

# Effective, Collaborative & Respectful Communication in the Workplace

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October 22, 2024

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# Agenda

- Respect and Professionalism in the Workplace
- How We Communicate
- 5 Tips to for Better Communication at Work
- Performance Management

# Respect and Professionalism in the Workplace

# Respect and Professionalism in the Workplace

- Today's workforce is diverse
- Sensitivity to the feelings of others is a business imperative
- Also, a legal imperative
- Conflicts in the workplace occur and can impact productivity and job satisfaction
- Conflicts interfere with retention and recruitment of employees

# The Basics

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect, cognizant of their diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- Avoid words and actions that can be taken as a slight against someone based on their unique background and experiences.

# Respect and Professionalism in the Workplace

## Common Company Objectives

Standards for workplace conduct are respect and professionalism

Objective is to create a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity and are comfortable at work

## Common Company Expectations

Follow all laws and regulations

Follow all company policies and guidelines

Treat fellow employees, customers/ clients/ patients, vendors and third parties with courtesy and resolve any differences in a professional, non-abusive and non-threatening manner

Our workforce is changing. Different languages, different religions, different customs. What issues can come up?

What do we need to know?



# Value Diversity

Working towards equality

Accepting each others' differences

Appreciating diversity

Topics discussed today are important for any manager's development and they go beyond discrimination/harassment!

