

Useful Strategies to Dealing with Difficult Employees



**The Know-
It-Alls**



**The
Passives**



**The
Dictators**



**The "Yes"
People**



**The "No"
People**



**The
Grippers**

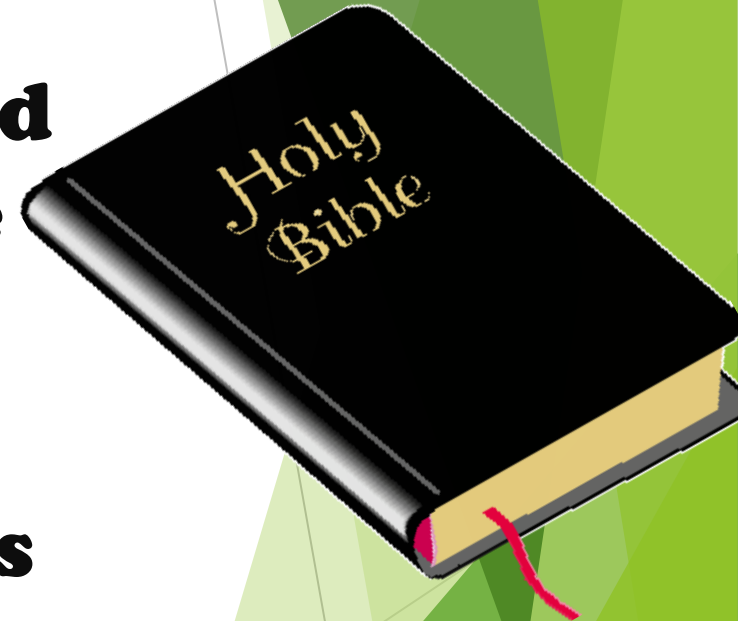
Two Fundamental Premisses:

- ❖ **Making Sure The Leader is not the « Difficult » Person**
- ❖ **True leadership is servanthood. Put the interests of others at the center of your decisions.” —*Dave Ramsey***
- ❖ **“Leadership is neither a showmanship, nor a dictatorship. Leadership is a stewardship and a partnership.”—*Rick Warren***

TEAMWORK

Mark 10:35- 45 (NIV)

- ▶ **43 ... whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.**
- ▶ **⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**



Two Fundamental Premisses:

❖ **Conflict is a normal and natural occurrence of interacting with one another. The cost of resolving conflict is negligible relative to the cost of leaving conflicts unresolved.**

Four (4) Strategies

- 1. Learn Their Strengths**
- 2. Identify The Problem**
- 3. Communicate**
- 4. Stay Calm**

1. Learn Their Strengths

- ▶ **When you find the right fit between employee's strength and the job, success is almost guaranteed.**



- **Help employees develop a professional growth plan and then help them reach their goals.**



- **Provide LOTS of feedback and celebrate their achievements. (Employee Engagement)**



2. Identify The Problem

- ▶ **A. What defines “difficult” employee?**
 - ▶ **Unique approach to the work?**
 - ▶ **Does the employee ask too many questions?**
 - ▶ **Did the employee’s manager put them in no-win situation?**
 - ▶ **Is the person facing personal challenges outside the workplace that are impacting their ability to concentrate?**
- ▶ **B. Ask yourself**
 - ▶ **What is the root cause of the employee’s actions?**
- ▶ **C. Remember...**
 - ▶ **Do not make assumptions**
 - ▶ **Our job is not to “fix” our employees. We set expectations for them to follow and hold them accountable if they do not.**
 - ▶ **Focus on actionable steps**

Delve Down - Case Study

At a previous company, I had an employee in her first professional position after graduate school who had a bad attitude. She complained frequently about putting in long hours, and no one liked working with her.

When she came to talk to me about feeling overwhelmed in her job, I listened and recommended some resources, including the employee assistance program, to help her cope with the demands of her role. I also told her that if she felt the position wasn't right for her, it was OK to seek opportunities elsewhere and perhaps return after she gained more experience. She seemed relieved.

Then we got to the real issue behind her long work hours. In the course of our conversation, it became clear that work was all she had going on in her life. She was new to the area and hadn't yet made any social connections. We talked about how she could become a part of the community. She reconnected with her sorority via the local alumnae chapter and took on a leadership position. Things really changed for her.

She ended up leaving our company on good terms, and she said that having activities outside of work gave her confidence to move forward in her career. We're still in touch even though we both have moved on to other organizations.

Lessons learned: Engaging with the employee helped me get to the real issue fast. The old adage of not putting all of your eggs in one basket is good for everyone to remember. We need to balance our work life with outside interests that engage us in different ways.

—Vickie L. Robinson, SHRM-CP, national director of HR, Armed Services YMCA of the USA, Springfield, Va.

3. Communicate

- ▶ **Be Transparent. Let the person know where you stand.**
- ▶ **Provide facts and evidence**
- ▶ **Show examples and be prepared to talk about what is expected or what improvement looks like**
- ▶ **Seek the employee's feedback to the facts and evidence and listen to their side/perspective**
- ▶ **Build a rapport. Computers, emails, electronic communication turns processes mechanical. Go back to the basics of interpersonal human communication. Share a meal together, learn their hobbies, family life, etc.**

Plan Ahead - Case Study

- ▶ A high-level female executive within the organization was so upset when someone arrived late to a meeting that she literally charged at him and pushed him out of the office. We were all shocked into silence, and then the meeting resumed as if nothing had happened. Later, I privately addressed the behavior with the leader. However, to my regret, we never discussed the incident as a group. What I didn't know was that this leader was already widely perceived to be a bully who intimidated others—even though she was under 5 feet tall.
- ▶ Lessons learned: Be prepared. Whether the worst-case scenario comes to pass or not, it's better to be safe than sorry. When you see someone at any level behave inappropriately, reinforce the company's expectations for conduct at work. Act quickly and responsibly to lead the team back on track.
- ▶ Intimidation can take many forms—wielding physical strength or positions of power. Part of being ready means learning to expect the unexpected.
- ▶ —Tracy Frazier, SHRM-SCP, director, advice and counsel services, HR, Memorial Hermann Health System, Houston

4. Stay Calm

- ▶ **Do not act on your emotions. If you act with heightened emotions, it does not help defuse the situation.**
- ▶ **Show respect in all situations, even when you feel disrespected**
- ▶ **Be fair, listen, ask questions. Never take anything at face value. By asking questions, you can find other reasons why the employee is being difficult.**
- ▶ **Be patient and exercise grace. We don't know what employees are going through in their personal life. Sometimes people being difficult is a cry for help.**