

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CO-WORKERS

Every office has them - people with habits and attitudes that get under your skin - most of the time you need to just let it go because it is very difficult to change people. However, if the behavior is affecting the quality of your work in some way you will need to do something about it. If you don't, there is the risk of making yourself look bad and possibly causing the loss of your job. If that condition exists, try this technique.

Start keeping track of the number of times per week the person does the offending behavior. If you find the behavior is just occasional, the best course of action is to try to cope with it instead of complaining. You don't want to get a reputation as a constant whiner.

If the problem surfaces frequently, you need to try to do something about it. Don't go complaining to your boss! Try to deal with it yourself first. You will get a reputation as a problem-solver.

Approach the offender in a neutral, open way without using critical language. Be sure to pick your time and place. It's best not to do it on a frantically hectic day or in front of co-workers.

Let the person know that you want to talk about something that is important to you and say, "I need to talk with you about a problem that is occurring."

Then use a "When" statement that goes like this: "When you use up most of the time at the copier, it causes the rest of us to fall behind in our work schedules. What suggestions do you have for a copier use agreement that will be fair to everyone?" This accomplishes two things: it states the problem in a non-blaming way and asks for his help in the solution of the problem.

Of course you can always offer your own solution, but you will get more "buy in" and the likelihood that they will change if you include the offender in the solution. Don't be surprised if it doesn't work the first time. Often you have to ask for the behavior change more than once.

When they finally do change, be sure to give them lots of positive reinforcement in the form of praise and thanks. "Bob, we really appreciate you following the guidelines for copier use. It has helped all of us be more productive" would be an example of some of the praise you should use. Remember that what gets positively reinforced gets repeated.

Try this technique; it's a whole lot better than steaming about it and causing you stress.