When you're not meeting expectations, do you want somebody to tell you or keep it to themselves?

And if they do tell you, would you rather they be really clear or do you want to walk out of that meeting not having any idea what they were talking about?

Okay, so the questions are a little bit rhetorical, but I'm trying to make a point here, which is, when it comes to our own stuff, most of us are on the same page.

We want to know if we are not meeting expectations and we want to know how to meet those expectations so we can make sure our performance is where it needs to be.

But when we start to supervise our own teams, we don't always afford them the same courtesy.

It's not because we suddenly think it's not the best way.

It's because we are faced with this difficult conversation that we don't want to have.

But have it you must because performance issues are inevitable.

People make mistakes.

They drop the ball.

Something slips through the cracks.

(I always realize how many cliches I use once I start recording myself) but it's true, that performance issues are going to happen and how you address them is going to really deeply impact your effectiveness as a leader.

Think about the team you're currently supervising and when it comes to addressing their performance issues what is challenging for you?

Then take a minute to look back over the years of all the people you've supervised and see what patterns might be there.

What has been challenging for you over time?

Then think about how you might shift your mindset to better serve you.

When it comes to addressing performance issues and most other things, your energy is better spent on the proactive side rather than the reactive side.

In the workplace, we tend to spend most of our energy on the reactive side.

What happens if said employee breaks said infraction?

We have steps, and we have forms, and we have HR processes, and the whole nine.

But we need to spend more time on the proactive side.

What are we doing as an organization?

What are you doing as a leader to minimize those performance issues?

Of course, you cannot 100% eliminate them, but you do have a lot of agency in limiting them.

Think about what you are doing proactively to prevent performance issues.

Then what are you doing reactively?

A lot of this comes down to one very simple question- Are you and your staff on the same page?

Are you on the same page about what the expectations are?

Are you on the same page about what to do if the expectations can't be met?

Are you on the same page about how to communicate?

So much of it comes down to two people thinking that they're on the same page, but they're not.

The other thing we run up against is trying to policy everything.

You cannot policy everything, every infraction, every nuance.

We add another line to the policy and that's not what impacts culture or that is not what should impact culture.

Your leadership and your culture should impact policy.

Your policy should not be impacting your leadership and your culture.

When it does come down to having to address performance issues, some best practices to keep in mind are: to be clear, frequent, and consistent about expectations.

What happens a lot of times is we hire someone and we hire them based on a job description that has certain expectations.

And then during their orientation we give them a list of goals that don't fully match up with what the job description was.

Then when it comes time for an annual performance review, there's a whole other set of expectations that also doesn't match up.

A lot of times, staff are in a position where they're not even a hundred percent clear what those expectations are.

Make sure that they're clear and consistent throughout all of the documents and all of your conversations.

Then bring your conversations to those expectations all the time in your praise, in your critical feedback, bring it back to those expectations.

You want to address issues quickly.

The asterisk there is if it's an anomaly and it's not that big of a deal and it's an otherwise really strong employee, be very thoughtful about whether it needs to be addressed.

Be sincerely curious.

A lot of times we get into trouble because we assume why somebody didn't do something.

That they don't care or they're not a very hard worker or they just can't do it when there are so many reasons why performance issues happen.

Don't assume.

Have the conversation and be genuinely curious.

Don't put them on the spot.

Don't ask leading rhetorical questions.

(Like I did at the beginning of this video.)

Be sincerely curious.

'So I was expecting that report yesterday and I didn't receive it. What happened?'

Sincerely ask them and then engage in that conversation.

Focus on the effect so make sure it's not 'well, that's the policy.'

Almost nothing gets me more heated than when I'm on customer service and I'm arguing about something and they say, 'well, that's the policy' and I always say, 'why is that your policy?'

It doesn't satisfy people to just say, 'well because that's the policy'.

You have to have good reasons why you have policies in place and don't fall back on the bad reasons that you have those policies.

Make sure you're clear with staff about why this performance is in fact an issue.

When you address it, it can be really beneficial to focus on the future.

'So what will you do differently so this doesn't happen again?'

Don't make it personal.

Sometimes we get very caught up, especially if it's a staff that we don't have the best relationship with and then it feels personal but it's not personal.

It's personal in the sense that you have a relationship with this person and you are a human being and you want to lead with empathy always but don't make it personal like you're out to get them or you're just so tired of working with them and you start nitpicking things that they're doing.

That's such an ugly place for anybody to be in.

Focus on making it better.

It's not about blaming and lashing people with wet noodles and making them feel terrible.

It's about making the situation better.

The whole point of addressing performance issues is to make them better. It's not punishment for whoever made the mistake.

It's best to document everything just in case so whether or not you're in a position where you're an at-will employer or maybe you're in a tenured position on the opposite end where you basically can't fire them for anything.

When you're at-will you can fire them for almost anything. Whatever situation you are in, even if you're somewhere in the middle, it's good practice to document not just to cover yourself (although that's important) but in your quest to help this person perform better, that history can be helpful.

It's not always just for HR purposes.

Make it collaborative like feedback and like all these other things.

Look out for patterns.

This is another one- make it a conversation and make it collaborative.

Involve them in the process of addressing the issue to make it better- one thing that a lot of us forget but is really important.

Once you finally figure out how you're going to address this and you get your courage and confidence up and you address it, that's a huge, huge step, but it's not the last one.

When you address it, give it some time and then as the progress is being made you have got to recognize that progress.

You just went through that whole process to get to this point and you might lose it in the follow-up.

Even if it's slow and even if it's little, you have to recognize the progress and you have to let your staff know you see they're making the effort so that they continue making it. It's helpful to set some deadlines and keep a close eye on it until it works itself out.

Maybe you agree on a certain date to check back in and see how it's going.

We talked a little bit about the assumptions we make when people have performance issues and we generally go to the last one, that they don't care.

Sometimes that's the case, but there are so many other reasons why performance issues happen. Depending on why they're happening is going to affect how you address them.

Don't assume.

Get it directly from the staff, so you know how to best support them.

If they didn't know it was an expectation then clarify it.

If they don't understand the expectation, clarify it.

If they don't have the knowledge or the skill, teach it.

If they don't have the resources, provide them.

If they don't have the capability- this one's a tricky one because then that's going to be a bigger discussion if they're a great staff and they work hard and they just can't do it.

Can that piece of their job be given to somebody else or is it really essential and they just can't do the job very well, but you don't want to lose them?

Is there somewhere else you can put them on that proverbial bus?

That's a tough one, but it's an important one to consider.

If they don't have the time do they need a resource, or do they need some prioritization?

If it is in fact the case that they don't care, don't work with attitude. It's not worth your time or energy if it's simply an attitude issue. Those are the people you don't want on your team.

Your silence is often received as endorsement both for the person having the performance issue and the rest of the team.

If you do ignore it, and you don't address it, then it is being perceived that it's okay or it's not okay, but you're not willing to address it and in either case this is not the result you want.

Your silence does have consequences.

Your staff are watching how you're handling other people's performance and everybody knows when there is a weak link. Everybody knows when somebody is slacking and everyone else is working hard and that can really damage morale.

You have to as the leader of the team take care of that and the team needs to know that you're taking care of it while protecting confidentiality.

It gets very tricky, but they need to know that performance matters and that you are going to address it when there's an issue.

So, the most important question for you is, what do you need to do to more effectively address performance issues?