



Transforming Unacceptable Behavior Top '7' Tips

Ann Golden Eglé, MCC
September 2011

You have that one employee who drives everyone crazy. He's self absorbed, borderline obnoxious, yet a top producer. In this economy, you can't afford to let him go. If only you could turn him into a role model to inspire your team instead of annoy them.

On the opposite end of the scale you have that brilliant member of your executive team whom you practically have to bribe to participate in meetings. You know she has so much to offer yet she just sits there looking bored. What message does that send to your team?

Neither behavior is acceptable, yet you can't bear the thought of entering into the lengthy and costly process to replace them. When you fire an employee it costs 1.5% of their salary to replace them; more, if there's a law suit. Ugh!

Instead, let's look at ways to transform this behavior into a win/win. Your employee will benefit from seeing the error of his ways. Your company's morale and productivity will improve. If he irritates you, the irritation likely goes through all layers of your organization.

Here are my **Top '7' Tips** on how to transform unacceptable behavior.

- 1) **Stop ignoring it.** Ignoring undesirable behavior diminishes the respect your people have for you. They expect a positive work environment. Instead, the messages you send are: a) I don't have the courage or skills to confront this individual; b) It's ok to behave poorly; and c) I don't really care as long as we are making money.
- 2) **Question what's behind this behavior.** Is this new behavior for this employee? Have there been recent layoffs or other contributing factors to this negative behavior? What don't you know? Sometimes employees simply need fifteen compassionate minutes with you listening intently to their situation in order for them to 'want' to change their behavior.
- 3) **Question whether if they see it.** Climbing the ladder, we've all been surprised at feedback provided by trusted mentors. In our passion to succeed, we may have ignored the repercussions of our words, tone, actions, focus or body language. Respectfully ask if this person understands that what they are doing is unacceptable, even offensive.
- 4) **Ask how they think their behavior affects others.** This question is a tough question to hear, especially for those who really care about their team. Being arrogant, for example, is a behavior intended to cover deep insecurity. Learning that their constant boasting makes others feel less than or insecure will help them make the needed change.
- 5) **Provide specific examples on how to change.** Complaints I often hear about bosses providing feedback is that it is too vague. Subordinates leave their boss's office not knowing how to change. Provide specific instances of their unacceptable behavior along with suggestions for how to improve. Ask if they understand.

- 6) **Establish accountability.** How will you know that this transformation change has occurred? You've exposed the behavior and provided clearly-articulated methods for improvement. Now, end your meeting with a clear plan for how this employee will be accountable to you. How will they demonstrate to you that they've transformed?
- 7) **Hire an executive coach.** Sometimes intolerable behavior is the outgrowth of years of poor behavior slipping through the cracks. Or, it can result from issues that have nothing to do with work. Your employee may be plagued with health or relationship challenges; entering a new phase of life that is tough to take; knowing that they need a change but are not sure how or what to change. These issues are beyond what most leaders want to take on. If your employee is valued, it may be time to bring in outside expertise.

It's never easy to confront someone whose behavior has grown to be unacceptable to you. However, having the discussion sooner rather than later will bring about the positive changes you desire. Waiting too long can do more damage and be costly to your entire organization.

If you've been putting off that conversation, I challenge you to pick one or all of these tips to master. Be compassionate yet strong. Have that dreaded, powerful conversation today.

Read all of Ann's Writing and Wisdom at: <http://gvasuccess.com/writing-and-wisdom.htm>

*Executive & Leadership Coach Ann Golden Eglé, MCC, has steered highly successful individuals to greater levels of success since 1998. Ann is President of Golden Visions & Associates, LLC, serves on the Board of the City Club of Central Oregon and can be reached at 541-385-8887 or www.GVAsuccess.com. *Subscribe* to Ann's internationally acclaimed 'Success Thoughts' e-zine on her website.*



Golden Visions & Associates, LLC
Coaching for Success
PO Box 1696, Bend, Oregon 97709
541.385.8887 1.888.831.8883
info@GVAsuccess.com
GVAsuccess.com