



Steps for Confronting Problem Behaviour

Are you facing the daunting task of having to approach someone and give them feedback on something they did wrong? Whether it's an employee, supplier or even a spouse, giving constructive feedback can be an uncomfortable thing for many people.

However, like anything else, being prepared is the key to tackling a tricky or difficult issue. With some pre-planning you can take some of the stress out of the discussion.

How to Pre-Plan for the Meeting

1. Identify the performance issue - What's happened that shouldn't have? What's working well and what could be improved?
2. Gather evidence - Have facts and figures so that you can be specific – what happened, when it happened, etc. Also try to outline the negative consequences if the issue/error were to occur again.
3. Determine specific outcomes desired – What do you want the outcome of the meeting to be?
4. Describe the individual – Try to anticipate how the person may react to the discussion. This will help you plan on how you will react. The key is not to be defensive but open to a discussion.
5. Study alternative courses of action – What could the individual do to improve? Have a plan in the back of your mind to be prepared, but ultimately you want a joint discussion in order to come up with an improvement plan.
6. Inform the person of the meeting – Make the meeting timely. Set it in a place that is private and where you won't be interrupted and provide an agenda.

One of the keys in the pre-planning is to focus on factual evidence. You want the discussion to be around behaviour and not personality. Facts help control this.

Steps on How to Conduct the Actual Meeting

1. Put the employee at ease – Ensure the person that you are meeting to have a candid discussion to positively resolve the issue.
2. State the purpose of the meeting – That you are going to present an issue and have a discussion around it and create an action plan.
3. Present results – Present some positives for the individual or strengths to maintain their self-esteem. This lets them know that you not only see the bad, but the good as well.
4. State the facts of the performance issue – Address the problem area. Present the specific details that you put together in the pre-planning phase. Also present the consequences if the behaviour were to continue.
5. Get the employee's perspective – Ask the person for their perspective. Are the facts correct? Can they provide a possible explanation? It is very important to listen at this point.
6. Discuss alternatives and solutions – Ask the employee for possible solutions. Present pre-prepared ones and get their feedback. It is important that the employee be part of the solution discussion so that they are bought into it.
7. Agree on action steps – Agree on the action steps for improvement. Set plans, dates, times and responsibilities. Put the action plan in writing after the meeting.
8. Set a follow up meeting and reiterate consequences – Emphasize the importance of satisfying customer needs or other impacts to the business. This reinforces that it's not just you being picky, put it impacts the whole business.
9. Express confidence in the person – End the meeting on a positive note and give your vote of confidence that the issue can be resolved. Ultimately you want to fix the problem and support the professional growth of the person, depending on the situation.

Being a good leader means that you need to give feedback and confront performance issues. Doing this requires an investment of time and attention. However, pre-planning and thoroughly thinking through the meeting and the discussion, will pay off in less stress and improved results.