

the SUNDAY TIMES

EMPLOYMENT TIMES

MAKING OPPORTUNITIES KNOCK ON YOUR DOOR

Dealing with difficult

By F. John Reh

All managers will have to deal with difficult employees during their careers. First, there will always be difficult employees. Second, it's your job as the manager to deal with them. If you don't deal with the problem, it will only get worse.

Why Are Difficult Employees Like That?

Difficult employees are that way simply because it is a behaviour that has worked for them in the past. They may not know any other behaviour or they may choose this behaviour when they think it will be most effective. You will be successful in dealing with difficult employees only to the extent that you can make these undesirable behaviours no longer effective for them. In many ways, it's like dealing with children. If every time a child screams, its parents give it candy, what will the child do when it wants candy? It will scream, of course.

The same is true for the employee who "blows up" whenever anyone disagrees with him. When he does that people stop disagreeing with him and he thinks he has won.

How Can A Manager Deal With Difficult Employees

Evaluate It is important when dealing with difficult employees to act quickly. Often you will need to act almost immediately to neutralize a dangerous situation. However, it is always appropriate to think before you act. Clearly if an employee comes to work with a gun, you will need to act more quickly than when someone complains that another employee is always taking credit for his her work. In either case, take the appropriate amount of time to evaluate the situation before you act. You don't want to make it worse.

Recognize that most employees can be "difficult" from time to time. This can be caused by stress on the job or away from it. Some employees are difficult more often than others. It is not always your least-productive employees who are difficult. So take a moment to evaluate each situation for the unique situation it is.

Do your homework

Always act on facts. Don't base your

actions on gossip or rumour. The person spreading the gossip is a difficult employee in their own way. If you have not seen the inappropriate behaviour yourself, look into it. Ask the people reportedly involved. Collect all the facts you can before you act.

Don't use the fact that you haven't seen and hold the inappropriate behaviour as an excuse to delay doing something. It is important to act promptly.

Make sure you aren't part of the problem. It will be much more difficult to remain calm and impartial in confronting the difficult behaviour if you are partly responsible. If that's the case, be sure you acknowledge your role in it, at least to yourself.

Develop a plan

You're a manager. You know the value of planning. This situation is no different. You need to plan the timing of the confrontation. You need to select a quiet, private place where you won't be interrupted. You need to decide whether you need to have others, like an HR representative, present at the meeting. Plan the confrontation and then make it happen.

When you have prepared, it is time to act. You do not need to act impulsively, but you must act quickly. The longer an inappropriate behaviour is allowed to continue, the harder it will be to change it or stop it.

Confront the problem

Don't put it off. It may not be pleasant, but it's an important part of your job. It will not "fix itself". It can only get worse. You have planned this confrontation. Now you need to execute.

Deal with the behaviour, not the person

Your goal is to develop a solution, not to "win". Focus on the inappropriate behaviour; don't attack the person.

Use "I" statements like "I need everybody on the team here on time so we can meet our goals" rather than "you" statements like "you are always late".

Don't assume the inappropriate behaviour is caused by negative intent. It may be from fear, confusion, lack of motivation, personal problems, etc.

Give the other person a chance to develop a solution to the problem. They are more likely to "own" the



solution if they are at least partially responsible for developing it.

Try to draw out the reasons behind the behaviour

As you talk with the difficult employee, actively listen to what they just said, "so what I understand you are saying is", so they know you are actually listening to them.

When you do respond to the difficult employee, remain calm. Summarize back to them what they just said, "so what I understand you are saying is", so they know you are actually listening to them.

If you can find out from the difficult employee what the real source of the inappropriate behavior is, you have a much better chance of finding a solution.

Sometimes these confrontations will go smoothly, or at least rapidly, to a conclusion. Other times it will require several sessions to resolve the problem.

Repeat as necessary

Minor problems, like being late for work, you may be able to resolve with a simple chat in your office with the employee. An office bully, who has used that behaviour successfully since elementary school, may need more than one confrontation before a solution can be reached. Be patient. Don't always expect instant results. Aim for continuous improvement rather than trying to achieve instant success.

Know when you are over your head Sometimes the underlying issue

with a difficult employee will be beyond your capabilities. The employee may have psychological problems that require professional help, for example.

Learn when to keep trying and when to refer the employee to others for more specialized help. Your company may have an EAP or you may need to use resources from the community.

Know when you are at the end

While the goals are always to reach a mutually acceptable solution that resolves the difficult employees inappropriate behaviour and keeps your team at full strength, sometimes that is not possible. When you reach an impasse and the employee is not willing to change his or her behaviour then you need to begin termination procedures in accordance with your company's policies.

