

The Poor Attitude Dilemma

A supervisor with six years' experience is informed that she will be responsible for overseeing a new department. Of the four new employees she is to supervise, one is labeled as having a poor attitude. While reading through this employee's personnel file, she finds various reviews describing such behaviors as numerous confrontations with peers and management, tardiness, average work performance, occasional complaints of rudeness with clients, and a very bad temper. On her first meeting with this employee, the supervisor attempts to establish a friendly working relationship by letting her subordinate know that she is there to assist him in any way possible and that she hopes the relationship will be a productive one. His response is minimal, indicating that he has very little investment in her or the company.

As a supervisor discovers, management has a special interest in this employee because his brother-in-law has extensive political connections. During the past nine years, because of these connections, other supervisors have been either afraid to fire him or reluctant ever to give him a low evaluation appraisal. Two weeks later, another subordinate comes to the supervisor and informs her that the employee in question is spreading rumors about her professional competence and her ability to work with people. What would you do? Multiple options are possible.

1. Confront the employee directly.
2. Note the incident in the personnel file of the problem employee.
3. Ask your supervisor for assistance.
4. Have a subordinate who brought you the information confront the problem employee.
5. Confront the employee indirectly.
6. Attempt to fire the employee.
7. Attempt to have the employee transferred.
8. Ask the problem employee what you might do to make him feel more comfortable.
9. Ignore the situation.
10. Get revenge by requiring a heavier workload of the employee.
11. Request a transfer for yourself.
12. Call a department meeting with all of your subordinates to discuss the situation.
13. Laugh the situation away with a humorous comment to the problem employee.

Thoughts for consideration:

- Do you feel it is possible to influence others? If so, how do you accomplish that task?
- How do political elements enter into your work?
- What are some specific skills using constructive confrontation?
- If you're in a situation in which you feel your hands are tied, what recourse do you have?
- How important are personal versus professional feelings in circumstances similar to this example?
- How do you cope with rumors in your own work setting?
- Besides those listed in the example above, are there any options that might be effective in resolving the situation?