

## Dealing With Chronic Complainers: Management Magic 5

Your employee frequently and openly complains and criticizes most management actions. Criticisms are generally expressed as an opinion that “It won’t work! A waste of time! ” When this is a long term employee, what to do, if anything?

If you allow negative behavior to continue, it will begin to undermine your business. The 2006 Gallup Survey indicates that 14% of employees are actively sabotaging company efforts. The complaining, always negative employee is a saboteur.

Now that doesn’t mean an employee can’t complain. You want to hear what’s not working. But if the employee only complains and has numerous reasons ‘Why’ most any effort won’t work, then you need to deal with this employee.

At the next opportunity, and there will be one soon, take the employee aside and say, “I’m concerned that I hear only negative comments from you. I need managers who will help resolve problems, not just complain about problems. I want you to feel free to raise issues with but I need you to *always* provide a workable recommendation, too. And I need you to think through your recommendation to ensure you have considered our situation. Can you do that?” And wait for the employee to say, “Yes.”

So the next time, Joe/Jane raises an issue, ask ‘Where is your recommendation?’ “No recommendation? Then we can’t deal with that issue, move on.”

And again Joe/Jane comes without a recommendation, your response is, “Well Joe/Jane, I can’t accept this from a member of the management team. Either find a way to help us improve or consider another role. Complaining without helping isn’t working.”

Third time: formally write up the problem. Typically by this time many employees have decided to try things your way or has begun looking for another job. Either is good. Keeping a constantly complaining employee is allowing a cancer to grow in your company. You have to remove him/her or diminish the impact.

If you have to write up this employee a second time, prepare to say goodbye to Joe/Jane, at least as a manager. If it is possible (and important to keep this employee), move Joe/Jane to a less influential role. But it is critical that you tell Joe/Jane why you are making the move.

However, in most small companies there is not enough flexibility to move an employee into another management role. So releasing Joe/Jane may be you best option. If the employee has not yet responded in an acceptable, proactive manner, it’s time to part. The impact of the employee leaving will be less than the constant negativity.

And get some help in releasing this employee.

It’s Always About People.