

Is Your Co-worker Lazy?



Question:

How do I get my co-worker to do his share of the work? I don't think he is incompetent. I think he is lazy! He spends most of the time yacking, he slips out of the office all of the time, and he spends a lot of time on his computer. How do you make someone take on his share of the work?

Answer:

Our unique perspective filters how we process information in every situation. It is inescapable. Consider these questions before you proceed...

- Could you and your co-worker see his role differently? Are there components of his work that are valued by your employer that you are not seeing?
- Could he lack some abilities to do the work he is not doing?
- Could he be struggling with a personal situation you are not aware of?

These are not meant as excuses. By asking yourself these questions you gain perspective that may enable you to approach the situation differently.

Create A New Process

From this moment forward, take the time to communicate clearly, in writing, who is expected to do what. Include incremental deadlines for all tasks. Do not make this a formal process; keep the tone of these communications friendly. When a job is underway follow-up with summaries and create tasks lists and calendar deadlines that you and your co-worker share. If he asks why you are doing this say that working to improve your own efficiency.

If your co-worker does not participate in these new processes and continues to slack off, begin the process of backing up your claims in the future.

TODAY'S EXPERT



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Document What Happens Next

Spend 5-10 days observing your co-worker in light of the recent changes made. If the situation improves, forgive past injuries and move on. If the problem persists, it is time to speak to him directly.

Have a Conversation

Approach him and say that you would like to review work tasks as part of your ongoing effort to become more efficient. Do not accuse him or get angry or involve a supervisor at this time. Indicate that it was your understanding that he was to take on some specific tasks and duties by certain deadlines but you have observed that this is not happening. Ask him if there could be any misunderstanding. If he says he does not see any problems or that he does not want to do the work then you have to be prepared to be more proactive.

Get Clarification From Your Supervisor

If he suggests that he is doing his work and that you have a problem or that you are supposed to be doing all the work indicate you might be in error and the two of you should get clarity from your supervisor. Keep the conversation friendly and do not sound as though you are complaining or reporting anything.

When you meet with the supervisor and co-worker do not show your list of 'grievances', do not bring a list of dates the co-worker slipped out early and do not bring your frustration. Simply say that you need to clarify some tasks and responsibilities. Mention the processes you have put in place. Ask your supervisor for suggestions for improving the processes and lines of communication. This is putting the issue on the supervisor's radar without having to accuse your co-worker of anything.

Dealing with the Situation If Does Not Change

There are times when it is possible to do the right things and not get the outcome you were seeking. You may have documented the ongoing lack of effort from your co-worker and even brought this to the attention of a supervisor only to have the supervisor say work it out yourselves or your co-worker does a good job. When this happens you have to find a way to manage the situation and this means changing yourself or looking for a new team. This does not mean you have to keep doing all of the extra work. When things are left undone communicate with your supervisor that you have completed your work and are now waiting. If you must leave at a specific time and the work is not completed message your co-worker and indicate you have finished your work and are leaving and for him to please let you know when he has finished his tasks so you can get back to work when you return. Continue this pattern, never accusing or complaining just informing and always with a thank you or a 'let me know if you are really stuck and we can talk about it'. At some point either you, the co-

worker or the supervisor will have to decide what to do next.

You should find a way to manage your feelings about the situation, do not spend a lot of time dwelling on it, set boundaries and learn to walk away. Over time the slacker may get caught or move on. For now you can only make the changes you can make and decide how you are going to manage the situation in the future.