

# COACHING TIP

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## DEALING WITH PEOPLE PROBLEMS

One of a manager's most difficult jobs is dealing with people problems. Most managers have the tendency to ignore these problems and hope they will go away, or spend so much time dealing with them that they neglect those team members who are doing a good job. The ideas that follow will help you overcome these natural tendencies.

People problems fall into a lot of categories, e.g. tardiness, absenteeism, sloppiness, poor interpersonal relations, low performance, lack of cooperation, poor teamwork, insubordination, disruptive behavior, or breaking company rules, just to name a few.

Most minor issues or infractions can be corrected by simply addressing them in a gentle, straight-forward manner. This can often be done in a relaxed, casual setting. The better your relationship with the team member, the easier it will be to get an improvement in behavior.

However, if the problem persists and is having a negative impact on your team and productivity, you will need to let the employee know that some sort of resolution is imperative. This usually requires a more formal setting.

Virtually all employees want to be successful. They do not want to be viewed or considered as "high maintenance" or a problem. Sometimes the underlying problem is a feeling of being under-appreciated, or not being thought of as important to the team or organization.

Perhaps they have personal problems away from the job. Be careful that you don't think of someone as "high maintenance" or a problem. It is important to focus on difficult or problem **behaviors** rather than difficult or problem people. This minor distinction can be a major factor in helping you maintain an objective, problem-solving attitude.

The costs of keeping poor performing employees are significant. The direct costs include increased labor, waste, rework, lost sales, poor customer relations, and damage to your reputation, to name a few. Team members who pick up the slack feel resentful and can lose their motivation. It will also be difficult for the manager to get other team members to perform at the desired level. The poorest performing employee usually sets the standards.

At the same time, the costs of replacing an employee can be substantial. The direct costs could include ad cost, placement fees, personnel testing, costs related to interviewing, and training costs. Other, harder to measure, costs could include: the cost of mistakes or errors, customer dissatisfaction or loss of confidence, and low team morale.

The Bottom Line – fixing an existing problem is usually less expensive than recruiting, hiring, and training a replacement employee.