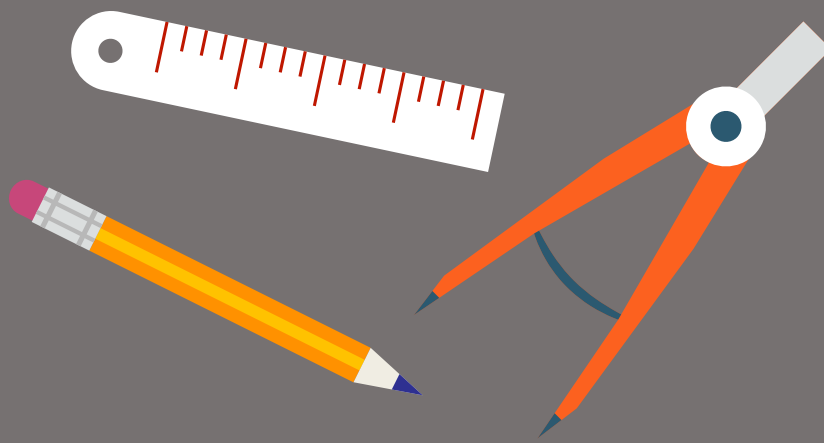


Getting Great Results From Salary Talks With Difficult People



PRACTICAL TOOLS

Getting Great Results From Salary Talks With Difficult People

Seasoned managers know it's smart to equip themselves with reliable techniques for holding salary talks so that the conversation can be kept focused on desired results.

When you're dealing with your best employees, that can be a breeze. These people are cooperative, insightful and helpful. They make your work life easier, even when you are discussing raises with them.

But another common scenario for many managers is having those tough salary conversations with difficult people.

Difficult people can turn your best intentions on their heads.

Here are some insights and ideas to keep in mind when preparing for a salary talk with a difficult employee.

Controlling the conversation is the key.

It's OK to let the employee rant a little over a pay raise that didn't meet their expectations, but eventually you'll have to get the talk back on track.

Develop a system or pattern.

Of course, every conversation is different, and you'll have to be fast on your feet to react to changes in the conversation. Don't let that stop you from developing a blueprint for such conversations, right down to the wording of phrases and built-in silences.

Meet emotion with calm.

The more emotional an employee acts, the more important it is for you to stay calm and even-tempered.

Keep the conversation legal.

Lawsuits can develop from salary conversations in which a manager might:

- (a) promise a future raise that doesn't materialize, or
- (b) makes statements that disparages or stereotypes people.

Document your conversations.

There are many reasons why you'll want to document what's said and what's agreed-to.

Among them:

- You want a "paper trail" to support your decisions.
- The employee has a history of insisting, "We never agreed to that."
- You want a written summary you and the employee can check to make sure there were no misunderstandings about what was said.

What NOT to document.

- Off-the-cuff promises of future rewards
- unsupported opinions
- confidential information, and
- anything you don't want the employee to see – since the employee has a right to examine the documentation.

Clear goals for salary talks

Salary talks are particularly tough when you know the employee's expectations are probably going to be greater than what you have to offer.

In these cases, the general guide is that the better prepared you are, the more likely that the conversation will proceed to its logical conclusion without going off the rails.

So this conversation is one you'll want to "script" more than any other – to know exactly what you're going to say and what words you're going to use.

A difficult conversation about salary is one of those times when precision makes all the difference.

Your overall goals for the talk should be to:

Place a time limit on each segment of the conversation.

It's not as if you're going to keep checking your watch to see if you're on schedule, but you want to have a feel for how long each part of the talk should take. That prevents rambling.

Maintain an even, forward-looking tone.

You can't control the tone of the employee's reaction, but you can control your own. So if you encounter an employee who shouts or otherwise gets emotional, you have to maintain your even keel.

Have a clear idea of how you want to end the conversation.

Many face-to-face talks go on for too long because the manager doesn't know how to finish. It can be as simple as standing up and saying, "Joe, I want to wish you the best and hope the year ahead is a good one."

Understanding Difficult People

Every workplace has negative people who erode morale and drive good employees away, even though they may be very good at their jobs.

They're not always easy to spot in a crowd, but they do an amazing amount of damage over time.

They're the ones who:

- always find things to complain about
- start rumors that pit employees against each other, and
- undermine supervisors' authority.

Every manager should develop a strategy to deal with these kinds of folks when discussing salary, because no matter what you do, they are likely to leave the talk feeling they were somehow "owed" even more than what you gave them. And that's what they'll tell everyone, too.

So going into these kinds of salary talks, it good to remember that difficult people:

1. **Want to be liked.** They do what they do to form a loyal band of followers to satisfy their need to be looked up to.
2. **Want to be noticed.** During the salary talks, honestly highlight their good performance, (emphasis on honest). Don't go overboard, but give them the recognition they deserve.
3. **Are hard on themselves.** They are quick to point out the mistakes of others because, believe it or not, they dwell a lot on their own shortcomings.
4. **Are very emotional.** Aren't we all! The problem is, difficult people tend to lack the emotional intelligence needed to mature emotionally and to understand why they feel the way they feel.
5. **Are sensitive.** They may seem brusque and unfazed on the outside, but inside they are teeming with insecurity, based on a lack of trust of those around them.

6. **They are afraid.** Like everyone else, difficult employees hide their fears under a cloud of dust they kick up to deliberately distract you from spotting and identifying their fears.

10 Ways to Motivate Difficult People

Here are some proven motivation tactics to get difficult people back on track:

1. **Public praise and recognition.** One note of caution: Make sure employees aren't embarrassed by public recognition before you single out anyone at a department or company event.
2. **Opportunity to show off a great job.** Most employees like to share their successes. Bonus: Others can learn from and be motivated by them.
3. **Hearing about the positive impact they have** – on the company, their boss, co-workers, a project, a customer, etc.
4. **Earning extra time off.** Employees usually enjoy earned time off more than time off that is just handed to them.
5. **Training and development opportunities.** This report will give you low-cost ways to train employees.
6. **Being treated with respect by managers and co-workers.** Managers need to check that employees treat each other well.
7. **Opportunities to mentor new hires.**
8. **Inclusion in projects and decisions beyond their normal job tasks.**
9. **Being trained to use new technology.**
10. **Working in bright, comfortable surroundings.** Good news: Employees don't expect new leather chairs and solid mahogany desks. A regular coat of bright paint, cheery artwork, well-lit offices, plants and comfortable furniture (that can be purchased in bulk rates) is often enough.