignoring hearsay and office gossip. Employees who are keen to spread such gossip are a problem in

their own right, and this should be identified and dealt with. Managers should conduct a detailed investigation into the circumstances in question. Before confronting difficult staff members, a quiet, private room should be selected, one in which there will be no interruptions. There should also be an appropriate company representative present, usually someone from human resources.

### **Take a pragmatic approach**

Your aim is not to start an argument; if tempers fray then the problem is only likely to be further compounded. A manager should take a reasoned approach, first highlighting the positive actions they would like to see the staff member take rather than focussing on the poor behaviour which has been so prevalent. If the problem is something fairly simple such as consistent lateness, rather than criticising the staff member for his or her timekeeping, simply stress the importance of every employee arriving at work on time in order to meet their goals.

It is also wrong to assume that the bad behaviour is an intentional attempt at insubordination. It may be as a result of personal problems or a lack of motivation manifesting itself in the workplace. If it is possible to locate the source of the problem then this is a huge advantage when attempting to find the solution. The secret here is impartial, non-judgmental, open questions which require more explanation than a simple yes or no answer.

An excellent tip is to summarise what the staff member has said as this shows the employee you are listening and taking their concerns seriously.

### **Results take time**

When dealing with difficult staff members it is important they are involved in devising the solution to the problem. Employees are more far likely to stand by and work towards to a decision they have had an input in. The watch word for this stage of the process is continuous improvement. If they show willingness to adapt their behaviour then half of the battle is already won.

If, on the other hand, employees show no willingness to change their behaviour then termination procedures within the company's policies and procedures should begin.

If you are inexperienced when it comes to dealing with difficult staff members and would like to brush up on your skills, management and executive coaching is an excellent measure to ensure you deal with your team in a fair, measured and effective way.

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