

# Manage a loud talker

Some otherwise great workers have a big drawback: They're incredibly loud.

Their voices fill the room, irritate others and create a less professional atmosphere. Everyone looks to you, as their boss, to bring down the noise.

It's tricky. On the one hand, you want to make loud talkers aware of their inappropriate volume. Yet if you make them feel too self-conscious, they may resent your criticism or retreat into a shell.

Here's how to do it:

**Seek solutions—together.** Level with the individual about the problem. Don't assume it's off-limits to say, "Don, I'd like to talk with you about how loudly you speak."

Through a friendly chat, you may learn that the employee is hearing-impaired or has struggled for years to pipe down. Then you can explore solutions in a supportive manner.

**Let them judge for themselves.** Tape-record a meeting so that loud talkers can hear how they drown out others. Don't begin by saying, "Listen to how loud you are." Instead, say, "I'd like you to listen and give me your thoughts." Once they realize the extent of the problem, they may take steps to solve it.

**Quarantine them.** If loud employees seem hopelessly wedded to their booming voices, contain them in their own work space. Give them a well-insulated office or distant cubicle.

## Handle loudmouths the right way

It's tempting to react to loud employees by poking fun at them or wincing while they bellow. That's not nice. Try these approaches:

**Speak softly.** Don't raise your volume to make yourself heard over the din. If you try to match their volume, that encourages them to speak even louder.

**Create a private signal.** Avoid rolling your eyes or covering your ears in mock pain when the loudmouth lectures. Instead, establish a subtle hand signal to help the employee know when to tone it down.