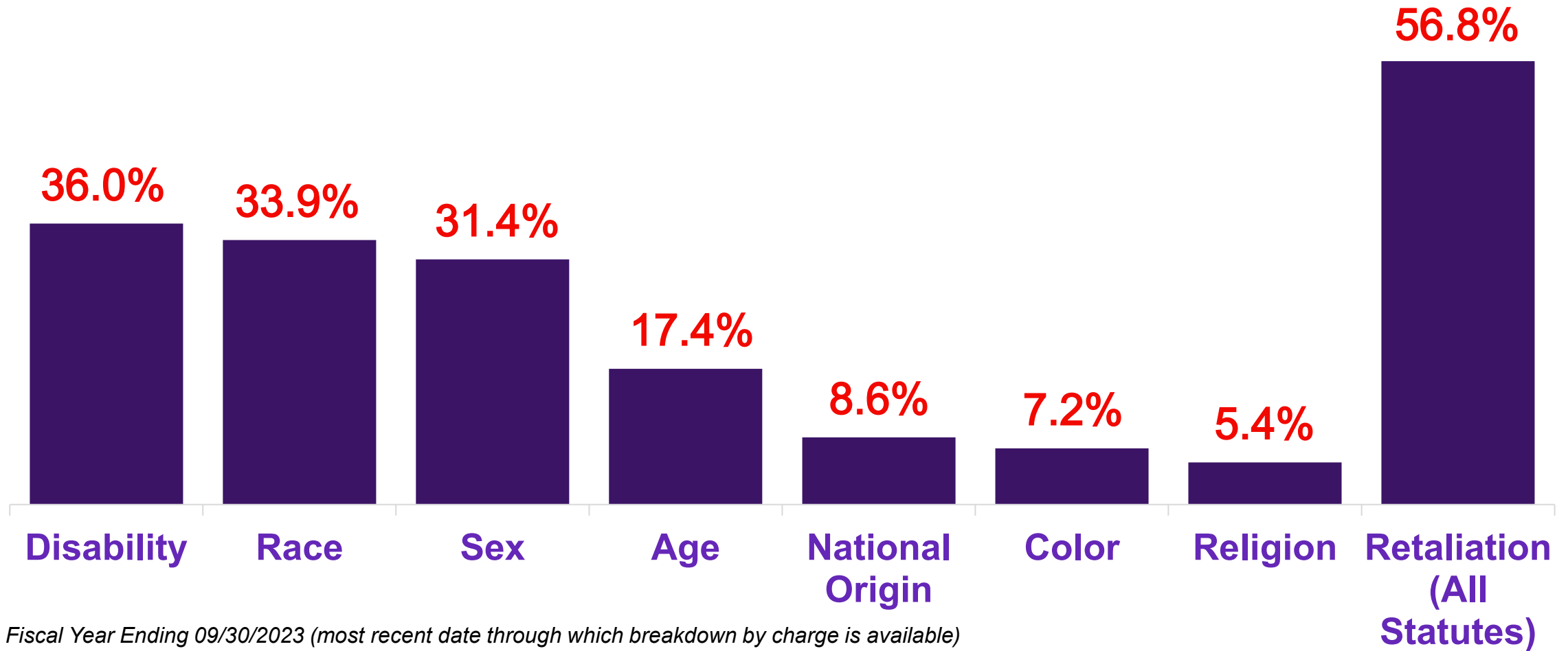


# Protected Characteristics

- Age
- Race
- Color
- National Origin
- Ancestry
- Citizenship
- Religious Creed
- Physical/ Mental Disability
- Medical Condition
- Marital/ Familial Status
- Veteran/ Military Status
- Sex/ Gender/ Pregnancy
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity/
- Gender Expression
- Genetic Information
- Engaging in a Protected Activity

*Additional classifications may be protected by other state/local laws*

# EEOC Percentage of Total Charges Filed FY 2023 (ending 09/30/2023)



*Fiscal Year Ending 09/30/2023 (most recent date through which breakdown by charge is available)*

# LGBTQ Employees' Experiences At Work

**46%**

Experienced unfair treatment at work (fired, not hired, harassed) at some point in their lives

**68%**

Reported negative comments (slurs, jokes about LGBTQ people) at work

**31%**

Reported discrimination/harassment within the past 5 years

**50%**

Are not out to their current supervisor (**26%** are not out to any co-workers)

**57%**

Reported the unfair treatment was motivated by religious beliefs

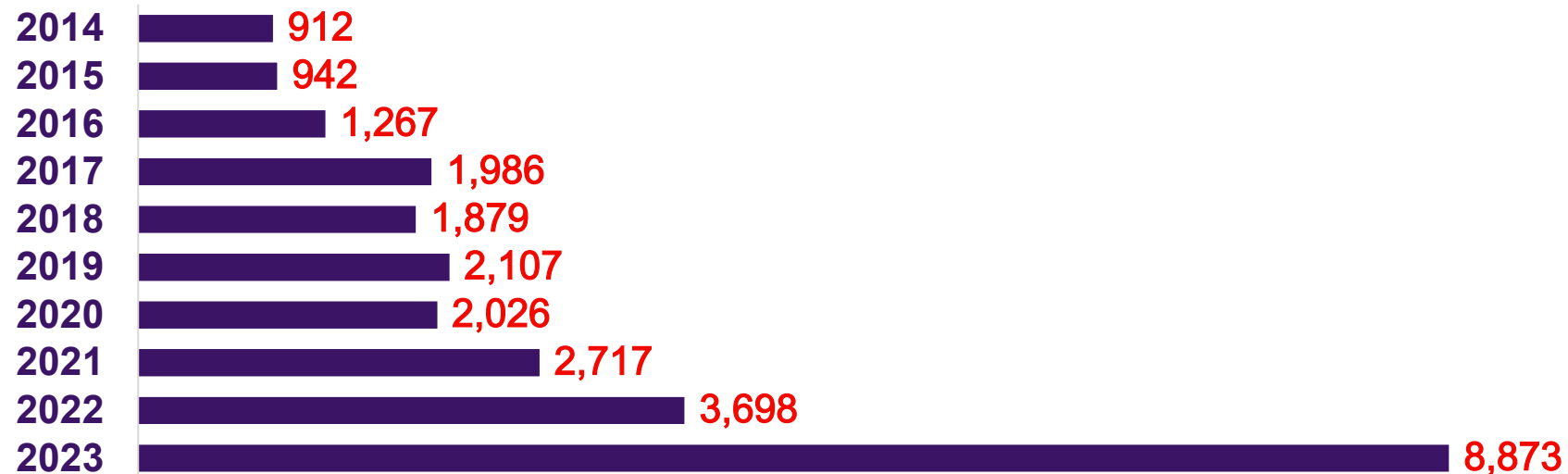
**34%**

Have left a job due to how they were treated based on their sexual orientation/gender identity

