

Improving The Performance of Problem Employees



HR Insider readers have spoken; performance goals are the way to improve employee performance.

Poorly performing and poorly behaving employees hamper the productivity of the workplace. Even if their impact seems minor, over time the impact has a cumulative impact on the morale and performance of everyone. Sometimes such employees are unaware of their behaviours and their impact on the workplace. Once made aware, some are willing and able to adjust their behaviours. Others are willing to make adjustments, but do not know how. These employees require feedback and assistance. Others, for a variety of reasons, are a bigger challenge.

Some employees respond well to feedback and do not require formal disciplinary steps. Some employees need to be disciplined formally. Most organizations employ a form of progressive discipline to help address workplace performance challenges.

We recently asked HR Insider readers about their experience addressing poor employee performance in the workplace. The results demonstrated a fairly consistent view of what disciplinary steps HR Insider readers find work best. The specific question we asked was:

What form of employee discipline do you find improves employee performance?

- 1) Meetings and written warnings
- 2) Demotion and/or removal of responsibilities
- 3) Fines in the form of suspension from work without pay
- 4) Probationary period
- 5) Specific performance goals and timelines



The goal of most supervisors is to avoid problems before they become problems. The majority of HR Insider readers, 79% indicated that offering employees specific

performance goals, often a first step before an official disciplinary step was the most effective way of improving performance. Sometimes formal disciplinary actions are useful and 14% of readers indicated that a formal meeting and a warning (often a second step in a disciplinary process) and 7% indicated that placing an employee on probation (often a step that comes after a formal warning) is required to improve performance.

Simple Changes

Sometimes the corrections required by an employee are minor and include better awareness of their actions, their role and the expectations in the workplace. This awareness can be accomplished in a conversation that includes clearly identifying what needs to be improved. This is a great step to take with employees on a regular basis, even before any performance problems arise.

Better Onboarding and Early Input

The best way to improve performance is to begin with clear expectations that are communicated in a solid onboarding process and reinforced on a regular basis. Connecting employees to mentors can be a great way to support your employees.

Most employees want to perform well but sometimes they do not realize their weaknesses or know how to change. Providing them with the tools that includes regular feedback and models for appropriate performance can benefit the entire organization.