



How do you manage sensitive issues

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It is hard enough to manage an employee's performance, but even harder when it involves issues outside of the norm. As business owners or managers you often have to deal with a variety of seemingly non-work related dramas from a worker who is 'a bit on the nose' to a workplace romance gone wrong. These issues require a tactful approach in an effort to suppress embarrassment both on your part and that of the employees.

But What if an employee's personality is affecting the rest of the work team and impacting on the business? How do you approach this issue, when their work performance is meeting requirements but their behaviour is affecting others performance?

Personality clashes are common in any workplace, we can't all be best friends. However, when one employee doesn't seem to fit, it's a tough job to manage. If you do nothing and hope it goes away, you could be making a serious mistake.

You may think that it appears on the surface not to be a performance problem, but that is exactly what it is becoming. When another employee's behaviour is causing others to avoid working with them it affects everyone's performance. In a small to medium size business that requires cooperation and teamwork, these conflicts can affect efficiency and possibly customer and colleague relationships.

As the employer or manager it is your role to help employees understand this behaviour can be detrimental to business and help them find a solution to the problem. Here are some tips to handle this situation:

Describe the behaviour/consequences: don't label the behaviour or suggest intent and be tactful in your communication. For example saying 'when you communicate with other workers your words and tone are being interpreted as arrogant, it may not be your intent, but the result is people don't want to work with you' is better than 'you're arrogant and its causing people to avoid working with you'.

Get the employee to own the problem: ask the employee what they think could be possible consequences of their behaviour or the perceptions of their colleagues and/or customers. Don't answer the question for them, they need to understand they are responsible for solving the problem.

Offer help - don't solve it for them: you can offer coaching and training, but it is not up to you to come up with a solution. Ask the employee what they will do to change the behaviour and improve relationships and perceptions.

Ensure the employee understands the urgency: ask the employee what they think could happen if they don't correct the behaviour. They need to fully understand that if it isn't corrected it will affect their performance and may lead to termination. This is not a threat - the purpose is to get them to acknowledge the severity of the issue.

Need Brismark's Help!! For more information contact Lisa Dwyer on 3915 4222 or email esm@brismark.com.au