

Dealing with Co-Workers Who Drop the Ball

Sarah is frustrated by a co-worker who is chronically late to work. Chad always seems to do all the heavy lifting while his able-bodied co-worker cheers him on. Tina spends the first hour of almost every shift fixing mistakes made by a co-worker.

Employees who drop the ball seem all too common in today's workplace. Co-workers may be reluctant to deal with these concerns directly, fearing retaliation or conflict if they approach the offending colleague. Many employees believe it is management's job to deal with the problem.

Some employee performance issues *are* best approached by the employee's supervisor. However, many minor concerns can be addressed directly by employees with their co-workers. Here are some helpful tips for how approach co-workers with a concern.

- ✓ Nip things in the bud. Being a *few* minutes late *once* is no big deal. Being an hour late or being chronically late should be dealt with. Tolerating this behaviour implies that it is okay with you that your co-worker is late.
- ✓ Use the T3 formula. Tact – Tone – Timing. Be tactful in how you approach your co-worker. Avoid assumptions, don't judge or be confrontational. Describe how your co-worker's behaviour affects you. Indicate you are trying to solve the problem by talking with him or her directly. Choose a time and place that allows for a private solution-focused conversation.
- ✓ Suggest possible solutions. For example, "If you are running late, give us (or the supervisor) a call or text us to let us know."
- ✓ Your co-worker may become defensive because he or she knows you are naming a legitimate problem and are asking them to do better in the future. Being defensive is a normal response. Don't argue – this will make things worse. Stand your ground and restate your point *once* ("I just wanted you to know that when you are late, it means I'm late getting home to my family.").
- ✓ Don't use the grapevine to deal with the issue. If you must discuss your concerns with someone, it should be your supervisor who should coach you in how to deal with the issue yourself or, if the problem is more serious, should address the issue with the employee.
- ✓ Despite your best efforts, if the problem continues take your concerns to your supervisor or manager. Describe how you've tried to deal with the issue and ask them to intervene.

Next week, tips for managers to achieve positive results when addressing employee performance issues.

Paula J. MacLean the bestselling author of 5 books focused on managing human resources in the workplace. To send Paula a workplace-related question, go to www.silvercreekpress.ca and click "Ask Paula".