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Bad News Never Ages Well

By Dr. John Drozdal

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You have an employee whose performance is below par. Do you:

- a. Ignore the performance issue and hope it improves;
- b. Move the problem performer to another department; or
- c. Confront the performance problem swiftly and decisively?

Let's take a closer look at each option.

Ignore the performance issue and hope it improves. Gordon Sullivan and Michael Harper wrote a book about the remaking of the United States Army titled, *Hope is Not a Method*. Hoping that the performance issue will get better over time, without any intervention on your part, is a recipe for disaster. The longer you wait to confront a performance issue the harder it will be to help the employee correct the issue. Also, if you are aware of the performance issue you can bet others are, as well. Simply hoping the problem will resolve itself is a not a behavior you want to model for other managers.

Move the problem performer to another department. Passing on the problem employee to another

department avoids dealing with the performance issue entirely. Dumping a bad performer on another manager lacks integrity and can have a major impact on your organizations productivity. In short, this move is a cop out!

Confront the performance problem swiftly and decisively. The only viable approach is to confront the performance issue swiftly and decisively. Meet with the employee and present factual evidence that speaks to the issue, explain your expectations for what the employee needs to do to improve his/her performance, offer the appropriate support to help that person succeed, and arrange a time for follow up. The bad news of a performance issue is not like vintage wine—it does not improve with age. The sooner you intervene in matters of performance, the more options you have for taking corrective action and the greater the likelihood you can help that employee get back on track. Performance problems that you address early on become teachable moments instead of major career derailers. ■

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