# Antisemitism On The Rise

Antisemitic incidents, including assaults, harassment, and vandalism have increased dramatically in the U.S. over the past decade

Source: *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents, Anti-Defamation League (April 16, 2024)*



More than **50%** of Jewish workers report dealing with workplace discrimination in their careers

Source: *Rice University Religion & Public Life Program Report (2022)*

# Maintaining A Respectful *Remote* Workplace

Harassment and discrimination can and does occur in the virtual workplace

- Communications (video, phone, text, chat) are often unmonitored; often no witnesses or bystanders

Employers have obligation to eradicate a hostile work environment (even when it originates outside of physical workplace)

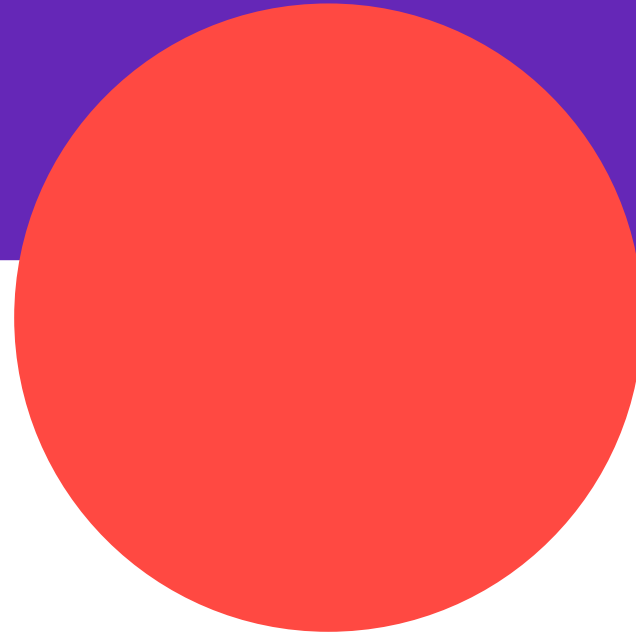
**38%**

Employees who have experienced harassment remotely

**24%**

Employees who believe harassment continues or gets worse through remote work channels

Why?



In a diverse environment, leaders are considerate of people's unique backgrounds and circumstances – leads to positive interactions, better outcomes, and less risk.

# How We Communicate

*Perception is more powerful than fact!*



# Communication is Multi-Dimensional

- Cultures
- Age
- Education
- Profession
- Function
- Tenure
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Values
- Socioeconomic status
- Hobbies/ recreational interest
- Political affiliation
- Geographical origin
- Race
- Gender
- Language
- Family status



# Attributes of a Great Communicator

*What are the attributes of a ...*

## Great Communicator?

- Listens
- Follows through on actions
- Motivates
- Thinks before speaking
- Clearly conveys message
- Incorporates the ideas of others when appropriate

## Not So Great Communicator

- Doesn't listen
- Easily distracted
- Know it all!
- Ego
- Dismisses the ideas of others
- Speaks without regard for others
- Speaks in "circle"

# Roadblocks to Communication

## Sending Solutions

- Advising vs. suggesting vs. giving solutions
- Ordering (commanding)
- Interrogating (excessive or inappropriate questions)

## Judging

- Criticizing (blaming, arguing)
- Name calling (labeling, ridiculing, shaming)
- Interpreting motives (analyzing, diagnosing)
- Praising (buttering up vs. evaluating positively)
- Threatening (warning, admonishing)

## Avoiding Other's Concerns

- Lecturing
- Diverting (distracting, joking)





## Monitor Your Body Language

- What your body says is just as important as what your mouth says
- You communicate non-verbally through your:
  - Eyes
  - Face
  - Hands
  - Arms and legs
  - Posture

