

# The Toughest Supervisor Challenges and How to Overcome Them

## Keys to Taking the Time

- ✓ Realism: "Trust, but verify."
- ✓ Restraint: "Stop, look, and listen."
- ✓ Resolve: "Stick with it."

## Conflict Strategies

### Ignore it

- Requires no time on your part.
- Left alone, most situations will only get worse.

### Tell Employees to Work it Out Themselves

- Requires no time on your part.
- May or may not be a permanent, positive outcome.

### Impose a Resolution

- Requires more time on your part.
- One side (or both) may be unhappy with the outcome.

### Mediate

- Requires the most time on your part.
- Collaborative, so both sides buy into the outcome.

## Mediating Conflict

- Treat all those involved with respect.
- Keep emotions in check.
- Focus on the issues; no personal attacks.
- Allow each side to state his or her case.
- Gather information. Ask questions to separate facts from perceptions.
- Agree on the facts and define the conflict.
- Agree on the goal: solving the business-related problem.
- Decide on a solution and how to implement it.

## Termination

- ✓ Be direct. Clearly state that the employee is being terminated and the reason(s) why.
- ✓ Do not apologize or engage in an argument about whether the termination is necessary.
- ✓ Explain procedures for final paycheck, unused sick or vacation time, and any severance provisions.
- ✓ Do give the employee time to respond and ask questions.
- ✓ With remaining employees, maintain an open door policy, be honest, ask for their input and communicate one-on-one more frequently

## Supervising Friends and Former Coworkers

- Acknowledge that things have changed. Accept that relationships will be different.
- Talk to them. Ask for their support and state your expectations.
- Be extra diligent about fairness.
- Avoid spending too much time with just your friends (lunch, breaks, etc.). That will increase others' perception of favoritism.
- Be discreet.

## Performance Issues Related to Personal Problems

- ✓ Arriving late and/or leaving early; increased absences
- ✓ Excessive time on personal phone calls
- ✓ Increase in mistakes
- ✓ Decrease in performance, such as the level of customer service provided
- ✓ Difficulty completing tasks or meeting deadlines
- ✓ Errors in judgment
- ✓ Interpersonal conflicts

## Getting Employees the Help They Need

### Employee Assistance Program

- Short-term counseling
- Conflict mediation and resolution
- Strategies for reinforcing acceptable behavior and performance
- Improving difficult communications among employees
- Referral to community resources
- Response to critical incidents

## Establish Guidelines and Expectations

- ✓ Provide clear, written expectations of performance for each position as well as a written conduct policy.
- ✓ Include examples of possible disciplinary action including formal warning, suspension, and termination.
- ✓ Document performance and attendance on an ongoing basis.
- ✓ Address performance issues as soon as they occur.
- ✓ Rate performance evaluations fairly.

## Crisis Management

- Take control and responsibility
- Remain optimistic but realistic
- Get the facts before making a decision
- Be solution focused and action-oriented
- Debrief after the crisis
- Make a contingency plan for worst-case scenarios

Stand alone or as part of a Coaching Engagement.