

Dealing with Challenging Employees

Craig W. Douglas, CCI National Conference 2024

A. Introduction

Why are there so many “challenging” people in the workplace?

Why do we put up with challenging people on our teams? Eight thoughts:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

B. Case Study – “Susie”

1. Mistakes made

2. What was done well

C. Employment Relationships

1. Before Hiring
 - Need
 - Kind of Person
 - Job description

2. Hiring Process
 - Right Fit
 - Advertising / Application Process / References / Criminal record check / Interview
 - Offer Letter / Contract
 - Terms of Employment (wages, hours, benefits, accountability, contingencies)
 - Probationary Period
 - Signed by both parties

3. After Hiring
 - Ongoing reviews
 - Accountability and support structure
 - Ongoing training
 - Exit strategy
4. What about volunteers?

D. First Steps When Things Start to Go Sideways

1. Work through the systems you already have in place
 - Reviews
 - Probationary periods
 - Regular “check-ins”
 - Job description
 - Mentoring
2. Deal with problems quickly
3. Have a face to face meeting
4. Determine next steps
5. Put together an action plan

E. Terminating Employment

1. Dangers of *NOT* terminating an employee who needs to go
2. Benefits of terminating an employee who needs to go
3. DOs of Terminations
 - Have a recent review on hand
 - Get everything in order ahead of time
 - Have a face to face meeting
 - Have a letter that covers the salient points
 - Have a witness
 - Keep it private

- Be firm but compassionate, understanding how this person will probably feel.
- Keep it short and to the point
- Have a checklist in hand
- Ensure your actions are legal
- Be empathetic
- Provide a reference if at all possible
- Have someone escort the employee out
- Deal with security measures immediately
- Let the rest of your team know – staff and board
- Do a self-assessment on hiring, supporting, development processes

4. DON'Ts of Terminations

- Don't act without warning
- Don't make excuses or be apologetic
- Don't give lots of details as to why they are being let go
- Don't allow them to leave with company property
- Don't allow person back among coworkers or work area (if possible)
- Don't allow continued access to information systems
- Don't be unkind or humiliate the employee
- Don't put it off! Have courage.

5. Legal Aspects of Terminating Employment

- a. Dismissal "Without Cause" (*with* working notice or payment in lieu)
 - They must be given adequate notice or be paid for that time
- b. Dismissal "For Cause" (*without* working notice or payment in lieu)
 - Can include reasons such as:
 - Misappropriation of employer property
 - Criminal activities
 - Harassment
 - Conflict of interest
 - Dishonesty
 - Beware of "Constructive Dismissal"
 - You could be in danger of a "Wrongful Dismissal" lawsuit

F. What about Difficult Co-Workers?
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1. Start by examining *yourself*.
2. Explore with a trusted friend what you are experiencing.
3. Be convinced of their value.
4. Avoid reading motivations into actions.
5. Choose empathy and compassion.
6. Approach the Individual
 - Choose a time and place for a private discussion
 - Use "I" language – don't accuse

- Help them understand the impact they are having on you
- Listen to them – try to understand their perspective; put off judging; look for their hidden need
- Avoid being defensive or angry
- Don't argue or try to convince
- Take responsibility for anything you have done to contribute to the problem
- Set limits and boundaries
- Walk away if things go downhill – always give yourself that out
- Practice “deflection” – being agreeable without agreeing

7. Debrief with someone.
8. Determine whether a follow-up discussion is needed.
9. Consider bringing a supervisor into the mix (theirs and/or yours).
10. Consider leaving your position if things cannot be resolved.
11. Never give up on people, relationships, or yourself!

G. SO WHAT? Three Things I Want to Remember or Do Differently

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

H. Summary

- We are all difficult or challenging at times. Be careful not to read motivations into what others do or say.
- We usually have reasons *not* to confront people who aren't meeting our expectations, but we still need to have the courage to do it.
- Make sure you have the right systems in place and use them. They are your lifeline.
- Make sure your terminations are done legally and documented properly.
- If you have any employees living onsite, know the Tenancy Act!
- Be compassionate and firm. Care about the individual and your organization. Try to find win-wins, but don't let one individual ruin things for everyone else.
- Remember your true ministry is the **people** you are with at any given time. Compassionately working with people is hard, but it is exactly what God has called us to do and what He enables us to do with His love.

***People have immense intrinsic value, so always show grace.
But also, for the sake of your organization, make sure you act when needed.
Don't ignore the problems and hope they will go away. Be courageous!***

*** If you have questions about this workshop or anything related to camp or ministry, please contact me any time:

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