# Be Aware of Negative Body Language

Being aware of negative body language can allow you to pick up on unspoken issues or bad feelings

Below are some negative nonverbal signals that you should look out for in yourself and others:

## Defensiveness/ Anger

- Arms folded in front of the body
- Minimal or tense facial expression
- Body turned away from you
- Eyes downcast, maintaining little contact

## Bored or Disinterested

- Sitting slumped, with head downcast
- Gazing at something else, or into space
- Fidgeting, picking at clothes, or fiddling with pens, phones, etc.
- Writing or doodling

# Little Acts of Disrespect

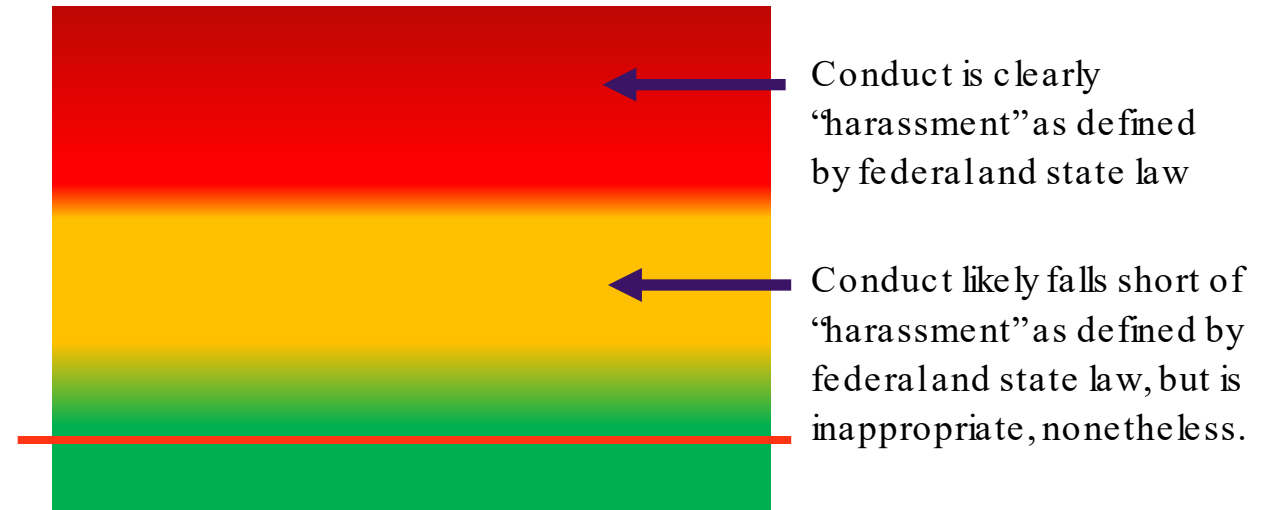
- People not introduced at meetings (or mistakenly introduced as someone else of same race)
- Failure to include some in social engagements with others from work
- Excessive chumminess with some
- Forging personal relationships with some
- Text message use/ taking calls during meeting or more so with some
- Greeting some but not others upon arrival at the office or to a meeting
- Interruptions
- Insider jokes
- Sighing, eye rolls at some

# What's the Standard?

## Illegal vs. Wrong

- Distinction between legal *definition* of harassment and what is appropriate workplace behavior.
- Even if conduct is not *unlawful*, it may be disrespectful or unprofessional or prohibited by Company policy.

Egregiousness of Conduct



# Four Common Sense Rules

**Never:** Presume people think the same way you do

“All people are different people.”

**Never:** Judge a book by its cover (people may not show or tell you about their discomfort)

“Just the tip of the iceberg”

**Always:** Think before you act/ speak

Is it OK to do at work?


**Always:** If you don't know, don't go!

## Before Speaking Think:

- How would this sound to a loved one or someone I care about?
- How would this sound to a total stranger whom I would like to think well of me? (for example: a juror)
- Avoid references in the workplace to matters such as gender, age, race, religion, national origin, disability or claims the employee may have made concerning such matters
- Don't state opinions using potentially offensive stereotypes (e.g., an older worker cannot learn new skills; women have no mechanical ability, etc..)
- Err on the side of caution!



