

# the ADVISOR

RESOURCES FOR SUPERVISORS, MANAGERS, AND HUMAN RESOURCES PERSONNEL

## Managing Former Peers

Congratulations! You've been promoted to manager or supervisor.

Now comes the hard part.

Transitioning to a management role means more than taking on new challenges and responsibilities. It may mean that you are now managing people who were once your peers and, in some instances, your friends.

Overseeing people who were once positional equals is often a challenge for newly promoted managers and supervisors, and how well both you and they adapt may have a lasting impact on your ability to lead. The following suggestions may help ease the transition:

- ▶ **Acknowledge the change.** Becoming the leader of a team that

you have previously served on may be challenging, particularly if other members were also in contention for your position. Here are some things to address at the first team meeting in your new position:

- Briefly outline your new role and responsibilities.

- Acknowledge that the team will be going through a period of adjustment, particularly if your promotion means that others will have different responsibilities as well. Encourage the team to come to you with questions and concerns.
- Solicit input on developing team goals.

- ▶ **Be respectful.** You have every right to be happy about a promotion. However, it's important to avoid the perception that you are gloating about your advancement, particularly if some of your new subordinates were also in contention for your position. Be sensitive to the feelings of others

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and avoid creating a situation that could breed resentment or undermine team cohesion.

► **Set appropriate boundaries.**

Now that you are a manager, you need to think twice about what you share with others. Conversation topics that it would be best to avoid include:

- **Gossip and rumors about other managers, team members, or workplace events.** If you do hear this sort of gossip, remind the team that it is inappropriate and you expect it to stop. Answer questions about the workplace as best you can without revealing sensitive company information that you have not been authorized to share.

- **Your personal life.** Limit conversation about relationships, religion, and political beliefs while in the workplace. If you choose to talk about these topics on your social media accounts, consider setting filters so work colleagues can no longer see these posts.

► **Create a level playing field.**

It's important to avoid the appearance of bias or favoritism, especially if you are personal friends with some of your former peers. Keep the focus on workplace performance and implement policies in a consistent manner.

- **Be circumspect.** Remember that spending time outside of work with former peers could

be perceived as favoritism. This does not mean that you have to abandon personal friendships or miss out on important life events. However, it may be best to limit your participation in work-related social activities to official events, such as team lunches or company-sponsored parties.

- **Change expectations.** Now that you are a manager, it is likely that you will be excluded from informal discussions about work or may find it more difficult to tap into the "office grapevine." It's not unusual to feel more isolated. This may be a good time to cultivate friendships outside of work or seek out professional affiliations with peers in your field.
- **Seek assistance.** Many of your fellow managers or supervisors have gone through the same transition and may be able to offer valuable insights. In addition, [mylifematters.com](http://mylifematters.com) offers articles, webinars, and other resources that will help you develop leadership skills and navigate the unique challenges of being a manager.

Whether you have just been promoted to management for the first time or have several years of experience, the LifeMatters Management Consultation Service is an invaluable resource. LifeMatters is available to assist with your personal concerns as well! Call 24/7/365.

# How Do I Say That?

## Conflict with a Direct Report

Sometimes, a relationship with a direct report goes sour. Maybe there is resentment because you've been promoted ahead of this person or you've made a workplace decision that they don't like. Or, perhaps your personalities simply don't mesh.

If conflict with a direct report is making it difficult to communicate or causing tension, consider these steps:

**1. Consult with Human Resources.** HR can review relevant policies and offer suggestions for handling the situation. The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service is also available to assist.

**2. Schedule a private meeting.**

Outline ways in which the tension has created difficulties within the workplace. Keep the focus on work performance, not the interpersonal conflict.

**Sample language:** "It seems like we've been having difficulty communicating lately. I'm concerned that it's hampering our ability to achieve team goals."

**3. Listen.** Ask the team member for their perspective and thoughts on how you might collaborate more productively in the future. If the employee mentions grievances or perceived slights, listen respect-



fully and apologize when appropriate. Then, return the focus to work performance.

**Sample language:** "I'd like to sort this out so we can both stay focused on our work. Can you tell me what's been troubling you?"

**4. Outline your expectations.**

Describe how you expect the employee to behave in the future.

**Sample language:** "I'd like to establish a more professional tone in our dealings moving forward. If you have concerns about decisions I've made, please speak with me privately."

**5. Make a referral to LifeMatters.**

In some instances, it may turn out that the employee's behavior has nothing to do with you personally, but is related to difficulties in other areas of the person's life. This is a good time to make a referral to LifeMatters. Consider making a performance referral if the employee's actions





have affected work performance.

**Sample language:** “LifeMatters can help you handle personal issues that may be impacting your behavior. They’ll also help you get back on track at work. I urge you to give them a call.”

**6. Follow up.** Schedule a meeting to review the employee’s progress and address lingering concerns. If performance issues persist, consult with Human Resources.

Always check with HR before taking disciplinary action.

**Sample language:** “Let’s meet again next week to review what we’ve discussed. Please talk to me anytime about questions or concerns.”

The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can suggest more options for addressing a conflict with a direct report, as well as any other workplace issue. Call 24/7/365.

## Management Consultation

LifeMatters is available to help with:

- ▶ Confronting an employee about performance issues
- ▶ An employee’s personal problem
- ▶ Suspected drug or alcohol use on the job
- ▶ Interpersonal conflicts between team members
- ▶ Establishing clear, attainable expectations for performance
- ▶ Addressing crisis situations, such as a violent incident, the death of an employee, or a natural disaster
- ▶ Your own personal concerns
- ▶ Any other work-related issue

LifeMatters offers professional management consultation when you need it, as often as you need it. Call anytime.

Call the **LifeMatters®** by Empathia Management Consultation Service toll-free anytime. **1-800-367-7474**

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Call collect to **262-574-2509** if outside of North America

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