



7 Tips for Dealing With Difficult Team Members

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Ken Beyersdorf, President

ken_beyersdorf@dalecarnegie.com

www.DaleCarnegie-Tucson.com

Successful teams depend on cooperation between all members of the group. However, consistent harmony is rare because conflicts between personalities or issues eventually happen. Additionally, confrontations between leaders and team members are unproductive, take up time and can create a bad atmosphere, lowering the overall morale of the team.

Dealing with difficult team members is not rocket science, but it does involve following several steps. That being said, we have put together a list of 7 tips to get you started.

The 7 Tips for Dealing With Difficult Team Members Are:

1. **Start with Yourself** - It takes two people in order to have a conflict. So look at the part you play in the conflict and do what you can to minimize the conflict. Be mindful that individual differences in outlook or style can generate tension which may cause problems.
2. **Be Clear About Expectations** - If you are leading the team, be sure that you have explained new initiatives clearly enough. If not, this could be the source of anxiety. Keep in mind that people generally do not like change – and when emotions like fear come into play, people start to behave irrationally.
3. **Get Feedback** - Do not be afraid to ask the other team members whether you come across as approachable and accessible. If not, take steps needed to correct this image, such as announcing when you are available for one-on-one discussions. Also, when you are discussing a conflict, try to remain emotionally detached so that you can discuss the issue at hand from an objective point of view.
4. **Be Reasonable** - Assess whether the demands you have made of your team members are reasonable or not. Know that people do not tend to admit when they are overloaded for fear of reprimand. Go back and check and give them the opportunity to be honest.
5. **Be Mindful** - If a team member has become disengaged, explore the causes face to face. Discuss what they expect and what you expect so that you may both be on the same page. Keep the lines of communication open so that future conflict will be minimized before it gets out of hand.
6. **Be Supportive But Firm** - If the team member is being difficult due to feelings of being overloaded, offer support and training over a reasonable timescale. But

- make it clear that if they do not make improvements, there will be consequences.
7. **Be Aware** - It will benefit everyone if you get to know your team members. You will then be able to notice changes in their mood, patterns of work or work-life balance which often signal stress and potential conflict. Knowing when someone is having an "off" day can help you put your emotions in check and not overreact to that person's attitude.

The 7 Competencies For Dealing With Difficult Team Members:

1. **Attitude** - A person who is able to deal with difficult team members has a friendly, positive and enthusiastic outlook.
2. **Influence** - A person who is able to deal with difficult team members consistently directs situations and inspires people for a win-win environment.
3. **Conflict Resolution** - A person who is able to deal with difficult team members is able to bring people together who have been separated by their differences.
4. **External Awareness** - A person who is able to deal with difficult team members can see things from multiple points-of-view. They also keep up to date with issues that affect responsibility.
5. **Interpersonal Skills** - A person who is able to deal with difficult team members displays a consistent ability to build solid relationships inside and outside the organization.
6. **Communication** - A person who is able to deal with difficult team members is able to communicate well, listen and clearly express their own ideas.
7. **Teamwork** - A person who is able to deal with difficult team members is able to bring the team together by organizing tasks, people and resources to deliver most effectively.

Summary: Oftentimes, people do not mean to be difficult. Knowing how to deal with difficult team members will give you a leg-up and help you avoid making a situation worse. Setting clear rules about behavior that is expected at meetings will help people know their boundaries. Also, communicating about expectations and progress is very helpful. Above all, always be respectful and know when a situation needs to be resolved in private rather than in front of the entire team.

"The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime."

- Babe Ruth

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