

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

EXAMPLE SITUATION:

"Sam texts: he's unable to come to work. This is the fifth day he's missed this month. Also, you know he missed TAFE last week and is struggling to keep up with his course work. You've raised issues with employee's parents in the past, but in this case, you know it will fall on deaf ears. You get the impression that Sam isn't taking his role seriously, and while you don't want to take on the role of parent, it's time for a difficult conversation about his attitude to work."

TIPS FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR NEW EMPLOYEE:

1. ACT IMMEDIATELY

Good feedback is timely, specific and relevant.

2. EXPLORE THEIR SITUATION

Start the conversation by exploring what you've noticed, and give them a chance to explain their situation. They might have valid reasons or concerns that could influence how the situation could be resolved. You might also be able to point them in the direction of helpful solutions, or discuss giving them extra support (especially for troubled employees with future potential).

3. CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS

Once you've given them a chance to discuss their challenges and explored potential ways of resolving problems or offering more support, reinforce your expectations.

Set out what you expect from them in a clear and simple way. Go through their signed contract and commitment to you again, making sure they understand all aspects. Adapt if changes were agreed to. Remind them that they are part of a bigger picture: their actions influence their team and the business.

4. REACH AGREEMENT

Mutual agreement is important: make sure that the employee is still committed and agrees to what's expected. If any adaptations to the original agreement have been made, make sure both parties understand each other's expectations going forward.

5. FOLLOW-UP

Reinforce your messages and keep on top of your employee's behavioural changes with regular follow-up conversations. Give them positive feedback when deserved, and remember to abide by any support promises you made.

If their behaviour stays the same, you need to have another conversation. You could then set an expected time frame during which changes must happen. Make it clear that a serious discussion at the end of this time period will determine their future with your business.

