

# One Bad Apple ...

Don't let a disgruntled employee bring down the rest of the team.

Gina Pellegrini

**D**o you have an employee with a bad attitude? How do you deal with someone who's consistently negative, uncooperative or offensive? In business (and life), a person's attitude is everything—and that attitude is surprisingly contagious. Obviously, you can't let a downbeat employee affect morale and productivity. What do you do?

First, examine your own attitude. Make sure the negativity isn't coming from the top. As the business owner, you set the tone in the office. It's up to you to establish the work ethic and overall mood. Adopt a confident, considerate attitude that reflects what you'd like emulated in the office.

Next, talk to the difficult employee. Find out the reason for the negative attitude. Talk to the entire staff to get ideas for improving the atmosphere. Take steps to reduce friction by holding more meetings, reassigning duties or trying some team-building exercises.



If nothing changes, establish a probationary period for the problem employee. Keep track of any reported incidents: rudeness to clients or coworkers, insubordination, tardiness, repeated mistakes, disregard for your business process, poor production, etc. Discuss the situation and give the employee one last chance to make amends. (Good luck!) If that doesn't work, you're left with one alternative.

## Let 'em go

Say goodbye to the troublemaker. If change is impossible, it's time to let the employee go. Too often, one bad apple obliterates teamwork. If the person has an unhealthy effect on your business, cut him or her loose. To quote Zig Ziglar: "Life is too short to spend your

precious time trying to convince a person who wants to live in gloom and doom otherwise. Give lifting that person your best shot, but don't hang around long enough for his or her bad attitude to pull you down. Instead, surround yourself with optimistic people." Pick good apples for your business. **A**

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