

## Quick Guide: Managing Poor Performance

Mention "discipline" and many supervisors go cold. "How can I tell them off when they're my friend, too?" or "What if I get it wrong?". Discipline isn't 'telling off' or issuing formal warnings. It's about identifying a poor standard of performance, finding out why it's happening and then getting the person back to where you want them to be. It's a management process. So here are the **top ten tips** to help you manage poor performance:

- 1. Do your homework!** Make sure you have recorded the (objective and evidenced) facts: if you only "think" or "have heard" that something is or isn't happening, it will end up in a defensive stalemate.
- 2.** Although it may be a difficult task to do in person, **don't use blanket discipline** (telling the whole team to do/not to do something). The whole team very likely knows who the message is aimed at! And if the individual concerned doesn't already know, sending a round robin won't have any impact.
- 3. Make sure your inner dialogue is about specific observation** rather than a personal attack. For example, "I've noticed a lot of mistakes in your work this week" rather than "You're getting careless with your work recently".
- 4. Get a response from them:** "Have you noticed this?" or "Why is this happening?". Their response will help you decide how to question to get more information, or get buy in to change.
- 5. Work out** with your team member **if it's a capability** (inability to perform), **disciplinary** (refusal to perform) **or external** (stress/pressures in private life) **issue**.
- 6. Remind them of the performance 'expectation'** and ask for their suggestions to bring about the change.
- 7. Remember to include a time limit** for review of the situation plus one for by when their performance will be back on track.
- 8. Do all of the above in private.** While it's tempting to 'have witnesses', or hope someone else will back you up, you will lose any trust and credibility you have: from the team member **and** the 'witnesses'.
- 9. Record the discussion**, actions agreed and deadlines, and remember to monitor - with support - the deadlines and changes made.
- 10. Praise your team member** for their positive achievements and changes made. (You **can** do this bit in public!)

**Compiled by Des Whitehorn**