

A man with a beard and a woman are standing in front of a dark blue chalkboard. The man is on the left, wearing a blue and white plaid shirt, and is gesturing with his hands as if speaking. The woman is on the right, wearing a yellow sweater, and is smiling. A large white speech bubble is drawn on the chalkboard, containing the text 'How to manage difficult employees & conversations at work'.

**How to manage
difficult employees
& conversations at
work**

FREE E-BOOK



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Have you hired the 'right' employee?

You have assembled a team, but how do you know if they are the right match for your business? With the right people in your team, ideally everything runs smoothly. The team's energy focuses on the positives and they are results orientated.

In an 'ideal' scenario, your team should be:

- Resulted driven
- Client-facing
- Promotable and self-managing
- Motivated
- Working well as a team
- Passionate
- Creative
- Loyal



The wrong staff: signs to look out for

If your team isn't operating as it should, how can you tell if your employee is not engaged, or simply just the wrong fit for your business?

- They are disengaged and not motivated by work.
- They are increasingly argumentative, disagreeing with new ideas and ways of working.
- They can't keep up and have a slower ability to learn, pulling the team down.
- They can be overly dramatic, turning everything into an issue with clients or the team.
- They won't take accountability, are starting to cover their tracks or divert attention away from themselves.
- They are displaying an entitlement attitude, expecting privileges from the business.

Ignoring the signs: why do we leave it?

You're not alone if you are ignoring the warning signs. It can be easier to avoid the issues for fear of confrontation, or perhaps you're unclear about what the appropriate action is.

Some business owners find themselves over compensating for poor-performing employees and end up recruiting around them to avoid the problem.

The biggest driver in ignoring the problem is however, almost always guilt. Sometimes we blame ourselves for the failure of an employee, either in poor recruitment or bad management.



What happens when you don't deal with the issue?

The key to dealing with all employees in an effective way is communication. If you ignore the issue it will only ever get worse. Here are just some of the ways it can impact your business:

- Financial drain - over time this employee will start to cost you money. It's expensive to keep someone who is not committed as they will ultimately have an impact on revenue, profit and the bottom line.
- Impacts the rest of the team - an unhappy, or unmotivated employee has a negative impact on the rest of the team who often have to work around them, cleaning up messes and detracting from their own good work.
- Lowers productivity - which can slow down projects and demotivate everyone around them.
- Risk losing team members - if you're not careful, the employee can encourage others to move on, resulting in the loss of talent and revenue.
- Drain on resources - a poor performing employee can use up valuable time, energy and resources.



What can you do?

Don't panic, there are a number of ways you can tackle the issue. Here are some of the most common scenarios and how to deal with them.

Scenario 1 - Position & candidate are not as advertised

- The employee has not performed well since they started.
- Job advert wasn't accurate enough for them to get a full understanding of the role.
- Interview wasn't thorough enough.
- The candidate oversold themselves in the interview.

Solutions

- Make use of the probation period to address issues, realign expectations, outline goals and set realistic KPIs.
- If it's really not working out then terminate the contract within this time, with notice.

Scenario 2 - Right person, wrong job

- You have hired a great person whose values align with the company. They have good skills but are just not blossoming in the role.

Solutions

- Use a personality profiling tool such as Myers Briggs to help understand why the role isn't gelling with them and where their strengths lie.
- Look at the job role and understand where they are struggling - could the role be tweaked to fit?
- Consider moving them to a different role based on their strengths and interests.
- Consider an exit strategy if none of the above are viable.



Scenario 3 - High performers, poor conduct

- Your employee produces great output but is poor at following processes, communicating and does not engage with teamwork.
- Perhaps you have inherited legacy workers who do not share the business values you are promoting.

Solutions

- Consider coaching having identified the areas of improvement. Is there someone within your business who could act as a 'mentor'?
- Set expectations in regular performance reviews and highlight the potential consequences if these are not met.
- Hold constant and regular reviews to monitor progress and development.
- Consider an exit strategy if none of the above are working for either party.

Red lights

Whenever you are dealing with staff issues, you must ensure that you are not acting in a manner which could be perceived as discriminatory. The law requires that you must not discriminate against employees on any of the following grounds:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

HR myths

Many business owners worry they are acting outside employment law. Here are some of the most common HR myths.

You can issue any kind of warning without going through the full procedure.

It's impossible to part company with employees.

If someone goes off sick you can't proceed with any action.

Contractors are easier to get rid of.

IF THERE IS NO CONTRACT YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU WANT



Taking action

Whichever course of action you decide upon, don't forget these key points:

- Document, document, document - keep a record of every conversation and contact to ensure you are protected legally.
- Track feedback with a regular appraisal process system - ideally every 3 - 6 months.
- Have conversations! Don't ignore the issues, open up the dialogue as soon as you spot the warning signs to avoid the problem snowballing.
- Consider a settlement agreement - you can buy an employee out of their contract if things are really not working out.



About Bespoke HR

It's our mission to provide SMEs with exceptional bespoke HR solutions. We can act as your in-house HR manager, providing a 'plug in' service, or offer ad-hoc HR advice and consultancy as and when you need it.

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