

Disruptive Stars **rmg**

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Nearly every organisation has one. That confident, often bordering on arrogant, top performer who effortlessly delivers against their objectives. Purely focused on the task in hand, they will bullishly force results with little regard for how their demands affect colleagues.

Depending on individual personalities the person may be blindly unaware of their impact on others or worse still, they may be aware, but don't care.

With heightened pressures on so many small businesses given the challenges of the pandemic, it's easy to understand why we may have been more tolerant of these individuals as we have relied on them to deliver.

In our latest blog we hear from RMG's Principal Consultant within our Industrials & Chemicals Division, Anita Caldwell, who distils her advice into three practical steps.

Raise

This first step may initially feel awkward but prepare yourself because it might not be the hardest. As with any good HR practice you should tackle behavioural issues as soon as the behaviour occurs. Find a quiet room, preferably over a coffee, and get straight to the point. The usual 's'- sandwich approach is ok, but don't labour the positive elements of their performance. Be concise, explain that their behaviour is having a negative impact on others and be specific with the things that you have witnessed.

"Your contribution to [sales/X function] is exceptional, but the way you have approached [situation x] recently is having a negative effect on others."

"I saw how you approached [situation X] and I need you to know that this is not how I would expect you to behave, and I need you to do things differently."

Clarify

Help them to understand their own behaviour and encourage self-awareness. This type of performer may default to communicating by email and if this is the case, encourage them to talk directly to colleagues; emails have a place but rarely in good internal communication strategies.

Suggest that the performer looks at emotional responses from their own colleagues such as body language; does the person they are talking to look relaxed, are they engaged in

the conversation, or are they just listening and not offering anything in return?

Encouraging them to spot cues like this will provide live feedback which is far more valuable in the heat of the moment. It may be that their sharp behaviour towards colleague is born out of frustration, so as their line manager you should try to understand the reasons and

whether they are valid or not. If valid, then you should step in and help. But if the performer is being unrealistic then they need to be told.

Behaviour like this can often be down to a lack of patience or empathy so point this out to them when you see it.

Sometimes just simply reminding them how you expect them to behave is enough – but this won't always be the case. This is where coaching can play an important role.

Coach

Good management is all about follow up and it's within this step that the hardest task may come. Make sure you take time to observe the performer and I would recommend doing this discreetly to ensure you observe their natural behaviour. If they get it right, make a point of recognising it.

Change won't happen immediately so you may need to help them with their new approach and do point out those instances where their behaviour is falling short of what you expect. If the performer's own career progression is important then you should appeal to this side of them; explain that in order to progress they have to be positively engaged with all members of the team.

In some circumstances, you may find yourself in a position where you have to reassess their individual value, versus the wider cultural impact. Having disruptive stars in your business is likely to affect staff morale, leading to increased churn and ultimately a negative effect on your employer brand.

Take a step back and work out what is in the best long-term interest of the company. If your star performer leaves tomorrow, it's likely to affect you in the short term, but what if five high potential performers decide they have had enough? It's a tough decision, but sometimes you have to make that call.

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