

## Quick Guide: Confronting and Dealing with Issues

When managing or coaching others it can perhaps be an anxious time if you have to confront them – either with a performance or a behaviour issue. But either you deal with it, or it will deal with you. So here are the **top ten tips** to help you:

- 1. Do your homework.** Make sure you are well prepared and know why you are confronting this issue, plus what outcomes are possible in the circumstances.
- 2. Take a stand and stick to it.** State your concern specifically and be laser clear. Express your concern in no more than 15 words: the more detail you give, the less chance they will understand your concern.
- 3. Be sure to separate the issue or concern from the person** – don't personalise your comments: "My intention is to discuss and resolve the issue, not to attack you personally". Invite them to deal with the issue. Ask for their response: "How do you see this?".
- 4. Assess whether they are taking it on board.** Listen to their response or reaction, watch their eyes and observe their body language. If necessary ask them what their intention is, so that you can work out if they are accepting or rejecting your invitation to discuss and resolve the issue.
- 5. If they accept the issue** you can then move on to discussing alternative solutions. Be sure to encourage them to make suggestions to resolve the issue instead of forcing them to accept your own solution(s).
- 6. If they reject or deny the issue,** perhaps through blaming, avoiding or discounting it, stay on target and deal with the rejection or denial first. Dealing with and discussing their emotions before attempting to discuss possible solutions means you are less likely to prolong their rejection.
- 7. Ask them** "What specifically do you disagree with?". If necessary, park the issue with an agreement to deal with it at a specific date or time.
- 8. If they still reject or deny the issue,** reiterate that your intention isn't personal but to invite them to deal with the issue. Mirror back "Let me see if I've got this right. You're telling me that you take no responsibility for ... (outcome/issue/situation)?".
- 9. If there is full or partial acceptance,** then discuss possible solutions to get their buy-in, and talk about the impact and consequences of each. If there is no acceptance then quickly end the meeting.
- 10. Nail down the action step by step.** Agree on a plan of who is to do what by when, and the follow-up details. Always remember to agree future review and discussion dates.

**Compiled by Des Whitehorn**