

## Don't Tolerate Bad Behavior

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**The Future Foundation found that managers spend 13% of their time managing poor performers and 14% of their time correcting poor performers mistakes.**

It may be time to make some personnel changes. I'm seeing a huge lack of respect, and sensing some divided loyalties. Unfortunately this comes from a couple of my top producers, so I'm really conflicted about what to do. I know that if employees don't have qualities of allegiance and honesty - they're not the right fit. But can I afford to put revenue at risk by dealing with this right now?

**Top thoughts:** A company is only as strong as its weakest links. Addressing the problems may pose some risk, but leaving problems to fester may result in a blow up at an even more inconvenient time. Work on a solution, that strengthens your position. Create opportunity for something better to come along.

I've repeatedly seen owners overlook behavior that causes them concern, for fear of making a change. The owner goes through a period of frustration, feeling out of control and lost as to what to do. Eventually the problems come to a head, and usually at a really inconvenient time.

Building a team means everyone has to be pulling in the same direction. As an owner, you build trust with your employees by having an even-handed approach. No special rules.

Underperforming or badmouthing the company, a team member, or supervisor, are behaviors that cannot be tolerated. As a manager, ignoring the situation is worse than the issues caused by the original behavior. Tolerance encourages more of the same, and indicates to team members that kind of behavior is acceptable.

Lack of respect for the company and its employees concerns more than you, the owner. If someone on the team isn't pulling their weight, or is pulling in a different direction, that can negatively impact the company's overall performance. Over time it can wear out even the most loyal and committed team members, who may eventually decide to move on out of frustration.

Keep in mind that criticism can cut both ways. One employee chooses to critique another, or complains to a supervisor. Maybe the criticism is justified, maybe not. It is the manager's responsibility to take note. The complaining employee is not owed an explanation. But the manager would be wise to look into the complaints, to see if there is a problem brewing.

Perhaps both employees need feedback and direction. The complaining employee may need counseling on how to work more cooperatively with peers, taking up issues in a productive manner, and working to get team members to follow their lead. The employee about whom the complaints have been lodged, deserves to be talked to in private, made aware there are concerns, and given a chance to correct them.

Own any feedback, by saying to the employee, "I have some concerns that I want you to be aware of." and "Here's what I've observed . . ." Or, "There's something that's bothering me about how things have been going lately."

Always be honest. "I'm not satisfied with how things are going. If things continue this way, I'll have no option but to rate your performance sub-par. That could affect your opportunity for advancement, raises, and ultimately jeopardize your continued employment. That's not where I want this to go, but things cannot continue as is."

Looking for alternate solutions will help you figure out the potential outside the company. Start to consider your options. Place an ad. Give yourself time to think through who else might step up to do the job. Line up 2 or 3 qualified candidates to fill the job. Keep their names in your rolodex in case of need.

If the employee doesn't want to deal with the problem, maybe this isn't the right job, or the right company for them. No matter how valuable this employee has been in the past, if their behavior is unacceptable for any reason, and the employee can't, or won't, step up, it's your responsibility to make changes.

Looking for a good book? 101 Tough Conversations to Have with Employees: A Manager's Guide to Addressing Performance, Conduct, and Discipline Challenges, by Paul Falcone.

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