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Having Difficult Conversations

Upcoming CORP Workshops:

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Improving Performance—Targeted Coaching

Sometimes, managers may be in a situation where they have suggested counselling or coaching to an employee whose work performance is of concern or who appears to be having difficulties but they don't know if the employee has accessed counselling or coaching and the performance problems continue. Formal referrals (where employees are requested to attend counselling/coaching by a manager, supervisor, human resources person or other key staff member) are for those occasions when the manager feels that they have done all that they can do internally to address performance issues and that a third party intervention is required.

Usually, formal referrals will occur when an individual's work performance and/or behaviour in the workplace is problematic and when all due procedures have been followed in the workplace to attempt to resolve the problems. It may also be appropriate where an alcohol and other drug or fitness for work question is being raised. Typically a formal referral would be considered before there is a clear disciplinary issue or breach, but where there is fear that without intervention this may happen. It is an external intervention provided by CORP to assist with poor performance or inappropriate behaviour in the workplace that has continued, regardless of performance management that has occurred within the workplace.

Ideally, the employee should be offered EAP counselling (i.e. a suggested referral) on at least one occasion prior to a formal referral option being pursued, unless the referral arises from a specific and unprecedented workplace incident.

Call CORP to find out more on 8941 5661

Why should I have a difficult conversation?

What is a difficult conversation?

In the workplace, a difficult conversation is one in which you have to manage emotions and information in a sensitive way, to deal with a workplace issue.

A difficult conversation may involve:

- topics you don't want to talk about situations where you're not sure what to say conflicting opinions
- circumstances where the outcome is uncertain
- discussions which make you feel uncomfortable.

As a manager, it is likely that you will need to have a difficult conversation from time to time - this is normal. For example, you may find it difficult to have a conversation about:

- poor employee performance or behaviour
- complaints and grievances
- giving bad news, such as ending employment or advising unsuccessful job applicants
- addressing conflict
- communicating tough business decisions.

Why are difficult conversations important?

Difficult conversations are a normal part of life. The best way to handle a difficult issue is to actually deal with it. Honest conversations are critical for managers. If handled well, these conversations provide you an opportunity to:

- resolve workplace conflicts quickly and efficiently
- lift employee performance and engagement
- improve relationships within your team.

Many people avoid difficult conversations in the workplace because it makes them feel uncomfortable. Even experienced managers can find these conversations daunting, despite being an important part of their role. We often make excuses to avoid difficult conversations, for example:

- "I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings"
- "Now is not the time"
- "Everyone makes mistakes sometimes"
- "I don't have time"
- "What's the point, there's never a good outcome"
- "The problem will fix itself – just give it time".

Most workplace problems will not go away by themselves. In fact, avoiding the conversation may:

- prolong or exacerbate the problem
- give the impression that there is no problem and deny the employee a chance to improve
- damage the productivity and efficiency of the business
- reduce staff engagement
- reduce staff confidence in your ability to manage
- lead to lower morale amongst team members
- lead to higher absenteeism and employee turnover

It is essential for managers to have the skills, knowledge and confidence to identify and manage problems at work early on, before they escalate.

Recognising when to have the conversation

When a problem arises decide whether a conversation is needed – a conversation may not be required in every case. For example, if the problem is trivial or temporary, you may not wish to draw attention to it. Next, decide if you are the best person to initiate the conversation. For example, it may be more appropriate to involve a more senior manager or human resources officer.

If you do need to have the conversation, it's much easier to do so as soon you start to have concerns about the issue or see the early signs of conflict. The worse a situation becomes, the harder it can be to manage and resolve, and people and productivity may be affected.

The best communication strategy at work is to have regular informal one-on-one conversations so that issues can be dealt with as naturally as possible. Be approachable and keep in touch with your staff and your team. If they see that you are approachable and ready to listen, they are also more likely to come to you with problems before they escalate.

How to prepare for a difficult conversation

- Decide what you want to achieve
- Before you start preparing for the conversation, ensure that you have a clear understanding of the problem that you want to resolve.
- Ask yourself:
 - why do you want to have the conversation?
 - what's important to you?
 - what do you want to achieve?
 - is the outcome you're looking for realistic?

Check your facts and gather relevant documents

Make sure you know the facts of the situation before approaching the employee.

Check relevant documents such as your workplace agreement or award, employment contract, human resources policy, business data or employee records. Print copies of any documents you need to bring to the meeting. For example, if the matter is about conduct or performance, you will need to have relevant policies, performance targets, and performance data at hand.

Confirm key details and ensure you have a thorough understanding of employee entitlements. For example, if the conversation will be about termination of employment, you will need to know how much notice is required, what the final payout includes and ensure that the dismissal is fair. You will also need to be aware of any relevant internal workplace policies and procedures so you can manage issues consistently within your business. In these circumstances it is a good idea to seek advice from a supervisor, human resources manager, your industry association, legal advisor or the Fair Work

Think about the employee's perspective

After you have gathered the facts, you should think about the situation from your employee's perspective.

Participate with an open mind, genuinely seeking to understand the situation from the employee's point of view. Don't be set in your assumptions – you may have misread the situation.

<http://mel0201clsprod.blob.core.windows.net/uploads/fairwork/programresources>

CORP 2017 CORP Workshop Calendar

Workplace Solutions Darwin | Alice Springs | Katherine



Book your place in any April 2017
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and receive a >>>

Note: offer does not apply to CORP Talks

\$50

DISCOUNT

DONT MISS OUT ON THIS GREAT OFFER!

For further information,
or to register for a
CORP Workshop,
contact:

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Alice Springs

(08) 8953 4225

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Katherine

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WORKSHOP — get your

registration in early!

Workshop Locations

Darwin

Level 2 Highway Arcade,

47 Stuart Highway

Stuart Park NT

Alice Springs

Locations in town centre:

confirmed upon booking

Katherine

Regional Training Centre

19 Second Street

***Katherine conditions:**

\$285pp for full day

\$175pp for half day

\$45pp for CORP Talks

Maximum **10** participants



Darwin

Tues 11 April	CORP Talk! Coping with Negative Emotions and Anxiety	One Hour
Weds 19 April	The Neuroscience of Leadership	Half Day
Tues 9 May	Motivating Staff through Excellence in Coaching and Mentoring	Full Day

Mediations | Formal Referrals | Mgt Coaching

CORP Workshops — coming soon!

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DARWIN

Wednesday 10
May

CORP Talk! Quit Smoking—An Intro!

One Hour

Thurs 23 May

Goal Setting

Half Day

ALICE SPRINGS

Limited places available in Alice Springs CORP workshops — please book early!

Thurs 11 May

Emotional Intelligence

Half day

KATHERINE

Limited places available in Katherine CORP workshops — please book early!

Weds 24 May

Enhancing the Customer Experience

Half Day

Build Your Planning Event



Your Way...

Establish direction, increase profitability, encourage innovation or raise employee morale with a CORP-facilitated Planning Event.

1. Choose Your Venue



Have your own on-site venue with projector, screen and break-out areas? CORP can come to you.

2. What's Your Vision?



Beef up workplace morale with Team Building & Group Activities designed to encourage employee engagement.

3. Create the Day



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Group activities designed to guide employees from denial and resistance into exploration and commitment to managing organisational change.

4. Flavour Options



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