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“THE HIGH COST OF NOT ADDRESSING EMPLOYEE ISSUES”

In a recent column we looked at some of the reasons that managers tend to avoid dealing with employee issues by sweeping them under the rug. That column received a record number of email responses from readers, validating that this is indeed an important issue that needs addressing in today's workplace.

The non-responsive manager needs to realize the negative impact that his or her inability or unwillingness to address behavioral issues is having in their working environment, and on the bottom line. There are several critical reasons why the manager who is not addressing "the issue" needs to do so, as soon as possible. With each day that passes:

- 1) The sub-par employee will assume you are condoning his or her behavior with your silence. People who are poor performers or who behave badly may be clueless about themselves. Or, they may be aware of themselves and simply choose to continue to get away with their behavior until someone decides to deal with it.
- 2) Co-workers feel resentful and frustrated when their manager is not dealing with the situation and allowing the individual to get away with unacceptable performance or behavior. This will be even worse if the offending person is given pay increases. It will send the message that "We not only tolerate, but reward undesirable or under-performing behavior here." Ultimately, this will have a negative impact on the morale and productivity of the rest of the group, and will likely result in the high-producing employees leaving.
- 3) While not a line item in the annual budget, you can be sure that this situation is negatively affecting your company's bottom line. The business is losing money through the problem employee's job ineffectiveness, or by the disruptions, loss of productivity and "work-arounds" that they are causing with their co-workers.

Financial loss may additionally include customers who are lost as a result of the offending employee's errors, attitude, lack of attentiveness, or other negative behaviors. The bottom line will also be impacted by unnecessary turnover. When the more desirable employees finally decide not to tolerate the inequity or lack of adherence to performance standards - and leave - it will cost the company plenty. Current research indicates that depending on the position, it will cost at least one to two times that valuable employee's salary to replace them.

The manager who is tolerating the employee issue will need to come to terms and address it sooner or later. It is rare that these kinds of situations resolve themselves.

In the best case scenario, the manager will see the light and realize that action must be taken. It is said that people will tend to finally initiate change when the pain of not taking action becomes greater than the fear or discomfort of taking action.

Another way that the inertia can be overcome is through the feedback of other staff or the manager's manager. 360-degree feedback programs, for instance, where a manager receives multi-rater input and feedback, can be helpful. They can point out his or her style and behavioral "themes," which will frequently bring these management deficiencies to the surface so that they can be dealt with.