Dealing with Problems

Sometimes we are so busy with other things that we don't see (or don't want to see) a problem that is growing. When it explodes, it can catch us broadside. Has that ever happened to you? What do you do?

- Assess the situation
- Meet the difficult behavior head-on
- Stay calm and objective
- Be up-front
- Make it a two-way conversation
- Put yourself in their place
- Be flexible
- Be tolerant

Teams

In a workplace the actions of each individual affect the whole company. This is why it is very important to be a good team member.

To be effective team members there are a number of guidelines that should be followed.

Listen and share information: Contribute your ideas and solutions, don't sit waiting for someone to come up with the idea- they may not

Recognize and respect differences in others: Diversity should be welcome. If everyone thought exactly the same you could just assign one person to do the task and they would do it exactly the same as everyone else.

This doesn't work. The team needs to hear from everyone and the ideas and contributions of everyone should be valued

Ask questions: Unless you understand what's going on you can't contribute effectively. Realize that if you don't understand something there are probably more on the team that don't either.

Utilize constructive feedback: Give and receive suggestions for improvement in a positive environment.

Do your work: If you have been given a task within the team do it. You are responsible for your tasks just as other team members are responsible for theirs.

Have fun: Everything is done better if you want to do it.

Self-Assessment

Questionnaire

This assessment will help you to determine your preferences for involvement in dealing with difficult people, and taking on those challenging conversations.

	YES	NO
Instead of getting into an argument, I put off certain discussions.		
When someone doesn't deliver on a promise, I judge them more quickly than I should.		
Sometimes I bring up difficult subjects in a way that makes people defensive.		
Let's be honest: there are people I deal with who simply cannot be motivated.		
When someone is struggling, I tend to offer advice, even though they may just want to have someone listen to their ideas.		
When discussing problems, I sometimes get sidetracked and miss the actual problem.		
There are some people I simply cannot work with.		
Sometimes it's not them being difficult, it's me.		
I prefer to just jump in and have the conversation, rather than spending a lot of time planning for it.		
I know that I have to have these conversations, but I do not have to like them.		

Scoring

Add up the number of times you answered "yes" and have a look at the explanations below:

- 7-10: You avoid difficult conversations. Try out some of the methods for conflict management that we are going to discuss. Consider getting a mentor who you can work with to be more comfortable in managing conflict.
- 4-6: You are not one to initiate those difficult conversations. You may want to use some of the methods for conflict management that we are going to discuss.
- 1-3: You're managing well and likely successful in dealing with difficult people.
- 0: You ought to be teaching this course! Hopefully you'll find a few helpful gems to enrich your relationship building.

Recognition

Recognition is an important motivator and can go a long way to creating a great work environment. The rewards do not have to be monetary - in fact money is usually fairly low on the list of rewards when employees are surveyed. It can be as simple as an acknowledgment from a senior manager that you are doing a good job.

Company as Team

We work best in teams but only if everyone is working toward a common goal. There are a number of things that can help to ensure that the team is working effectively. These include:

Engaged people
It is important that everyone is there for the good of the team.

Collaboration
Working together and understanding each other's point of view is essential in teams.

Clear goals
Employees want to know what the end goals are and that they can be part of getting there.

Tolerance and acceptance
Teams need to be made up of a diverse group of people to ensure all angles and possibilities are considered. It is important that team members embrace this.

Creative environment
A fun, energetic environment can boost creativity and team effectiveness.

What Can I Do?

As an Employee

A positive work environment is important for the productivity of a company but it is also important to us personally. Our emotional and physical health can be improved by working in a positive work environment. We should wake up each morning wanting to go to work - not trying to think of excuses to not go. We want to be proud of where we work and enjoy telling others about where we work. What can we do on a personal level to help create or maintain a positive work environment? Here are a few ideas:

- Be kind, optimistic and approachable- build a level of mutual trust and respect with colleagues
- Always be on time, ready and willing to work - actively contributing
- Be organized (including your personal work space) and use your time wisely
- Regularly seek constructive feedback from supervisors, coworkers, customers and act on it
- Be a team player- actively communicating with co-workers, fulfilling work requirements, completing assignments, ready to take on tasks, supporting co-workers, giving credit to co-workers
- Understand and promote diversity - be open to learning about co-workers, listen to the point of view of others especially those with different experiences and background
- Seek to improve your skills by additional training

As a Leader

As a leader within a company you have a responsibility to create and maintain a positive work environment. Even if this is not a company wide reality you can seek to provide this type of environment for your Department/ Division or those within your sphere of influence. Here are some things that can help you in that effort:

Respect and trust
- Show employees they are valued
- Allow employees to use their strengths most of the time rather than burden them with things they are not good at
- Allow employees to do what you hired them to do - don't micromanage

Be a coach
- Explain how daily tasks feed into the team and result in accomplishing team goals
- Help employees to reach their goals by pointing out what they are doing well and helping to improve other aspects of their work

Be flexible
- Try to work with the employee's schedule whenever possible. If they need to be doing something else for the morning, and it doesn't affect their deadlines and they have a history of always making deadlines, just go with it.

Team build
- Do non-work things with your team. A morning of go-cart racing, providing a pizza lunch, having a monthly birthday cake for employees are only a few of the team building activities you can do. Try to do this monthly or quarterly. Once a year won't have the same effect.

Show your gratefulness
- When employees are working hard and getting things done, a little gesture of gratitude can help. A gift card can go a long way to make someone feel appreciated and it is not that expensive.

Provide for physical needs
- Personal space, quality of lighting, furniture and even the color of the walls or cubicle can make a difference in the employee's outlook. Giving the employee input into what their work space looks like (even if it's to pick out items from a list of acceptable furnishings, colors, etc.) can go a long way to creating a positive physical work space and happy employee.

Model the behavior you want to see
- Maintain professionalism, be clear about your expectations, keep employee issues private and confidential, don't tolerate infighting and treat all employees the same.