

Let's T.A.L.K.

Handling the Difficult Performance Appraisal

Participant Materials

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Pretraining Assessment

Instructions: Consider the questions and write your answers in the space provided.

1. What do you perceive to be your biggest challenge when face-to-face with an employee during a performance review?
2. True or False. It is easy to make assumptions about why an employee is behaving in a particular manner, but the reality is that you could be way off target in your assumption and end up losing a good employee.
3. True or False. It is important not to upset top performers, therefore it is better not to mention minor performance issues as long as they are meeting their overall performance goals.
4. True or False. The key with top performers is that the manager doesn't want to come across as though they are arbitrarily raising the bar. Instead, you lead the employee to raise the bar on his or her own behavior.
5. What steps do you usually take when dealing with a difficult performance appraisal?

Identifying Your Concerns

In the space provided, briefly describe one or two difficult performance appraisal situations that you have encountered in the past.

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What other concerns do you have regarding dealing with difficult performance appraisal issues?

Tell It Like It Is and Ask for Feedback

Read the following scenarios and then identify two or three open-ended questions you could ask to help clarify the issue with the employee.

Situation 1: You have a performance review tomorrow with Carol, one of your best employees. Lately, Carol has been coming into work at least 20 minutes late and taking an extra half-hour for lunch. You have discussed this with her before but she is still showing up late. What can you ask Carol to help you understand what is going on?

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Situation 2: Bob's 90-day performance review is coming up. He has only been with the company for three months and he has never really shown any interest in his job. He seems apathetic towards his job and to the other people he works with. What can you ask Bob to help you understand what is going on?

Situation 3: Adam told you last week that he was getting a divorce. His work has been slacking off for the last six months. You have tried to discuss it with him but he keeps giving you excuses and promising that it will get better. What can you ask Adam to help you understand what is going on?

Skill Practice Scenarios

Manager's Version

Scenario One

Ross is one of your best sales reps. He is always meeting and exceeding his sales goal. Although you are looking forward to telling him what a great job he is doing with his sales goals, you need to talk to him about his inappropriate behavior toward others in the department who are not hitting their goals. You have heard Ross on several occasions make really inappropriate and snide remarks to new or inexperienced sales people. The remarks are starting to affect the morale of the department.

Scenario Two

Sally returned from maternity leave six months ago. During the last six months, she has missed her deadlines consistently and is often late for work. Sally is a single mother of twin baby girls. She often comes in looking disheveled and unkempt. The rest of the department has been really supportive of Sally, but you are concerned that she is not pulling her weight and others are having to take on extra work because of her missed deadlines.

Scenario Three

Max is one of the most difficult people in your department. He is constantly griping and complaining about something. You are going to have to give him a “does not meet expectations” on his performance review form. You know that he is going to get really angry and start complaining about how unfair the department is.

Skill Practice Scenarios

Employee's Version

Scenario One

You are Ross, one of the best sales reps in the company. You are always meeting and exceeding your sales goal. You are looking forward to your performance appraisal because you are expecting a fabulous rating and raise from your manager. You are sure of this positive rating because the majority of the other people in the department are worthless and not producing. You have helped the department meet its goals in spite of the slackers.

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Scenario Two

You are Sally and you returned from maternity leave six months ago. During the last six months, you have missed a few deadlines and you are often late for work. You are a single mother of twin baby girls. The girls are not sleeping through the night yet and you have a difficult time getting up in the morning. Unfortunately, the girls want to go to sleep right when you need to be getting up. The rest of the department has been really supportive of you and you are really appreciative of their understanding.

Scenario Three

You are Max and you have been with the company for fifteen years. Over the last year the company has made a lot of changes, and you are struggling with the computer system. You are the only one in the department that is having trouble with it. You don't have a computer at home so everything about the new system doesn't make complete sense to you. You are angry and frustrated by these changes. You have done this job for 15 years and know it better than anyone. It's just that the new computer system is making you feel incompetent, and you are sick and tired of seeing the young employees buzzing out of the building right on time when you have several more hours of struggling on the computer left at the end of each day.

Observer's Sheet

Observe the skill practice and write your answers in the space provided.

1. Did the manager clarify the situation? Yes or No

If yes, what questions did the manager use to clarify the situation?

If no, what questions could the manager have used to clarify the situation?

2. Did the manager get agreement on the solution? Describe how the manager obtained the employee's agreement.

3. What action did the manager take after obtaining agreement on the solution?

Posttraining Assessment

Instructions: The statements below highlight the key points you've learned in this training program. Consider the statements and write your answers in the space provided.

1. True or False. It is easy to make assumptions about why an employee is behaving in a particular manner. The reality is that you could be way off target in your assumption, and end up losing a good employee.
2. True or False. It is important not to upset top performers, therefore it is better not to mention minor performance issues as long as they are meeting their overall performance goals.
3. True or False. The key with top performers is that the manager doesn't want to come across as though they are arbitrarily raising the bar. Instead, you lead the employee to raise the bar on his or her own behavior.
4. True or False. If an employee is sending you signals that they don't care, it may be time for you to consult HR regarding their dismissal.
5. True or False. It is important for the manager to decide on how to proceed with the solution before they discuss the solution with the employee.
6. What was the most important thing you learned during this training session? Please describe it below.

Session Evaluation

Please circle the number that best describes your evaluation of the training session.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This training program concentrates on how to effectively handle difficult performance appraisals.	4	3	2	1
This training program helped me understand the importance of telling it like it is and getting the employee's feedback.	4	3	2	1
As a result of this program I am more confident in MY ability to get agreement on a solution to the employee's performance problem.	4	3	2	1
The objectives of the program were clearly presented.	4	3	2	1
Opportunities to ask questions and discuss issues were sufficient.	4	3	2	1
The session was well organized.	4	3	2	1

The best part of the program was:

This program could be improved by:

Additional comments:

I would recommend this session to others (circle one). Yes No