



Struggling to manage a difficult colleague?



As people managers, it's not unusual to come across people who are challenging or difficult. There are many ways that people earn this label, but the following are examples of what they may do:

- Constantly on their phone/internet
- Take credit for other peoples' work
- Are disrespectful - talk over you and don't value other's opinions
- Enjoy gossiping and spreading rumours
- Belittle others/complain about team members
- Talk loudly about how they would do things better
- Back stab others to get ahead
- Have an answer for everything
- Distract others from their work
- Leave you out of important conversations
- Are aggressive, mean and hurtful
- Become flexible with office hours (arrive late & leave early)

Two sides to every story

When it comes to managing people, we can't always choose whom we work with. Whilst we are not responsible for the behaviour of others, we do however have control over how we engage with them. We have a duty to do this with empathy, understanding and a willingness to accept change. Here are some top tips to enable you to have an effective working relationship with them, so you can get on and do the job.

1. Change your mindset. Instead of seeing this individual as difficult, you might want to start seeing them as different. We're individuals and the way we react to things is never the same.

2. Get a sense check that you're not overreacting. Ask others in the team how they get on with this person to see if their experiences are similar or dissimilar to your own.

3. Is it just you? If it is, look more closely at your leadership style and what you may be unknowingly contributing to the situation, which maybe making things worse.

4. Remove the fear. Look at the issues/occurrences objectively, don't share your worries publicly and don't take things personally.

5. Sit down with them in private. Find out where they are, what's important to them and what their drivers are. Have an open mind and avoid being angry, accusatory or defensive.

6. Find out more about their communication style (DISC). Consider the changes that might need to be made to improve or repair your ongoing relationship with them.

7. Focus on the behaviour that's bothering you. Make it about the situation, rather than the person, and try not to get too emotional. Use the word 'I' and 'We' more than 'You.'

8. Listen with an open mind. Avoid being judgmental or playing the blame game. Aim to get consensus to move forwards with a constructive plan that you both agree to.

9. If necessary, set boundaries to remove the potential for further conflict. Be clear, concise and calm and explain about effects, consequences and next steps.

10. Follow up. After a set period of time assess whether their behaviour has changed for the better or the worse? If the latter, it might be time to put them on a performance improvement plan.

To find out how I can help you to successfully manage difficult or challenging work relationships, call 07734 080073.