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Theme: The Problem Employee

Note: No animals were harmed in the making of this newsletter.

There's trouble in paradise! My yard, typically my "happy place", is not so blissful right now. To put it in workplace terms, let's just say there is major discord between management and staff.

I (*management*) prefer a neat and orderly yard. Staff (*the wildlife who live there*) prefer to run amuck. They have little regard for my vision and the policies created to get us there!

The squirrels bury nuts in arbitrary places; voles dig holes in my newly mulched flower beds; the neighborhood cat is convinced that eating small goldfish from my pond helps maintain her girlish figure; and the deer consume massive quantities of flora like it's senior discount night at the Golden Corral! I am not pleased!

But the one who distresses me most is our resident groundhog. Besides the fact that I find his looks repulsive, he is lazy, disrespectful and destructive. I tried on numerous occasions to live in harmony with the creature, but to no avail. He mocks me! Like a scene from Caddy shack, he takes great delight in watching me make a fool of myself as he shows little regard for my authority and position. His antics have been so disruptive lately that severe disciplinary action was finally deemed necessary (See photo).

The result? An inter-office transfer was arranged so that he is now in an environment which better suits his personality!



"It's not nice to disrespect the boss"

My point? Not every employee can be successfully coached or counseled. Some employees fail to demonstrate progress even after implementing a Performance Improvement Plan. When a single employee consumes most or all of your time or the attitude of one deteriorates the morale of many, it's time to take action. Ignoring a problem employee doesn't make the problems go away, it only makes things worse.

Document, document, document. Consult your HR and/or Legal Department to be certain that appropriate procedures are followed.

Although having a "bad attitude" can be difficult to measure and document, the following are observable behaviors:

- Excessive days off work or tardiness
- Being impolite/disrespectful to co-workers or management
- Showing little interest in getting work done which results in not meeting deadlines
- Lack of respect for the property of others

Do the negatives overshadow the benefits of retaining a problem employee? It's your call. But I'm amazed at how many times I've followed up with a client who was experiencing departmental morale issues only to find that morale improved because the "problem left the firm."

Here's to a harmonious spring!

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