



## **We Need to Talk: Ten Scenarios to Practice Handling Needed Conversations**

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Ten scenarios allow you to practice addressing employee issues ranging from suspected employee theft to personal hygiene. You are asked to first assume the role of a manager and confront the employee on sensitive issues that frequently occur in the workplace, and then to assume the role of an HR manager and identify the HR implications in the scenario. The scenarios challenge you to think on their feet, exercise judgment, and render a decision toward successful resolution.

### **Learning Objectives**

These scenarios expose you to common workplace issues that have significant HR implications and which managers and supervisors are often reluctant to confront. By participating in these scenarios, you will be able to:

- Structure a conversation with an employee based on communication heuristics.
- Lead discussions with employees on sensitive workplace issues.
- Use various interpersonal communication skills and incorporate them into existing skills.
- Identify specific HR issues and provide advice to general managers dealing with the employee-related issues.
- Improve your self-efficacy as a manager and as an HR professional who provides advice on workplace-related issues.

### **Employee Relations Scenarios**

1. You are a supervisor in a warehousing operation. You recently instituted a “No Smoking” policy in the facility. All employees were notified of the policy change. It was not well-received. As you walk down aisle B in the warehouse, you see a cloud of smoke and then see Chris running to aisle A. You need to talk to Chris.
2. You are an office manager overseeing a department of 25 people. One of your employees comes to you and complains about Pat’s unpleasant body odor and how difficult it is to work in the same area. You agree to talk to Pat.
3. You are the sales department manager at an upscale store. Your boss has talked to you about the appearance of some of your sales clerks—particularly Alex. Alex is sporting on his forearm a new, large tattoo of a devil eating a rat. You agree with your boss that some customers might find it offensive and that it should somehow be covered up. You need to talk to Alex.
4. Sidney has recently been missing work. She tends to call in at the last minute, and there seems to be a pattern developing of Mondays and Fridays. Sidney has been in rehabilitation in the past for alcohol abuse. You need to talk to Sidney.
5. You are a project manager and supervise a team of 11 people. It is near Christmas, and you notice that within one day the office supply cabinet has been conspicuously depleted of tape, scissors, and packing materials. Other than you, the administrative assistant, Lesley, is the only one with the key to the cabinet. You need to talk to Lesley.

6. You are the director of human resources. You asked your benefits administrator, Morgan, to immediately send new benefit information to your boss for her review. The next day, you are chewed out by your boss for not sending her the information. You look bad. You decide to talk to Morgan.
7. You are the vice president of finance. Your administrative assistant, Ryan, is often late getting to work. You have tolerated it for the past year, but your workload has increased and you need all the help you can get, especially at the start of the day. With Ryan coming in late, it is starting to affect your ability to get your job done. You need to talk to Ryan.
8. You are an accounting manager, and the business relies on your department to produce accurate financial reports the end of each month. Your department uses Excel. Last month, you hired a new accountant, Taylor, who claimed to be proficient in Excel. However, co-workers have come to you with complaints about Taylor's work and questioning his abilities. You need to talk to Taylor.
9. You are a payroll manager supervising 25 people. Your team works in close quarters with little physical separation between work stations. Drew is one of your best performers, yet you have received complaints that Drew tends to sprinkle conversations with rather crude and vulgar references. This is not a team of saints, but some have complained that Drew is crossing the line. You need to talk to Drew.
10. You are a marketing director supervising 18 professionals and support staff. The nature of the work requires a collaborative environment where the professionals give work direction to the support staff. A professional on your team, Dana, has started dating a person on the support staff. Although there is no policy prohibiting dating, several co-workers have complained about the two being too affectionate at work. Some also indicate there is preferential treatment for Dana's newfound love interest. You need to talk to Dana.