Coming to a Solution

The desired result from confronting a difficult employee's inappropriate behaviour is an agreed upon solution. You know that this inappropriate behaviour will continue unless you and the employee agree on a solution. The employee needs to know what is inappropriate about their behaviour and they also need to know what is appropriate behaviour. The need for a manager to communicate clearly is always high. It is especially important in these situations. Make very sure the employee understands the requirements and the consequences.

management.about.com

Motivation and solving office conflicts

THE CONSCIENTIOUS and well-meaning owner of a small business cannot seem to get his work force motivated, despite a good benefits package and pleasant working environment. "I am coming to the conclusion that it doesn't pay to be nice to people," he says. "Maybe if I fired a few of them I'd get better results."

The supervisor of a 100-employee division of a large company says his employees are demoralized; he wants to know ways to increase their motivation.

An office manager is stunned to find out that two of her best employees told another supervisor she did not like them. "They are both top performers, and I can never remember being dissatisfied with them in any way," she says. "What's happening?"

These managers are discovering that managing means managing people. In the course of consulting and column writing I have found the two major problem areas for managers are how to motivate and how to reduce conflict.

Take the owner who is contemplating firing some of his employees. It is not that he is doing something wrong by giving them a handsome benefits package and good working conditions. He is just not doing enough. If you are in his situation you should ask yourself these questions: Do your employees participate in decision making? Do they have promotion opportunities? Do they think you have made promises you have not fulfilled? Do you reward them for initiative and superior performance?

People will work for money, but except in extreme circumstances, they resist working for money alone. They also want recognition, security and opportunity. There is, accordingly, a simple solution for the supervisor of those 100 demoralized employees: Tell them "thank you."

It is human nature to like praise and to be motivated to work for it. I often tell my clients, "Do you want to make \$1,000 in five minutes? Go and give an employee a word of praise. His work rate will increase, his motivational level will rise, and he will pass along his good mood to others."

And you must be aware that all the good work and good feeling you build up can be destroyed in ways you little expect. Take the supervisor who was amazed to find out that her two best employees thought she disliked them.

It can happen like this: The manager is worried about a procurement problem. Frank, the employee, passes the manager in the corridor and greets her with a smile. The manager, engrossed in her problem, looks up briefly and mumbles a reply. Frank's mood drops. He wonders why she is angry with him, what he did, whether he is doing a good job.

The next day, the procurement problem takes a turn for the worse. Frank tries again. This time the manager does not even respond. Frank's worst fears are confirmed. And the manager does not even realize it.

Why does this happen? Employees are constantly gauging their job security and their employer's satisfaction with their performance by the expression they see on the manager's face.

OFFICE CONFLICT at its worst is caused by a deliberate troublemaker. Here is a typical case:

"I work with a manager who constantly criticizes me and the other managers. He likes to show my boss how knowledgeable he is and how he is the only guy who can 'get anything done around here.' The boss laps it up, and the two of them have lengthy conferences discussing all the employee. This guy is bent on climbing to the top over our bodies. What should we do?"

These professional conflict makers create morale problems, credibility problems and eventual productivity problems. They can be cunning and vicious, but they flourish only where the boss is a willing participant.

Professional conflict makers devote so much of their energies to criticizing others' performances that their own tasks are neglected. You can find subtle ways of pointing that out to their superiors.

Worth noting is that professional conflict makers rarely confine their volleys to employees. Their highly critical appraisals usually include disparaging remarks about the boss and his management style. At the appropriate time, you might wish to share with your boss your concerns about the damage being done to the boss' own image in the eyes of the employees. By the way, bring along a witness or two. It will enhance your credibility. Keep your remarks dispassionate, and your boss will see the light. findarticles.com



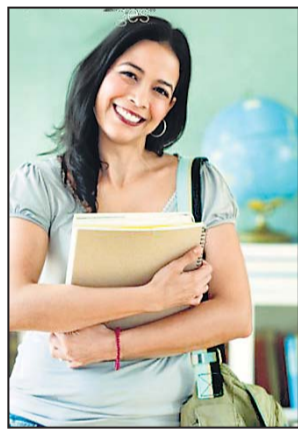
Examine the pros and cons of taking a management path in your career.

Are you wondering whether you want to be a manager, deciding if a management path is right for your career? Maybe the company has suggested a supervisory position for you. Maybe someone in your life is pushing you to "make more out of your life." Or are you trying to decide whether to get your Masters degree in your technical specialty or go for an MBA instead.

Whatever the reason you are considering a management career, this article will help you decide whether or not management is for you.

The upside of being a manager

There are many positives to being a



manager. Managers generally are paid more than others in the company. They appear to have more power. And the power and pay differences tend to give the position more status or prestige.

Pay Certainly the top manager in a company, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is paid more than anyone else in

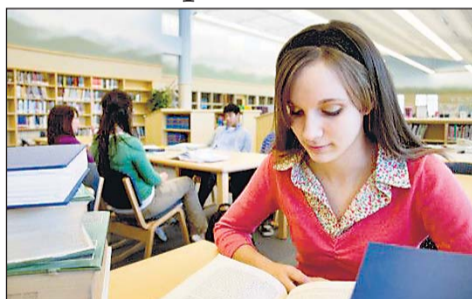
the company. Managers below the CEO are generally paid more than everyone in their group as well, but not always. I managed a group of scientists in which the very top scientists were paid more than I. Smart companies pay their people based on their value to the company, not on their title or position, and in that company, key scientists were more valuable than their manager.

