

5 Management Tips

For Employee Performance Discussions



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Many human resources professionals and managers cringe at the thought of having performance discussions with an employee. These conversations are not easy, but there are benefits to having them. Careful planning is critical. The best practices below can help turn discussions about an employee's performance into growth opportunities that maximize workplace productivity.



1. Avoid Small Talk

Acknowledge that this is going to be a difficult conversation about serious performance issues. If you procrastinate, the employee may become well aware of the performance concern and sense the pending discussion, then end up using that knowledge to their advantage by engaging in protected activity or taking a protected leave.

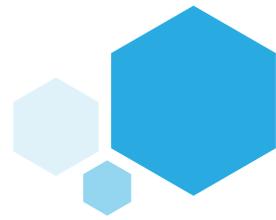
PRO TIP: Have the conversation as soon as possible. Putting these conversations off can give the employee time to make a preemptive move, and it may appear retaliatory when you do finally have the conversation.

2. Provide Concrete Examples

During your conversation, identify where an employee's performance has fallen short by providing specific examples of times when the employee did not meet objectives. The key here is to focus on facts and results, rather than opinions.



PRO TIP: Avoid using "always" and "never." In difficult discussions, using absolutes can be a danger, as it takes only one example to the contrary to make your statement invalid.



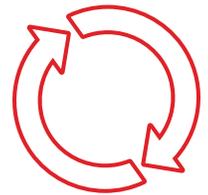
3. Listen to the Employee

Don't underestimate the power of the pause. Once you have laid out the performance issue, pause and give the employee an opportunity to speak and possibly provide clues as to why the situation arose.

PRO TIP: Listen to what they aren't saying, too. Keep in mind that as important as what the employee says is, what the employee does not say is equally important. For example, if the employee does not respond and later claims that they were denied an accommodation, the employer may be able to defend itself from a lawsuit, given the employee's prior silence.

4. Make Your Expectations Clear

Now that you have identified the performance concerns and given the employee the opportunity to speak, it is time to clarify your expectations. Remember, the goal of these discussions is to improve performance, not discipline the employee. Set expectations, develop an achievement plan and schedule a time to discuss and monitor progress.



PRO TIP: Don't forget the follow-up. A big pitfall is to engage in this conversation and then fail to follow up, but this step is critical to ensure you continue to give the employee what they need to make the necessary improvements and succeed.



5. Document, Document, Document

Performance documentation should start before the conversation with the employee. For example, managers need to document the deficient performance at the time it occurs, including any written correspondence or feedback from the employee's coworkers. It is likewise critical that managers document and recap the conversation itself to capture expectations and related plans to remedy the issue(s).

PRO TIP: Keep documentation together. Any documentation about an employee's performance is necessary to properly evaluate them; by maintaining accurate documentation of unsatisfactory performance, it will be significantly easier to correct any deficiencies and impose any discipline you implement as a result of poor performance. Documentation can also help the employer from future liability.

Poor employee performance can cost an employer money, reduce team productivity, and cause a negative or tense work environment to develop, so nipping it in the bud is essential. It's important for managers or human resources professionals to follow the tips above, so they can remain calm and professional throughout this process, turning it into a growth opportunity instead of a painful conversation.

ABOUT THE QTI GROUP

The QTI Group, headquartered in Madison, WI, is a privately owned human resources (HR) organization providing staffing solutions, professional and executive recruiting, HR/Compensation consulting services to businesses and organizations. Our key services help businesses reach their full potential through people. The QTI Group has been an active member of the business community since 1957. With a rich history of growth, innovation, and community engagement, QTI has nine offices in Wisconsin. For more information about how The QTI Group can help you with your human resources needs, call **608.257.1057** or email qti@qtigroup.com.