



One of my favorite staff I ever supervised- I know, I know we're not supposed to have favorites, but they were.

So bright, so energetic, positive, hardworking, brilliant, everything you want in a staff.

Except they talked. And talked. And talked some more.

Every meeting, every brainstorming session, every everything, they talked incessantly.

It wasn't a performance issue, but it was affecting their performance. Because even though everybody loved this person too, they didn't want to be in meetings with them. They didn't want to choose them to present things because they talked and talked and talked and talked.

As this person's supervisor, it was up to me to decide if I wanted to address this or not.

The challenge with non-performance issues when you're a supervisor is that they're non-performance-related. It's not within your job description to address these things, but if you want to be a really great leader- and I know that you do- these are the kinds of conversations that can literally change people's lives.

Generally these are the things that hold people back and they're not even aware of it because nobody else wants to have the conversation with them either.

They tend to be things that are more on the personal side. It might be how they come off when they communicate. It might have something to do with hygiene- that's a really tricky one. Or how somebody dresses

It's a really challenging thing as a supervisor if you are deciding whether or not to have this type of conversation with staff.

But if you want to go from good to great, these are the conversations you need to be having to support this other person.

I know this picture is jarring. That's why I put it in here. The analogy I sometimes use for non-performance issues is lipstick on the teeth.

It could be spinach in your teeth or something hanging out of your nose or the fly on your pants being down- all these little physical, embarrassing things that happen to all of us, and people don't want to tell us, even though almost everybody in that situation would want to know.

We get so uncomfortable bringing it to their attention that we choose not to.

I am constantly in front of people whether it's teaching or facilitating or coaching and I cannot tell you how many times after a full session I'll go to the ladies room



and I have mascara running down my face or I have a poppy seed between my two front teeth or something that I know the other person I just spent an hour talking to noticed and never told me.

Sometimes I make a joke about it. Usually I make a joke about it. I'm like, *you need to tell me because I don't want to feel embarrassed*. So this is the image I want to burn into your mind when you're thinking about these conversations. People don't want to walk around with lipstick on their teeth. And you can be the person who tells them.

What might be challenging about that for you?

Have you ever told someone a version of having lipstick on their teeth or maybe something a little bit deeper than that?

How did it go?

Has anyone ever told you you have lipstick on your teeth? How did that feel? Were you grateful?

How can you shift your mindset to better serve you?

Important things to consider about having these non-performance conversations- Can they handle it?

Is it going to be received well? Maybe not at the moment, but eventually do you think they'll be grateful for it? It's hard to gauge. Sometimes you don't make the right call, but it is something to consider.

What is your purpose in telling them this? If this is a staff person and you're the supervisor, you're not obligated to address these conversations. So what is the purpose? Ultimately it should be that you're looking out for their best interests, not because it annoys you or you don't like it on principle. If it's not affecting their performance directly, then the main purpose is to help them and make them aware of what might be holding them back.

Similarly if it's a colleague or even your boss- that might be the trickiest one of all- you have to think about if they can handle it. Can your relationship handle it? What is your real purpose in wanting to tell them?

There's my little elephant again. One of the ways that you can make these conversations a little bit easier is to acknowledge the discomfort when you're sitting down and you're about to tell someone something that might not feel good for them to hear.

It's okay to disclaim that and say, *you know, I want to start off this conversation by saying it might be uncomfortable and I apologize for that* to set that tone that this could be a tricky thing to talk about.



Come from a place of care and concern that you want them to be aware of it. Ultimately it's up to them what they want to do about it.

Here's how it might be holding them back. I'm guessing you would be having this conversation with somebody you know on some deep level, so you probably have a sense of what their goals are or what they're trying to accomplish. You can bring the conversation back to that. *I know that you want to run your own nonprofit one day and I'm wondering how this might show up as you're pursuing that goal.*

Don't put it on anyone else. That is taking the easy way out. Don't say *well my boss wanted me to ask you or some people are saying...*

Just own it. You don't have to put it on anybody. Just have the conversation. Focus it on them and offer to help. They might be aware but they might not know how to adjust it. That's where you can come in and really help them out.

So, the most important question for you to consider is, who in your world might benefit from knowing they have lipstick on their teeth?

And I'm going to add another question for you-how are you going to find out if you have lipstick on your teeth? Who might you be able to ask to find out that?