



How To....Say anything to anyone

The challenge

Got an employee who has their personal phone calls so public and loud that your whole team know what their children's fifth birthday plans are? Or on who can read a spreadsheet but doesn't seem to be able to read when a clock is close to 9am? Chances are you will have encountered at least one situation which is vaguely familiar to these in the last few months and unless you are one of the few who is blessed with what I call the 'Jeremy Paxman' gene, chances are you might have skirted around the subject which is causing annoyance in the vain hope that it will either go away, or they will magically be able to translate your looks/ raised eyebrows and harrumphing. It won't. So follow our path to success.

The path to success

- 1) Introduce the conversation so the person knows what to expect and you're both as comfortable as possible. E.g. Meet with the team member in a quiet place where no-one can over hear.
- 2) Empathise so people know that you're having the conversation to be helpful rather than hurtful.
- 3) Describe the behaviour you see rather than your thoughts on it initially: "I've noticed that ... " so that they can picture a specific, recent example of what you are referring to. The more specific you can be, the less defensive they will be.
- 4) State the impact of this behaviour to describe the consequences of it and any actions which arise: "Because of this, the impression is that you are not being organised or committed to the team as we can't rely on you for x" . It is what happened as a result of the person's actions.
- 5) Discuss with them and ask them for their take on the situation (expect to get defensiveness in response): this gives both people the chance to speak and ensures the conversation is not one sided. Many feedback conversations are not conversations at all, they are monologues. One person talks and the other pretends to listen, while deciding what an idiot you are. Good feedback conversations are dialogue during which the recipient can ask questions, share their point of view and explore next steps
- 6) Make a suggestion or request so that they have another way to approach the situation or task in the future: " Can I ask that you ... ". It might seem patently obvious what they should do, but if you are clear about this, then there can be no doubt in future and it also offers an alternative rather than just criticism.
- 7) Get their commitment to act on this suggestion.



- 8) Thank them for having that conversation, “Thank you - I know it was awkward” – to create closure and to express appreciation for their willingness to have a difficult conversation