# 5 Tips to Better Communication



1

**Listen to understand,  
not to reply.**

**“There is a difference between truly listening and  
waiting for your turn to talk.”**

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

# Listen to understand, not to reply.

Are you really listening, or just waiting to talk?

- Listening to reply is the standard way that most people communicate.
- Instead of really paying attention to what the other person is saying, you are already thinking about what you want to say in response.
- If you're thinking about what *YOU* want to say instead of hearing what the other person is saying, you aren't really listening and communicating well.
- You may be getting your point across —or not, if the other person listens the same way you do —but you're not having a meaningful interaction with the other person.
- Do you think that the vast majority of people are listening to understand you, or are they waiting for a gap so that they can respond based on something that you've said? Are they listening to respond or to understand?

# Listen to understand, not to reply.

Example: Someone says, “you know, I had a wonderful weekend.”

*Listening to respond* sounds like:

- “We did also, you know what we did? We went to the mountains, we went hiking, we went fishing, we had a BBQ and an overall wonderful time.”
- They just completely overshoot what you said, didn’t acknowledge it, and told you what they did. They were waiting for a gap in the conversation so they could respond about what they had done.

*Listening to understand* sounds something like this:

- “We had a wonderful weekend.” “Really, what made your weekend so wonderful?” “Well we went down to the waterfront and we did the ferris wheel.” “Was that the first time you rode the ferris wheel? What was it like? Were you afraid of the height? Did you like the view from up there? Who did you go with?”

# Listen to understand, not to reply.

*Listening to understand* why an event or experience is important to someone is transformational in your relationships.

Why?

- Because what you're doing is expressing *an interest and concern* for the other person.
- By doing so you are communicating how important the person is to you. When someone isn't important you don't listen to them.
- Listening is a powerful influencing tool in that when someone feels listened to they feel heard, they feel valued, they feel important, and they feel that you were the person that helped make them feel that way.
- **When people feel heard, this result in more positive work relationships and performance.**

## Listen to understand, not to reply.

- Focus on the other person
- Be curious
- Don't interrupt
- Repeat what they said
- Respond to what they said



2

## Master the art of giving and receiving critical feedback.

“We all need people who will give us feedback. That’s how we improve.”

- Bill Gates

# Master the art of giving and receiving critical feedback.

- Change the way you feel about negative feedback
- See the value in negative feedback
- Be willing to ask for feedback
- Responses to feedback that don't work:
  - Caving in and quitting
  - Getting mad at the source of the feedback
  - Ignoring the feedback



# Six Steps to Receiving Critical Feedback.

- 1. Stop your first reaction.** Stay calm. Be aware of facial expressions before responding. Don't let emotion take control. "Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you'll ever regret."
- 2. Remember the benefit of getting feedback.** You should also try to curtail any reaction you're having to the person who is delivering the feedback. It can be challenging to receive criticism from a coworker, a peer, or someone that you don't fully respect, but remember, accurate and constructive feedback comes even from flawed sources.
- 3. Listen for understanding.** Don't interrupt. When the person is finished, repeat back what you hear. For example, I think I hear you saying that you want me to provide more detailed weekly reports, is that right? At that point, avoid analyzing or questioning the person's assessment. Focus on that person's perspective.

# Six Steps to Receiving Critical Feedback.

4. **Say thank you.** Look the person in the eyes and thank them for sharing the feedback. Expressing appreciation does not mean that you agree. It does show that you are acknowledging the effort your colleague took to evaluate you and share his or her thoughts.

