

Member's Quarterly

Winter 2023 Edition

Feature

How to Manage Disrespectful Employees

Take corrective action immediately before it affects your workplace culture

In an ideal world, we would all like to get along with everyone. Unfortunately, it is simply not realistic. Incompatible personalities are part and parcel of today's workplace, whether we are physically together or working remotely.

Disrespectful behaviour in the workplace takes many forms, from subtle comments, raised voices or name-calling to physical fighting. Rude behaviour in the workplace causes problems ranging from lost productivity, increased stress, a negative impact on the workplace environment and employee retention.

Three tips for Dealing with Disrespectful Employees

Treat the Behaviour Problem Like a Performance Problem – Treat disrespectful behaviour seriously as you would confront and correct a significant performance problem. Apply the same measures as you would for recurring errors and unexplained absences or tardiness.

Be Direct – Many employees appreciate and respond to a direct approach. As a Leader, if you are indirect, this will only feed into the employee's belligerence. However, being direct does not mean being aggressive. When addressing the issue, be specific, speak plainly and make it clear as to the expected behaviour change that is required.

Praise Positive Behaviour Change – It may be a challenge for the disrespectful employee to change. Initially, they might resist. As the leader, you should provide positive encouragement to the employee when you see the behaviour change. Slight rare slip-ups may happen, and if things get worse, it will require another correcting conversation.

In a recent study from The Herman Group, 75% of employees who quit their roles admitted that they were not leaving for more money – they were running away from poor leadership. But what happens when you are managing an employee who does not respect the administration – and that cynicism is starting to drift into your workplace culture?

A few tips to help you manage the delicate problem of an employee who seems to resent you passively-aggressively.

Remain calm – A recent survey from TalentSmart found that 90% of top performers are highly skilled at keeping their emotions checked and managing stressful situations. When an employee takes to disrespecting you or being overtly condescending, it can be incredibly tempting to lose your temper. Do not. Resist the urge to shout. Instead, maintain a calm and polite exterior and ask the employee in question if they have an issue they would like to discuss in private. This often is not easy and takes a lot of self-control and resilience.

Create a positive working environment and maintain a positive attitude – Be careful not to lower yourself to the employee's level even when you are tempted by negative comments or insults from them. Check your temper and put forward your professional face. Remember if you reprimand someone in public, that is a form of bullying. Engage the employee in dialogue for suggestions and how to repair the problems. If employees feel their opinions matter, they will feel more positive about the workplace and their manager.



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Feature continued

Accept Blame – Sometimes the manager shares the responsibility in forming a state of disrespect. By being too relaxed in your management style, you may be encouraging an atmosphere in the workplace where employees feel that they have little direction. If you are direct and address these issues as you notice them quickly yet privately, you may be able to change the behaviour, improve your management style and gain your whole team's respect.

In the workplace, respect often must be earned. When an employee behaves disrespectfully, you will be more successful by simply communicating directly with that employee. Failure to communicate could lead to an increase in the problem until it impacts the rest of the team.

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