

Numark Core Leadership Module



Managing poor performance:
Courageous conversations

NUMARK+

a PHOENIX Pharmacy Partnership member

Session Objectives

By the end of this workshop you will be able to:

- recognise the need to deal with poor performance or challenging issues as soon as they occur
- prepare for and conduct a courageous conversation
- explain the difference between conduct and capability
- prepare a case file for more serious issues
- manage issues of conflict within the workplace

Manage poor performance quickly

Performance management makes up a significant part of every manager's job, and hence this means you must deal with poor performance.

However much we might not wish to do it, managing poor performance should not be a 'huge event' it should be quick and relatively pain free, for both the manager and the employee. Action should be taken at the first sign of behaviour that deviates from what is expected.

The longer the behaviour continues, it can become a much bigger problem to deal with because:

- it can give a negative vision of your business to your customers or potential new staff
- it creates friction/tension as others in the team are forced to pick up the slack, resulting in lower morale and employee engagement
- in reality, if you don't address poor performance then it can be seen as condoned by the manager - this can have a knock on effect to other employees also, they may start to think "well xx does that, so I must be ok to do that too"
- if you don't deal with poor performance it can affect your credibility and integrity and most of all it will stress you out and create an environment you don't want to work in

Courageous conversations

Having identified a particular issue with a member of your team you might need to have a courageous conversation. This is all about giving feedback in a clear and concise way. The first thing you need to do is to plan when and where you are going to have the conversation and make sure you have the time to do it with no interruptions.

At the beginning of the meeting you need to explain to the person what the meeting is about. You need to do this as clearly and precisely as possible. You may start with:

"I need to talk with you about..."

You can then use the EEC model as a guide for the rest of the meeting.

The EEC model

E **Example**

E **Effect**

C **Change**

EXAMPLE

Once you've explained what the meeting is about you need to:

Tell the person what they did / state the facts of the matter

Be as specific as possible so that there is no argument about it. For example:

- On 3 days this week you have arrived at work 10 minutes late
- I have had a complaint from a customer regarding ...

EFFECT

Once they know what they have done you need to:

Tell the person the effect of their action

Be as specific as possible for example:

- By being late it means that your other colleagues have had to do xyz
- We have lost a number of our repeat customers following complaints

You could also ask them what they think is the effect of their actions. For example, “What impact do you think being late has had on the rest of the team?”

CHANGE

Once they know what they did and the effect it has had you need to:

Explain the change that needs to happen and agree with them how to make the change.

This may take the form of telling them about the changes you need to see (“I need you to make sure you are here in time to start work at 10am”) or asking them questions to get them to come to the changes required (“What do you need to do differently?”)

This framework can be used in a ***push or pull way***.

Push is where you are telling them (pushing the information at them)

Pull is where you are asking questions (pulling the information from them)

Dealing with distraction techniques

You may have employees who try to apply some distraction techniques to throw you off track.

Behaviour	Possible approach to deal with this
I've been doing it for years like that why should I change?	<i>Explain the reason for the change and if he/she continues to resist making any changes explain the consequences of not making the changes.</i>
XXX is doing the same yet you are not dealing with him/him	<i>Explain that at the moment I am dealing with you and your behaviour so let's just focus on that.</i>
Crying	<i>Acknowledge the distress but keep to the agenda, this is obviously causing you some distress and I appreciate it is difficult to hear what I have to say. I want to work with you to change/improve...so what could you do differently/this is what I need you to do. If necessary you can take a break in the conversation to allow them to compose themselves.</i>
Getting angry	<i>Keep calm yourself and resist any urge to get angry back. Behaviour breeds behaviour. Stick to the facts and if necessary ask the individual to take 5 minutes to calm down and then restart the conversation.</i>
It's not my fault	<i>Listen to what the person has to say and if you think it is a genuine comment say that you will look into it and will meet again with him/her to discuss. If you believe it not to be a genuine issue reiterate the issue and changes required.</i>

Behaviour	Possible approach to deal with this
It's all your fault if only you would...	<i>Listen to what the other person has said and if you are at fault apologise and agree to do whatever is required to move things forward. However what is more likely to be the case is that the individual could do something too so make sure the action plan involves the individuals actions too.</i>

What if things are not improving after speaking to an individual?

This is where you may need to seek HR advice as appropriate. There are a couple of things you need to consider though and that will help ensure that you are dealing with things as you need to.

