MANAGING DIFFICULT EMPLOYEES: 15 TYPES WHO CHALLENGE US

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Dr. Steve Albrecht
SHRM PHR, ASIS CPP, ATAP CTM
www.DrSteveAlbrecht.com

"On the whole human beings want to be good, but not too good, and not quite all the time."

-- George Bernard Shaw

OUR MOTTO

We can accept the person without having to accept his or her inappropriate behavior or poor performance.

SOME THEMES . . .

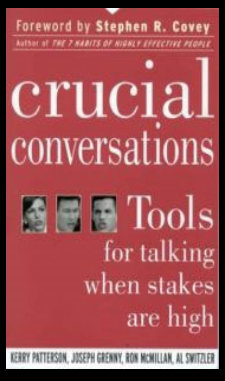
What is the impact on the business?
Why do we rationalize unacceptable behavior?
Are these “profiles” or “behaviors”?
Is our goal “peace” or “justice”?
What should asking for help mean?
How do we align with people?
If there are no consequences . . .
Acting skills? Patience? Proof of change?

THE BIG SEVEN

Work performance
Violations of policies & procedures
Conflict
Attendance
Attitude
Service
Teamwork

Crucial Conversations

by Patterson, Grenny et al. (2002, McGraw-Hill)



Opinions vary.

Stakes are high.

Emotions run strong.

These can give us permission to coach.

COACHING DEFINED

"A pre or post-discipline conversation about performance or behavior. . ."

"A series of conversations that help the employee along his or her career path. . ."

"A way to identify skill gaps, solve conflicts, reward success, and make the PE process easier. . ."

TARGETED COACHING

Executive / Strategic Coaching: senior leaders, strategic issues, the top team. Goal = Direction

Career Development Coaching: leadership, career guidance. Goal = Personal Skills

Performance Improvement Coaching: knowledge enhancement, training. Goal = Job Skills

Corrective Coaching: career "rescue," skills deficit, compliance issues. Goal = Compliance

Special-Problems Coaching: special skills, special issues, high-threat situations. Goal = Peace

KEEP / STOP / START

To get along better and work more productively, we can ask, suggest, or tell employees three things:

KEEP doing this, because it's working.

STOP doing this, because it's not working.

START doing this, because it will work better.

THE THREE C's

COMMUNICATE – Let them tell you their issue, or vent to you, without being judgmental. Listen carefully, without interrupting.

CLARIFY – Use paraphrasing questions to make certain you understand their concerns. Ask for their solutions or suggest your own.

COMMIT – Get their promise for a commitment to action. When will they start doing what you've both now agreed upon? How will they continue?

PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY MEETINGS (PAM's)

Otherwise known as having a "cards on the table meeting." (Last coaching meeting before discipline.)

Useful for employees who use sarcasm, negative opinions, idea killing, or bad body language.

Try explaining your expectations and asking the employee for his or her help.

Don't argue or get overly-frustrated; tell the employee what he or she needs to do to comply.

Finish with the same closure speech: "Is there any reason you can't make these changes?"

THE BULLY

Behaviors: Verbal or physical intimidation; overly-aggressive in meetings and conversation; uses rank, status, size, tone to demean others.

Reasons: Lots of behind-the-scenes reasons, often from childhood. Poor self-esteem masks their fears. Plus, it's worked for them before.

Tools: Collect a list of examples; focus on behaviors and the impact; confront calmly; create consequences; reward compliance with praise.

THE HARASSER

Behaviors: Physical, verbal, sexual, or racially harassing actions; creates a hostile work environment using intimidation, power, fear, humiliation, embarrassment.

Reasons: Learned behavior; past behaviors that have worked; the need to keep people one-down to them; either unaware or don't care about gender, cultural, or diversity differences.

Tools: Enforce policies, call out the behaviors, use on-on-one coaching, discipline and termination.

THE SMART SLACKER

Behaviors: Knows how to work hard; doesn't want to. Missing on Duty / Retired on Duty. Works only when it works for him or her. They can teach other employees to slack.

Reasons: Burned out, dissatisfied, topped out, not enough job challenges, wants to retire but can't afford to. Frustrated, misses the "old days."

Tools: Confront their behavior, attitude, or performance. Remind them of their "legacy employee" status. Ask for their help. Use a PAM once coaching has clearly not worked.

THE DOLPHIN

Behaviors: They perform well, show up on time, and do their jobs, until they don't. They perform only when you put pressure on them; they stop when you stop.

Reasons: Burned out, unmotivated, or they may need more hands-on supervision than you have time to give. Similar to the Plow Horse.

Tools: Remind them of your need for consistent and constant performance throughout the year. Give examples of when they are above and below the waterline of quality work, attendance, actions.

THE PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE

Behaviors: Kings and Queens of behind-the-scenes manipulations, guilt, and diversion. They act wounded when you call them out for missing deadlines, not doing their work and blaming others. Master manipulators who redirect blame.

Reasons: Learned during childhood to exert control over situations where they felt no power.

Tools: Never let them win by backing down. Call them out with specific examples. Demand high performance.