5. **Ask questions to deconstruct the feedback.** Don't debate. For example, if a colleague tells you that you got a little heated in a meeting, here are a few ways to deconstruct the feedback:

- Seek specific examples to help you understand the issue: "I was a little frustrated, but can you share when in the meeting you thought I got heated?"
- Acknowledge the feedback that is not in dispute: "You're right that I did cut him off while he was talking, and I later apologized for that."
- Try to understand whether this is an isolated issue (e.g., a mistake you made once): "Have you noticed me getting heated in other meetings?"
- Seek specific solutions to address the feedback: "I'd love to hear your ideas on how I might handle this differently in the future."

6. **Request time to follow up.**

# Importance of Giving Positive Feedback.

According to a study conducted by the Harvard Business Review, employees need 6 pieces of positive feedback for every negative piece of feedback.

This is not just a management function, everyone can make it a priority to recognize the strengths of your colleagues.

**Helps people improve, and creates a positive environment in the workplace.**

People are quick to notice what's wrong. But it is equally important to pay attention to and provide input on what is working

People benefit significantly from positive feedback and their strengths and contributions.

- Notice positive feedback.
- Separate the positive and negative feedback.
- Compliments are also an opportunity for learning. You can learn your strengths, focus on them, and continue to build them.
- If you notice something great, say it.



**Have the courage to  
engage in difficult  
conversations.**

# Have the courage to engage in difficult conversations.

- When we avoid difficult conversations we trade short term discomfort for long term dysfunction
- Difficult conversations take skill, strategy, and a sincere desire to do good. They call for courage. Your ability to speak up about issues that weigh you down is crucial to your success at work and in life.
- Speak candidly and listen openly
- Check your ego and set your intention

# Have the courage to engage in difficult conversations.

## Tips for having difficult conversations:

1. Be prepared. Think about what you want to say and how you want to use your energy.
2. Bring evidence.
  - Does your boss think you messed up the department budget? Bring evidence from the budget system to show him where you stand as you walk through it instead of just saying “I did everything right!”
  - Is your employee making the same design mistake over and over? Bring copies of the drafts and notes from your previous meetings.
3. Stay calm.



4

## Pay attention to body language.

**“When the eyes say one thing, and the tongue another, a practiced man relies on the language of the first.”**

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Pay attention to body language.

- Majority of communication is nonverbal (between 60-90% depending on study)
- Your energy introduces you before you even speak
- Show people you are listening to them. Put away distractions.
- Mindful of facial expressions, gestures, posture





5

## Assume positive intent.

**“Whatever anybody says or does, assume positive intent. You will be amazed at how your whole approach to a person or problem becomes very different.”**

- Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo

## Assume positive intent.

- If you assume positive intent, you'll be able to listen generously and speak straight far more effectively. When you assume negative intent, you're angry or annoyed.
- To be proficient at assuming positive intent, you must first recognize your automatic tendency to see negative intentions when something impacts you negatively, and then you must deliberately practice looking for positive intent.
- When you look for positive intent, you give people the benefit of the doubt and you give yourself the chance to learn the details of the situation. You may be surprised how often you learn something that you hadn't expected. Once you learn the details, you may get to see that the team member was indeed committed, competent, and on top of the situation.

# Performance Management

# Performance Management

The importance of effective performance management communication:

- Employees want to know how they are doing in their job.
- Regular communication provides employees with an opportunity to ask questions, make improvements, and clear up misunderstandings.
- To correct an employee's unsatisfactory work performance, conduct, or violation of Company policies.
- To provide positive reinforcement and plan for improvement.
- To create a record that will protect the Company (and you) in court if an employee sues.
- Effective performance management, discipline, and terminations help to avoid unfairness or the perception of unfairness.

# Legal Implications of Performance Management

- Often, employees bring claims not because an employer actually discriminated or retaliated, but because an employee felt unfairly treated.
- Written reviews and documented coaching are often used in litigation to show performance deficiencies
- Inaccurate reviews or vague reviews can lead to litigation disputes later
- Who is your primary audience?
- What is your ultimate goal?
- Think about litigation
- What message will your review send?

# Evaluations and Performance Management

- Do it regularly.
- Avoid surprises.
- Don't forget about positive motivation.