Consider if the issue conduct or capability related?

Conduct = won't do

Capability = can't do

Examples:

- Sally is asked to tidy up the store room area. She refuses. This is a conduct issue.
- Dawn was supposed to order a particular product for a customer but forgets. This is a capability issue.

Remember the rule to remember and ask:

“Could they do it if their life depended on it?”

A capability issue will require you to look at what further support and training they may require to try and get them to the required standard. A conduct issue will require you to be very clear as to what behaviour you expect from them and the potential consequences if they fail to meet this.

Creating a case file

If an individual fails to improve after you have had a courageous conversation, the issue can become a little more serious and need to be addressed differently.

The most important thing you should do is gather a 'case file' regarding the employee

A case file is essentially building a portfolio of evidence regarding their behaviour or performance alongside any discussions you have had with them and agreed action. It will include things such as what have they done, when, when have you spoken to them, what have you asked them to do, stats, figures, complaints, comments etc.

This evidence will allow you to deal objectively with the situation should it become necessary to take disciplinary action. You may wish to seek HR advice to support you at this point also.

Tips for managing performance

Be consistent in your approach - consistency is one of the hallmarks of effective management of misconduct. Treat all employees equally, keep them informed and ensure a careful and full investigation of all cases of misconduct without prejudice. You will soon lose respect from employees if someone is treated differently to someone else for doing the same thing.

Keep things confidential - it is important that all information is dealt with in a confidential manner and you talk to individuals in private.

Know your own business policies and procedures and follow them!

Never confront someone in anger - do not let performance management become an emotional situation.

Use your probationary period effectively - sometimes we have employees that are not right for the business from the start, but we tell ourselves they are new and will improve. Proactively manage their performance from day one and if they don't improve end their contract during this period with appropriate advice.

Dealing with conflict

What are the signs of conflict within a team?

- **Arguments**
- **Lack of motivation** – fewer people volunteer to take on new tasks
- **Unpleasant behaviour** – people start to make derogatory remarks
- **Failing productivity** – likely to more queries or complaints if people are not cooperating with each other
- **Increased sick leave/absence** – unhappiness may lead to depression or stress
- **Increased level of grievances**

True or False?

Conflict is inevitable

We are a diverse society and individual differences in ideas, interests, values, cultures and perceptions appear to make conflict inevitable. However, managed well, conflict does not have to be a negative or destructive experience.

Conflict can never lead to anything positive

This is something of a myth. Whilst it can be a risk. It can also lead to learning and growth. It can be a stimulus for new ideas and solutions. Effectively managed conflict can produce a win-win situation for all parties.

Conflicts are the results of clashing personalities

Personalities do not clash, behaviours do! Different people can work together for years without having conflict, until their behaviours conflict. Differentiating personality from behaviour makes conflict manageable.

Conflict and anger go together

Conflict with people does not necessarily have to include anger. There are a whole range of emotions that surface during conflict.

Does the leader often cause conflict?

Controversial! But sometimes the manager can encourage conflict if a goal is not made clear to the team or people are working towards different goals. If people are aligned to goals this can help avoid conflict in the first place.

Conflict resolution between team members

Step one

Try to help individuals resolve the conflict with each other. This may involve some coaching first or involve listening to each side independently so they can sort their thoughts. Being able to resolve conflict with each other helps individuals learn how to confront each other and work together for a solution.

Step two

If this doesn't work, there may be a need to intercede. Bring the two people together and be clear on what the goal is and the expected outcome. It can sometimes take more than one meeting to resolve conflict fully.

Tips to manage team conflict

- Address conflict as soon as possible when it arises. Don't sweep it under the carpet in the hopes that it will go away as this just creates resentment among colleagues.
- Focus on what can be done and not what can't be done as this keeps things positive.
- Be clear on what is expected of the team.
- Remain neutral at all times and express feelings in a way that does not blame individuals.
- Work on the outcome and not who is right or wrong or allocating blame.
- Separate facts from emotions.
- Separate history from hearsay.
- Separate the people from the problems.
- Help the two sides respect each other.
- Keep in mind the different communication styles of various team members and how this might be contributing to the conflict at hand.

You will more than likely experience conflict in a team at some point, but handled correctly will ensure that it can be positive and not impact negatively.

Use your powers of observation and do everything you can to minimise potential conflict and react quickly to issues as they arise.