

Reprimanding employees: 6 tips for doing it right

It would be great if employees never needed to be reprimanded. But the workplace isn't a utopia of obedient, hard-working people. Sometimes managers need to pull a worker aside and have "the talk." Coach bosses to follow these tips:

Don't smile. The moment you smile, even though you're trying to put the employee at ease, you have reduced your effectiveness. Smiling indicates approval, and you are talking about performance that does not deserve approval.

Don't "gunnysack." Gunnysacking is when you save up all your complaints and problems until the bag is full and then dump the contents on the worker. Reprimand as soon as possible for each problem, one at a time.

Be specific. Tell the employee what she did wrong—what was observed and how that differs from what was expected. Give her a chance to clarify the issue, but don't accept excuses.

Explain how you feel. Don't pretend you're not angry or surprised or disappointed when you obviously are. But don't, of course, let your feelings become more important than the actual facts at hand.

Put the reprimand in perspective. You're reprimanding the employee for a specific action in a specific situation, not for being a bad worker in general. It's because you value his work and talents that you're investing the energy in trying to correct his performance.

Don't repeat the reprimand. Once it's done, it's done. Now it's time for everyone to go back to work.