THE CHAMPION

Behaviors: Loves to point out all the injustices, problems, and conflicts in the workplace. Runs to the boss or HR, often with petty complaints about others, that really have no merit. In reality, not good at their own jobs.

Reasons: They define themselves as entitled whistleblowers and defenders of what's right.

Tools: Complain about them to your boss and HR before they can complain about you. Use PIPs to confront their typical poor performance.

THE GOSSIP

Behaviors: Talks about everyone else to everyone else, whether they want to hear it or not. Can create cliques, team conflicts, and the silent treatment among co-workers.

Reasons: Bored, not enough to work to do, angry at certain people and uses gossip to sabotage personal or marital relationships, and co-workers.

Tools: Tell them to stop and get back to work. Use sending computer viruses as an example. Enforce consequences related to creating conflicts.

THE PSYCHOPATH

Behaviors: Lying, hurting, manipulating people for their own benefit. No empathy for others. Smooth like a snake.

Reasons: They were born this way and they are nearly impossible to treat.

Tools: They need boundaries, consequences, and the use of discipline. Consider early termination.

THE INJUSTICE COLLECTOR

Behaviors: They believe others are out to get them, and ruin their careers or lives. They are instantly suspicious of the motives of their boss or co-workers and fear the worst is being said about them.

Reasons: They were born this way and they are nearly impossible to treat.

Tools: Prove them wrong every time with the facts and the truth. Let them vent but control the conversation. Use your discipline process.

THE NARCISSIST

Behaviors: The world revolves around them and their egos are on display at all times. They are overly-sensitive to being slighted, ignored, or not praised. They see themselves as superior.

Reasons: Hard to know, harder to treat. It's often a defense mechanism for their self-esteem and insecurities. They don't feel worthy.

Tools: Give them praise when they deserve it, but keep things in perspective. Use reality checks.

THE STATUE

Behaviors: Just sits there and does not engage in group discussions, ever.

Reasons: Language barrier? Highly introverted? Fearful of being embarrassed in front of boss or peers? Criticized once and never forgot it?

Tools: Draw them out by using safe questions. Try to determine their strengths and ask them to talk about what they know best. Use praise and give support. Don't allow Idea Killers around them.

THE HYGIENE-CHALLENGED

Behaviors: They don't stand close enough to the soap and water in the shower. Their personal hygiene is noticeable and hurts the business.

Reasons: Health-related, lazy, religious, depressed, medication-driven, distracted, revengeful.

Tools: Have the necessary "care-fronting" conversation and discuss the impact on the business. Don't judge; set expectations and ask if you need to make accommodations.

THE CHALLENGER / KNOW-IT-ALL

Behaviors: They love to publicly confront you or others when they believe they are right, often in a too-loud tone. Their version of the facts may or may not be right, but they announce their opinions anyway. Close cousin to the Idea Killer.

Reasons: Self-esteem, frustration, the need to be right in front of their peers, jealousy toward you or co-workers about status, rank, job knowledge.

Tools: Don't argue in public. Be firm, take them aside to ask them to stop. Use peer pressure.

THE JOKESTER

Behaviors: Uses humor a lot and usually at the wrong times, often sarcastically or to change the flow of the discussion back to them. The jokes are often hurtful and targeted or intentionally disruptive.

Reasons: Self-esteem, jealousy, attention-seeking has worked before, often since childhood.

Tools: Use coaching immediately, with specific examples about how it impacts the business. Use peer pressure or “extinction” techniques.

THE PLOW HORSE

Behaviors: They work on a project until they hit an obstacle and then they sit or do nothing without guidance. Nice people, but not much initiative or creativity to think beyond the tough part of the problem. Not a behavioral issue; an action issue.

Reasons: In the past, a boss told them not to think outside the box, waste time or money, or be creative, so they didn’t.

Tools: Encourage them to use option-thinking to problem-solve. Give them chances to succeed. Reward their self-initiated progress with praise.

PLUS 1: THE SHINING STAR

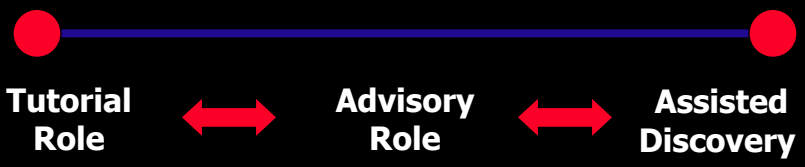
Behaviors: Hard-working, creative, energetic, helpful, supportive, great in teams or alone on challenging projects.

Reasons: Work ethic and kindness toward others.

Tools: Give them challenges but watch for job burnout. Create a career path. Be careful not to create "Teacher's Pet."

THE COACHING DYNAMIC

"A Spectrum of Influence"



INFLUENCING: THE HIDDEN TOOL

Your ability to persuade your people to do their work, not just by *telling*, but by *selling*.

Leadership is about building trust. It's how you use your knowledge, experience, and intelligence to gently or boldly convince others to follow your directions.

It's known as "walking the talk."

THE TOOLS OF INFLUENCE

Leading from the front and the rear.
(Getting your hands dirty, from time to time.)

Never lying.

Modeling consistency, reliability, and the patient, humane treatment of all.

Keeping your people informed.

Standing up for your people when it's the right thing to do.

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