



Sometimes managers think it's too late to tackle a team member's behaviour because "that's just the way they are" or we haven't said anything up until now.

It's never too late. People can change, though it may feel difficult for them and may take some time and support. Not addressing the issue will do them a disservice; you and others will be secretly judging and feeling critical of their shortcomings without giving them an opportunity to do something about it.

**How and when to address it** – There may be a natural way to address the inappropriate behaviour, for example at the beginning of a new year or quarter, or when there is a refocus on team or business goals. Having the conversation with the team member will require honesty and transparency. Share that you've been reflecting on recent business performance and that you've noticed something they can do to support you and the organisation.

Be ready to give the person feedback on what you are seeing currently. Be mindful not to label the behaviour you want to raise to their awareness; simply describe the behaviour you see (e.g. 'you rarely smile' versus 'you look unfriendly and miserable'). Through open questioning, help them to think through the impact of that behaviour and to recognise how it hinders expectations of them in their role, or the achievement of team/ business goals.

Check understanding. Has the person really understood what 'good looks like' in the future and the difference it will make if they achieve it? Be specific about the kind of scenarios in which the behaviour needs to change. Involve the person in the solution:

- What do they see as the steps towards consistently changing?
- What support, training or resources could help them achieve this?
- Agree together how you will measure progress.

**Your part to play** - You've been courageous and addressed the matter, but you're not quite done. Regular reinforcement will be critical to success. Notice when the person is successfully shifting their behaviour and help them recognise the positive consequences of this. Nudge them when they slip back into old habits and, as necessary, refresh the conversation around what steps they need to take to consistently achieve the change. Ensure they take ownership; you shouldn't have to police the matter or provide all the answers.

**It feels too hard ...** When it feels like too much time or effort to deal with the behaviour, remind yourself of the consequences of doing nothing. Perhaps ask yourself these questions:

- What is not being achieved because of the current behaviour?
- What more could be achieved if it the behaviour shifted?
- What's the impact on the rest of the team, of this person not being held accountable for their behaviour?
- What message does it send to new starters about what's okay/ not okay around here?
- How do your team view your leadership capability?



## Top tips

Be empathetic but clear – don't add 'flowers and hedges' when describing the situation. You may do this to ease your discomfort about the message you are needing to share but it will lead to a lack of clarity and buy in.

Involve the person in the solution – so they don't feel something is being 'done unto them' and so that they have to engage in the conversation and upcoming action.

Be consistent in your follow up – progress needs to be acknowledged and celebrated, and any continuation of the inappropriate behaviour must be dealt with.