

# Oh, no! They shoved a weak link on my team



An employee with a history of poor performance is transferred to your department. What do you do?

Here's a systematic approach to helping an employee with a checkered track record get up and running in your department.

**1. Keep an open mind.** As a supervisor, you play a key role in developing all your employees, regardless of their backgrounds. It's up to you to determine objectively what will help the transferred employee "click" as part of your team. His previous experiences may provide some useful clues—but avoid using past failures to predict the future. Instead, learn what you can about the new employee's strengths and weaknesses from previous supervisors. Then ask the employee himself to discuss his career with the organization. Encourage him to talk about aspects of the work he liked, as well as things that made it difficult for him to do his best.

**2. Make the new employee feel welcome.** Show positive expectations, and let the new employee know where he fits in. You'll help him feel comfortable in putting the past behind him and pave the way for him to get ahead. Get started on the right foot. Make sure the employee's workstation is ready in advance, and plan meaningful, achievable tasks that will integrate him into the unit quickly. Greet him enthusiastically when he arrives, and introduce him cordially to co-workers. Describe the new job's responsibilities. Then give him an opportunity to speak one-on-one with team members about how they view the department and its work.

**3. Establish attainable goals.** Once you've provided initial background information, ask the employee for ideas about how to make the most of his abilities. Listen closely for expressions of interest and ambition, and do your best to fuel them. Work together to establish clear, attainable goals. Agree on achieving levels of productivity, and set some skill development targets, too. A worker who has been expected to fail may never have been challenged to learn new software or acquire fresh customer service techniques. He's likely to welcome such a show of faith in his ability to improve.

**4. Provide training.** Once you've had a chance to observe the employee in action, you're likely to recognize aspects of his performance that need improvement. His technical skills may be imperfect, or his interpersonal skills may be rough. Treat these needs as you would with a veteran member of your team—by providing the coaching or training required. Ask the employee for his ideas about the performance gap, and how he thinks it

might best be bridged.