



## Managing different personality types

As a manager, one of your most important responsibilities — perhaps even more important than overseeing schedules, resources and finances — is managing people. It is your job to help cultivate and maintain a high functioning team. However, like any sample of people, your team is sure to be made up of different personality types — you will have introverts working alongside extroverts and some people who fall somewhere in between. It can be difficult to adapt your management style to suit everyone, but once you recognize that having a diverse range of personalities and working styles on your team is an asset, you will be able to gracefully incorporate everyone's different skills so they complement each other rather than conflict. Here are some ways to go about identifying and integrating these different personalities into your management methodology.

### Learn about introverts and extroverts

Take some time to educate yourself about the traits of introverts and extroverts. While it may be commonly understood that introverts are quiet and shy and extroverts are loud and talkative, it is actually a little more complicated than this. Rather than how they act outwardly, what really defines an introvert or an extrovert is what they need to do to recharge, and how they prefer to work. Most introverts need alone time to refuel or recharge and prefer to work alone while most extroverts gain energy in groups and love to think out loud. Learn more about these types [here](#).

### Get to know your team

As you have spent a lot of time working with the members of your team already, you probably have a pretty good sense of who might be an introvert and who is likely an extrovert. But sometimes identifying someone's personality type is not so easy; some people work contrary to their natural personality to try to fit into what they believe is an ideal or expected. To really find out what each member of your team is like, talk to them. Ask them what they need, and how they really like to work and feel most comfortable. Do they prefer to spearhead meetings and give presentations, or methodically think through problems and write detailed reports? It can also be a fun and informative exercise to have everyone take a personality test and discuss their results - just be sure to communicate that the results will not have any bearing on how team members are evaluated and that one type is not more desirable than another.

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### **Bring balance to the workday**

In addition to maintaining some balance of working collaboratively and working alone, allow for flexibility so that each person can work the way that they know will allow them to reach their potential. This means that if someone knows their best work will be done solo, make space for them to work alone, or if they know they can give their best performance in a presentation, give them the chance to speak up.

When it comes to personality styles in the workplace, diversity is invaluable. Introverts and extroverts both add value to a thriving work environment as their differing styles can actually harmonize each other. Pair an extrovert who is full of ideas they want to express with an introvert who can hear them and spend the time to think them through. The more you know and understand about your team's strengths, the more you will be able to lead with an assured confidence that will in turn allow people to trust you more since you have demonstrated an understanding of and a desire to meet their individual needs.

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## How to address sensitive topics at work

Managers are often reluctant to address performance, sensitive personal issues or behavioural problems with employees due to anxieties about overly emotional reactions, making the situation worse, and the manager's own discomfort. But from a productivity standpoint, the sooner a problem is confronted, the sooner it can be resolved. Therefore, learning how to effectively handle difficult conversations is an important skill for any manager.

### Be prepared

The first step to addressing a sensitive topic at work is to have the relevant facts and information at your fingertips. Connect with your HR representative to ensure you fully understand company policies and procedures, your rights and the employee's rights.

Here are some helpful tips to help you prepare:

- **Deciding on a location.** You need to be able to have an open, frank, one-to-one conversation in private without interruptions. Make sure the conversation is in-person, NOT by telephone or email.
- **Allocate enough time.** You don't want to appear rushed. Give yourself and your employee some breathing space after the meeting to refocus.
- **Contacting your Employee and Family Assistance Program.** Dealing with sensitive employee and workplace situations can challenge you as a people leader. Let your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) help with confidential and professional guidance for any situation you may be faced with.
- **Planning your conversation.** Jot down notes and key points to help you cover all relevant points and remain focused.

### The conversation

The goal of your conversation is for you and the employee to agree on a plan of action to help address the problem. It gives you the chance to fully understand what might be going on and gives the employee the chance to seek support or voice concerns. However, if the employee is resistant or defensive, your internal policies and procedures for handling discipline matters and grievances will provide you with a framework for any action you intend to take.

During the conversation be sure to:

- **Remain calm and focused.** Concentrate on the issue or behaviour and not the person and remain objective and non-judgmental.
- **Be positive.** If this is the first time you are bringing up the topic to an individual, try to be positive. State your concern and then explain that your feedback is meant to help them improve and succeed.
- **Practice active listening.**

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- Make eye contact and watch your body language. Lean toward the other person and avoid folding your arms as this signals that you are not listening.
- Do not interrupt.
- Ask questions to clarify the situation. Avoid closed yes-or-no questions that tend to shut down conversation. Instead, paraphrase what the employee has said. For example, "In other words, what you are saying is...".
- Acknowledge the employee's perspective.
- Manage the meeting. This means *you* direct the conversation and decide if and when tactics are working. You also decide if an adjournment or break is needed.
- Involve the employee. Together, agree to a plan of action and schedule a follow up meeting.

### **Follow up**

Even if the employee has been successful in changing his or her behaviour or improving performance, a follow up conversation is important. Tell the employee that you appreciate his or her efforts and ask if any further support from you is required. If the situation has not improved, you need to have a formal discussion with the employee regarding company policies and procedures and the consequences of his or her continued behaviour or poor performance.

No one looks forward to having a difficult conversation with someone who works for them, but if the discussion is handled in the right way, it can not only lead to better performance or relationships for the employee, but for your whole team.

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