

Tips for Managing People Who Are Hard to Manage

Management would be easy if you had a team of hard working, collaborative, talented employees all of whom had a positive focused attitude, all striving towards the same set of goals and objectives, but we all know this is not the case.

There's generally that one employee who doesn't perform well, or is difficult to deal with, or has a hard time getting along with others, or the one that means well but just doesn't ever quite do what's expected of them.

Simply put, some people are easy to manage, and others come with complications.

Most managers end up spending a disproportionate amount of time, thought and emotional energy on problem employees often teetering on the brink and letting issues continue for years, but never quite being able to deal with them appropriately for a variety of reasons.



So How Do You Manage This Challenge?

Team members need to be managed individually, but there's still general guidance that can help pave the way. Here are some tips from **Hanson Lawrie** for managing the people who are hard to manage:

1. **Accept that management is a complex and difficult job** – and that frustrations and difficult situations go with the territory of management. That's why you're being compensated more than if you were not in management. Approach delicate employee "issues" sensitively and positively.
2. **Don't avoid conflict** – deal with it directly and fairly. The best managers do not ignore conflict but neither do they pull rank and roll right over others when conflicts occur. Look for fair constructive resolutions and outcomes.
3. **Listen** – Often, when an employee is difficult, we stop paying attention to what's actually going on. We're irritated, and in most cases, we have already made our own mind up about what's going on. What we should be doing is being attentive when someone's not doing well. As a manager you need to have the clearest possible *understanding* of the situation – including knowing the employee's point of view.
4. **Try to see things through the eyes of others** – there may be reasons why a certain person is hard to manage. Has he or she always been this way, or are there new external factors contributing? Is there anything in your own management style that could be triggering an oppositional response? Put yourself in their position and think how would you like to be treated in the scenario.
5. **Set clear measurable job objectives** – so it's a matter of fact, not a debate whether or not your employees have reached their performance targets. It makes evaluating performance more concrete. When a problematic employee isn't achieving goals, you have something totally tangible to discuss.

6. **Give clear, behavioural feedback** – Most managers will spend months, even years, complaining about poor employees... and not ever giving them actual feedback about what they need to be doing differently. Giving tough feedback is one of the most uncomfortable things a manager has to do but it's a must if you want things to change.
7. **Document** – Whenever you're having significant problems with an employee, keep a record of it **WRITE IT DOWN**. All too often lack of documentation arises out of misplaced hopefulness that the person may change. Good managers know that documentation isn't negative – it's prudent.
8. **Be consistent** – If you say you're not OK with a behaviour, don't sometimes be OK with it.
9. **Set consequences if things don't change** – If things still aren't improving, get specific.

"I still believe you can turn this around. Here's what turning it around would look like. If I don't see that behaviour by x date, here's what will happen"

Examples of some substantive negative consequences: *"You'll be let go," or "You'll be put on warning" or "You won't be eligible for a promotion"*

10. **Work through the company's processes** – Make sure you have 'dotted all the I's' and 'crossed all the T's.' If you're at this point of no return with your problem employee, you ought to be having very clear conversations with your HR representative, so that you know (and are doing) exactly what you need to do to clear the path to termination, if that turns out to be necessary.

Still want help managing a difficult member of staff? Haven't got the right process in place to follow? Do you require a replacement team member?

Hanson Lawrie is a specialist HR and Recruitment consultancy firm that offers a one stop shop for all your needs, so why not talk to us today to get the support you need.