

# Deny a request for time off without coming off like a jerk



Although most organizations have thorough and specific policies on paid leave, they cannot tell a supervisor how to respond to every leave request that employees make.

The policies provide strong guidelines, but sooner or later every manager gets a request for time off that requires individual judgment.

When requests for leave or vacation are submitted in advance, for example, there are times when the supervisor must consider not only the policy guidelines, but the staffing schedule and the department's workload before approving or denying the request. Usually this process is smooth. Most of the time supervisors approve requests without discussion because they want to say "yes" and because employees know when it's not a good time to request time off.

Problems can arise, however, when an employee feels compelled to ask for leave when the department is busy or understaffed. When this situation occurs, the supervisor has to find a way to decline the request without hurting the employee's morale.

This is sometimes difficult to do. It is always easier, however, if you do the following:

- **First, treat the matter seriously.** The employee will regard it that way and so should you.
- **Second, discuss the request and your decision in private.** Meet in his or her office (if they have one) or in yours. Avoid telling the employee your decision in front of others or "on the run" as you pass his or her desk. Although this might save a little time initially, it's not worth the risk of making him or her feel unimportant and unappreciated.