



Dealing with Challenging Employees

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Course Objectives

- Define Unsatisfactory Employee Performance
- Identify Tools and Techniques to Address Challenging Behaviors
- Identify and Leverage Your Options
- What else do you need from me today?



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What is “unsatisfactory” performance?

When an employee fails to perform the duties of their job to the organization’s satisfaction.



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Do you know the subtle signs?

Employee challenges usually occur gradually but leaders often ignore or excuse away these *gradual* behavior changes. What are the gradual signs that are often ignored?



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If the shift in behavior or performance doesn't stem from a personal concern, then perhaps it's because the employee is frustrated....with something or someone at work?

All frustration comes from unmet expectations.



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What are ways we communicate expectations to employees?



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Preventative Measures

- Chill on the “employer of choice” if it doesn’t pass the “snicker test”.
- Offer realistic job previews.
- Establish a series of solid new hire orientation experiences.
- OJT for everyone. OJT is about culture.
- Convey expectations to individuals and everyone with EVERY new hire.
- What else?



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Set Expectations

Do employees know:

- Who we are?
- Where we’re going?
- How we’re going to get there?
- Their role?
- How they can help?



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Set Expectations – The Review

- Show that the review is valuable to you – the leader.
- No surprises.
- Regular and expected.
- The process is clear.
- Avoid rater biases.



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Set Expectations – The Review

- No one gets fired.
- Relax, it is a conversation.
- Make it clear you'll ask for feedback from others they work with.
- Be prepared.
- L.U.V. your employees (listen, understand, validate)



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How do you ID poor performance?

- Not meeting job standards.
- Consistently late/tardy with assignments (or to work).
- Driving a damaged C.A.B.
- Gross misconduct.



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Document Performance

- Document good performance and not so good performance.
- Document within the hour whenever possible.
- Go back and review for context.
- Use a systemic process.
- Make it professional, neat and organized.



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Documentation Must Be

- Fair
- Factual (specific and measurable)
- Objective
- Legal
- Complete



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Improve these statements:

- Esther is clearly in over her head.
- John is lazy.
- Karen is inappropriate with clients.
- Paula is not a good fit.
- Eric has a really bad attitude.
- Carl is not a team player.



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How would you handle Anthony?

Anthony has been with the organization for 3 years as a customer service representative. Anthony's performance has increasingly declined to the point you need to address his conduct, attitude and his behavior. He is tardy, customer service scores have declined and there is talk that he is looking for another job. Prior to this decline Anthony was a high potential employee that you considered grooming for more challenging opportunities.



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Let's look at a process for having performance conversations.



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Step One – Your Options

Assess Climate, Capability and Willingness



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Your options include:

- Ignore it
- Informal conversations
- Coaching conversations
- Verbal warnings
- Written warnings
- Decision-making leave/Suspension
- Discharge



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Before you can realistically explore your options, you have to ask yourself these 6 questions:



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1. Does the company **WANT** the employee to stay?
2. Does the employee know **WHAT** to do?
3. Does the employee know **HOW** to do the work...properly?
4. Is the employee **CAPABLE** or **COMPETENT** to do the work?
5. Does the employee **WANT** to do the work?
6. Does the employee want to work for **YOU**?



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Leader Self Check

- You enjoy people and can accept them for WHO they are?
- You are genuinely not afraid of anyone, or of being sued?
- You are not interested in "fixing" anyone?
- People generally respond positively to your leadership.
- You are a good listener?
- You give others the room to succeed?
- You are not afraid of, but allow others to shine?



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Step Two

A.P.S.E.A.TM

- A = Articulate the Presenting Problem (issue or topic)
- P = Pause and Listen
- S = Show Support
- E = Explore Obstacles and Options
- A = Action and Accountability



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Assess and Articulate the Presenting Problem

A.P.S.E.A.TM

What is the presenting problem facing the employee? Describe the problem or challenge succinctly to the employee.



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Pause and Listen

A.P.S.E.A.TM

The most difficult challenge is to wait for an employee to respond. If too much time passes, ask if the employee would like for you to restate the presenting problem. Try not to become defensive, after all performance is completely within the employee's control. Your job is to ensure the work environment is conducive to optimal performance.



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Ask Powerful Questions

How do you intend to handle that?
 What is the first step?
 Is there a solution here?
 What if that didn't matter?
 If you were in my shoes, how would you coach yourself to win here?
 What's next?
 When will you do that? By when?
 Is there another way?
 How much longer can you continue working this way?
 Is this the legacy you wish to leave?



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Show Support

A.P.S.E.A.TM

You can show support by saying something like, "my job is to help you be as effective and successful as possible. I am confident you have what it takes to succeed in this position, but I need to know what shifts you are going to make to ensure an immediate and sustained course correction in the next xyz days or weeks and how I can help?"



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Explore Obstacles and Options

A.P.S.E.A.TM

What are the options for a win-win? What obstacles will they face? How can they navigate those obstacles?



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Hold the Employee Accountable

A.P.S.E.A.TM

Now it is time to get it in writing. Ask them to write down the shift they are going to make with the timeline and to print, date, sign and hand it to you by close of business.



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Hold the Employee Accountable

A.P.S.E.A.TM

Close the discussion with, "So, when we meet again in xyz days or weeks, you assure me that you will have made the stated improvements correct?" Thank them and state, "Thank you, I believe you can do this job, but your ultimate success in this job and with this organization rests solely with you."



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Step Three

Follow-up & Finish



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Follow-up & Finish

- Check in with the employee (scheduled and unscheduled).
- Offer impromptu encouragement and support without smothering or acting parental.
- Hold the employee accountable.
- Know when to encourage and allow course corrections.
- Stay focused on the goal and not the personality.
- Don't make it about YOU.
- Know when to let it go and move on.
- Celebrate successes!



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Discussion

- Why should you not share what's going on with other team members?
- What can you share with other team members?



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Help Employees Manage Stress

- Encourage employees to focus on what they can control.
- Let people vent...a little.
- Have 1:1's.
- Look for signs of stress.
- Point to external resources when needed.



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Thank You
Ask me anything!

Helping you achieve success through people.

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