Impressive titles are more than cheap rewards

More and more organizations are doling out impressive-sounding job titles, many including superlatives such as 'chief.' One reason is to stop key executives from leaving, according to Michael Jalbert, president of MRINetwork, a major search and recruitment organization. But titles such as chief marketing officer, chief innovation officer, and chief risk officer also mark the extra responsibilities that CEOs are delegating to senior staff.

Michael Jalbert said: "CEOs and presidents of companies realize that running a successful business requires an effective leadership team. Many top executives have more autonomy in the running of their departments than ever before. This results in a greater sense of ownership and fosters loyalty."

Jalbert considers that 'chief' titles are best used to signal strategically important issues in the organization. For example, banks often have a chief risk officer now to make sure that they are in com-



pliance with laws governing accountability. And many businesses have a chief marketing officer to show the importance of customer acquisition. But organizations expect results in return for these titles.

"If the CMO can't deliver results fast enough - such as increase market share and improve brand awareness - they don't last long," said Jalbert. - hrmguide.com

How to implement strategic

The strategic planning how-to question strikes at the heart of how to make change of any kind of happening in your organization. Start by answering why your organization might want to embark on a strategic planning process. Want to be one of the organizations, in which employees understand the mission and goals? They enjoy a 29 percent greater return than other firms. To me this seems like a good reason to start strategic planning. How about you?

Keys to Strategic Planning Success

These are the keys to effective strategic planning for your business. Full and active executive support, Effective communication, Employee involvement, Thorough organizational planning and competitive analysis, and

Widespread perceived need for the strategic planning.

If you are implementing your strategic planning in an organizational environment that is already employee-oriented, with a high level

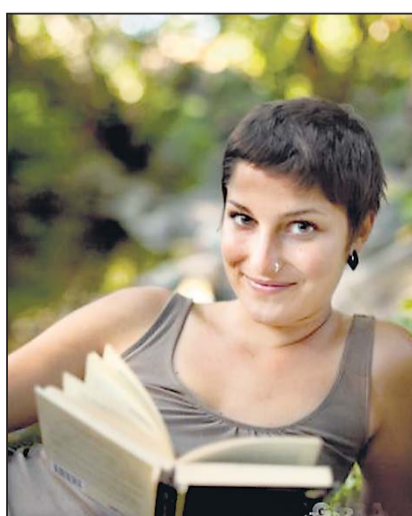
of trust, you start the strategic planning process with a huge plus. An additional plus is an organization that already thinks strategically.

Unfortunately, the implementation of strategic planning most frequently occurs as an organization moves from being traditionally reactionary to strategic. So, often, learning to think strategically is part of the strategic planning learning curve.

Full and Active Executive Support for Successful Strategic Planning

Successful strategic planning requires a large commitment from executives and senior managers, whether the strategic planning is occurring in a department or in a complete organization. Executives must lead, support, follow-up, and live the results of the strategic planning process. Or, the strategic planning process will fail. It's as simple as that.

Without the full commitment of the organization's senior executives, don't even start strategic planning. Participants will feel fooled and mis-



Senior leaders can do the following to create a successful strategic planning process. Establish a clear vision for the

strategic planning process. Paint a picture of where the organization will end up and the anticipated outcomes. Make certain the picture is one of reality and not what people "wish" would occur. Make sure key employees know "why" the organization is changing.

Appoint an executive champion or a leader who "owns" the strategic planning process and makes certain other senior managers, as well as other appropriate people in the organization, are involved.

Executive support in strategic planning is critical to its success. Executives must lead, support, follow-up, and live the results of the strategic planning process. These are additional ways executive leaders can support the strategic planning process. See the first part of this article for more ways that leaders can support the strategic planning process.

Pay attention to the planning occurring. Ask how things are going. Focus on progress and barriers for change management. One of the worst possible scenarios is to have

Customer database ...

Contd from pg 1
Main Bases for Segmentation

- **Demographics** : Personal attributes that are measurable statistics such as age, gender, income, occupation, family status.
- **Social Status/class** : The stratifications such as working class, middle/upper class etc based on socio economic variables. i.e. JICNAR
- **Family Life cycle** : Development stages such as bachelorhood, newly married couple, full-nest, empty-nest and solitary survivor etc.
- **Psychographics** : Lifestyle analysis, AIO analysis etc. This classifies people based on values, attitudes, motivations and so on. Benefits of a Customer Database

- Increased sales and market share through better understanding of customers and markets.
 - Increased customer loyalty and high customer retention due to better relationship and high level of interactions.
 - Better use of resources through precise targeting.
 - Better decision making using quality management information.
 - Competitive advantages based on information collection and proactive approach.
- Barriers to Building Database
- Lack of commitment and motivation from the senior management.
 - Resistance to change among the staff members
 - High cost of hardware, staff training, consultancy etc.