

Resolving Job Performance and Conduct Problems

Addressing and resolving job performance and conduct related problem behavior is often difficult and daunting.

The risks and distress from confronting an employee regarding problem behavior can be high, yet the risk and potential negative consequences of allowing problem behavior to continue can be even higher. It is rarely an easy conversation - however, with experience, skill, and consulting support, managers can intervene sooner before problem behaviors escalate or the damage is irreparable.

The following steps outline a process to address problem behavior in a non-punitive manner, reduce conflict escalation and the accrual of resentments.

Preparation

Performance feedback done well can yield constructive results. Performance feedback done poorly can make things worse, adding tension, conflict and acrimony.

Conversations to resolve problem behaviors are complicated and challenging. They hold potential to damage workplace relationships and safety if participants become defensive. Consequently, we recommend consulting with the following three resources prior to the performance feedback conversation:

1. Human Resources, to verify feedback is consistent with company policy and procedures.
2. Corporate legal counsel, to address potential legal complications and consistency with any pertinent contractual agreements.
3. Employee Assistance Program supervisory consultation for coaching, to anticipate and manage the interpersonal dynamics unique to each situation.

Consultation prior to the conversation about job performance or conduct is helpful to review nuances and unique situational variables. An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure.

Steps

The goal of the following steps is to resolve problem behaviors; it is not designed to be punitive.

1. Set a time to meet privately. Begin the conversation by acknowledging that this may be difficult for both parties. Express the intent to be straightforward based on your respect for the individual and the desire to seek solutions.
2. Request the individual make a commitment to listen without interruption and state "I will listen to you when I finish."
3. State your concerns using specific behavioral descriptions. (If behavioral descriptions are not clear, call for a supervisory consultation with EAP as noted above to assist with development of specific

behavioral language. A crucial component to successful intervention is stating behaviors and facts without making assumptions or drawing conclusions. Assumptions and conclusions are often subject to debate and hold the potential for argument leading to conflict escalation.)

4. Use a limited number of behavioral descriptions that are clear and concise. Avoid an extensive list to prevent overwhelming the individual and setting the stage for the discussion to be perceived as punitive.
5. Actively listen to your employee's perspective.
6. State your expectations using behavioral descriptions.
7. Be receptive to negotiate expectations if the behaviors are, in fact, negotiable.
8. If the expectations are non-negotiable, state potential consequences if there is no improvement.
9. Schedule and keep a time for a follow up meeting to review progress.

For supervisory/management consultation, call DIRECTION EAP at 541-345-2800