

Mistake-prone employee? 8 questions to ask

Errors slow productivity and frustrate everyone. So it's tempting to chastise or terminate employees who repeatedly make mistakes.

But don't be so quick with that trigger finger. Employees make slip-ups for different reasons—miscommunication, carelessness, lack of training, unfamiliarity with the process and more.

Good management means finding out why mistakes occur.

First, determine the circumstances under which mistakes tend to occur. Are errors connected to certain tasks?

Find how often an employee makes mistakes and whether other workers are involved. Then ask questions like these:

- 1. Do you feel more likely to make mistakes while working fast or juggling several things simultaneously?** Determine whether the employee habitually makes errors under pressure.
- 2. Do you feel comfortable asking questions about assignments?** Some employees believe asking questions signals incompetence.
- 3. Do you feel the need to always figure things out yourself when you don't know what to do?** You don't want employees guessing.
- 4. Do you know when you make mistakes or do you find out afterwards?** Self-awareness helps self-correction.
- 5. Do you feel comfortable reporting mistakes to management?** You want to know that employees don't try to hide slip-ups.
- 6. Do you sometimes feel you lack the job knowledge to avoid mistakes?** Perhaps the employee feels that training is an issue.
- 7. Do you understand the instructions for tasks?** Maybe the employee feels that explanations are unclear.
- 8. What do you think needs to be done to avoid repeating the mistake?** Most employees will know.

Final notes: Listen for whether an employee blames others or takes responsibility for mistakes. Use mistakes as a teaching opportunity. Such an approach increases the chances that errors won't reoccur.