



HR At a Glance - Leadership

A Practical Desk Reference for Small Business Leaders



SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Most performance problems trace back to a conversation that never happened.

COACHING EMPLOYEES

Managers who coach regularly rarely need to manage performance formally.

HOLDING ACCOUNTABILITY CONVERSATIONS

Letting issues slide doesn't protect the relationship - it undermines it.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Define what "good" looks like before evaluating performance.

COACHING EMPLOYEES

Shift from telling to asking.

HOLDING ACCOUNTABILITY

Prepare before the conversation, not during it.

- Role clarity and job expectations
- Performance standards defined
- Goals communicated in writing
- Check-in cadence established
- Consequences of non-performance clear

- Ask before advising
- Listen more than you talk
- Focus on behavior, not personality
- Document coaching conversations
- Follow up on commitments

- State the issue clearly and specifically
- Reference prior expectations
- Allow employee to respond
- Agree on next steps
- Document the conversation

Red Flags

- Employees say "I didn't know that was expected"
- Performance issues with no prior documentation
- Goals exist only in the manager's head

Red Flags

- Manager only talks to employees when something goes wrong
- Feedback is vague ("do better") rather than specific
- Employees are surprised by performance reviews

Red Flags

- Problems are discussed informally but never documented
- Same issues keep recurring without resolution
- Manager avoids the conversation hoping it resolves itself

Lean in HR Tip

If it wasn't written down, it wasn't communicated.

Lean in HR Tip

Regular coaching prevents formal performance management.

Lean in HR Tip

A conversation without documentation didn't happen.

📄 KELLY'S RULES OF LEADERSHIP

1. Clarity beats assumptions.
2. Consistency builds trust.
3. Feedback loses value when delayed.
4. Accountability starts with expectations.
5. Leaders set the tone.

⚠️ HOW URGENT IS THIS?

🚫 ADDRESS TODAY

- Unaddressed performance issue
- Active conflict between employees
- Manager behavior creating legal risk
- Complaint without a response

⚠️ ADDRESS THIS WEEK

- Unclear role expectations
- Overdue coaching conversation
- Undocumented performance concerns
- Inconsistent policy application

✅ ADDRESS THIS MONTH

- Manager training on feedback
- Goal-setting process
- Coaching cadence established
- Documentation practices reviewed

⚠️ BEFORE YOU TAKE ACTION

Before having any employee conversation, ask yourself:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have I clearly communicated my expectations? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do I have documentation of prior conversations? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have I coached before escalating? | <input type="checkbox"/> Am I applying standards consistently? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Am I addressing behavior, not personality? | <input type="checkbox"/> Would my approach hold up to scrutiny? |

Most leadership problems don't start with bad managers - they start with unclear expectations, inconsistent follow-through, and conversations that never happened. A little structure today prevents significant problems tomorrow.



Need a Second Opinion?

Take the free HR Snapshot to find out where your management practices stand - and what to fix first.

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