## Word Choice Matters

“You’re the best!” is not as useful as a comment like “Outstanding job on that report – you included all the needed information in a clear and concise manner and provided it to me timely. I had zero revisions.”

# Compare:

- Sally is always late
- Tom fails to pay attention to his work
- Jane is fantastic and the best employee ever
- Tony went nuts and stormed out!
- Sally was late on May 1, May 3, May 8, May 17, May 25
- Tom dispatched EMS to the wrong address on March 2, 2018
- Jane did an outstanding job at the May 1 public outreach presentation. Multiple attendees followed up with the agency afterwards and praised her performance.
- On May 1, Tony threw his phone on the floor, screamed at Elizabeth for eating his jelly beans, and left the office without his supervisor's permission for half an hour between 10:15 and 10:45 am. Additional eye witnesses include: Joe, Sarah and Frank.



## What do you think?

Manager John comes to HR and says that he would like to terminate employee Jenny. Jenny is not performing to minimum job requirements. This is causing excess work for the remainder of the team and lowering morale. Mgr. John has been aware of this issue for the past 2-3 months but has only had a couple of informal (non-documented) conversations.

What do you recommend the Company do in this instance?

## What do you think?

Manager John allowed the conduct to go on for months without addressing it, then simply decide to address it now by terminating the employee. Creates the opportunity for miscommunication and misunderstanding between himself and Jenny.

Best practice is for Manager John to document that he communicated with Jenny and gave her an opportunity to improve before making any major employment decision. Manager John says he spoke with Jenny, but chances are she has a different take on those discussions and what was communicated to her.

If you fail to document it, consider it never happened.

Meet with the employee and set the tone and agenda without being dictatorial or hostile.

Manager John should understand that he was poor at addressing Jenny's previous conduct that should have been flagged and discussed for improvement. His manager/supervisor should identify how similar issues should be handled moving forward.

# The ABC's Of Discipline

Always  
Be  
Consistent,  
Document  
Everything



# Why Document Instead of Relying on Memory?

- **Accuracy**
  - Memories fade and change over time
  - Avoid he-said-she-said situation
- **Completeness**
  - You cannot remember everything (or you may move into a different job)
  - Gives the employer a complete record of all decisions
- **Consistency**
  - Allows employer to show that employees are treated equally

# Best Practices

## Evaluate the Performance, NOT the Person.

- State facts, not opinions.
- Cite specific examples to support conclusions.
- Avoid assumptions and subjective conclusions.
- Do not speculate.
- Do not psychoanalyze.
- Use language that makes sense to the employee.
- Provide suggestions and target milestones.

# Keys to Effective Performance Management Communication

- **Concern**
- **Expectations**
- **Consequences**

# Keys to Effective Performance Management Communication

- **Concern**

- What is your concern about the individual's performance, and how is it impacting the operations, goals, objectives ?
- Essentially this is the part where you let the know what they are doing incorrectly, and how their behavior or performance has an impact

# Keys to Effective Performance Management Communication

- **Expectations**

- What are your expectations of the employee?
  - It's great to tell our employees what we don't want. Sometimes that's the easy part.
  - It's just as important to let them know what we do expect from their behavior or performance.
  - Spell it out for them!



# Keys to Effective Performance Management Communication

- **Consequences**

- What are the consequences for the employee if they don't correct the behavior?
- If you don't perform well are there consequences for that? Of course there are.
- The same is true for our employees so let's not leave them guessing.
- Tell them what to expect if their behavior or performance doesn't improve.

## Avoid Common Mistakes

Do not rate employees higher than warranted.

- Do not inflate – be honest
- Do not be “soft” out of fear of demoralizing.

Support conclusions with specific, objective facts and examples.

Do not make it personal; do not say, without factual support, that someone is not motivated, not a team player, or shows “attitude”.

## Avoid Common Mistakes

Make feedback timely.

Clearly state future expectations.

Do not contradict your written review in your discussion with the employee.

No surprises! Do not include issues in the evaluation that were never addressed with the employee prior to the evaluation.

Questions?

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Thank you.

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