

How To Deal With Hostile Employees: 10 Strategies



What is one strategy for an employer to deal with hostile employees?

To help employers deal with hostile employee behavior, we asked business owners and HR leaders this question for their best advice. From setting clear behavioral expectations to promptly addressing the behavior, there are several strategies that may help your company's leadership handle hostile employee behavior.

Here are 10 ways to deal with hostile employees:

- Set Clear Expectations for Future Behavior
- Consider Why They Are Hostile
- Be Firm, Assertive, and Clear With Them
- Document Events of their Hostile Behavior
- Setting Boundaries is Paramount
- Give Direct and Open Feedback
- Remain Calm in Tense Situations

- Utilize Empathy
- Remind Them of Company Culture Expectations
- Promptly Address the Behavior to Put An End to It

Set Clear Expectations for Future Behavior

If you are dealing with an employee who is being hostile, you can work with your team or department to set expectations and guidelines for everyone. Building healthy norms like agreeing as a team to communicate more openly about frustrations can help avoid unneeded stress and resentment within the team. If the employee who is being hostile tends to ignore things like assignments given during meetings, take notes about who is responsible for what and by when. This can help everyone be held accountable and a little positive peer pressure can sometimes lessen someone's passive-aggressiveness.

Maegan Griffin, [Skin Pharm](#)

Consider Why They Are Hostile

In order to address a problem effectively, you must first understand it. Why are your employees hostile? If it is for a legitimate reason, such as delays in their pay or an inability to access promised benefits, that problem must be addressed immediately.

If the problem is instead attitude, entitlement, or general discontent it is time to begin documenting employee behavior and preparing for separations.

Wesley Jacobs, [Apollo Medical Travel](#)

Be Firm, Assertive, and Clear With Them

Hostile employees are a plague for any business and employer and more specifically, to their co-workers who may be on the receiving end of hostility. One key strategy to deal with hostile employees is simple but must be upheld and executed. No one wants to start issues and bring up a certain person's hostility but if they're a constant physical and mental threat to you and your co-workers, action must be taken. You MUST be firm, assertive, and clear when speaking to your hostile employee and you must discuss what exactly they're doing wrong, how it's affecting the employees and workplace, and the consequences that will follow if they do not change their behavior at work.

James Burati, [1-800-PackRat](#)

Document Events of their Hostile Behavior

Before you can intervene and correct the situation, you'll need to document the behavior of the employee to identify recurring patterns of their antisocial behavior. This documentation will further act as infallible proof when you need to discuss the repercussions of their actions, especially if they try to talk their way out of it. Furthermore, it may help the employee identify the root cause and even take accountability for their actions, especially if they're being hostile unknowingly.

Riley Beam, [Douglas R. Beam, P.A.](#)

Setting Boundaries is Paramount

The importance of setting boundaries is paramount when dealing with hostile employees. Your first assessment as a manager or small business owner should be to consider if the employee is a valuable asset. That being the case, the next best step would be to play fair by listening to their concerns and addressing the issues that might be causing them animosity. You should provide valuable feedback to them while following an intentional process that involves documenting the behavior and taking appropriate action based on your company's policies. An amicable resolution is what everyone is looking for. Trust your instincts and make decisions based on what you think is most appropriate for the team dynamic and the company.

Nick Shackelford, [Structured Agency](#).

Give Direct and Open Feedback

Sometimes, hostile employees do not even realize their own hostility unless you start a conversation about it. Thus, it's essential to provide them with your honest and constructive feedback as the employer. It can allow them to take a look at their behavior from another perspective, understand the problem and, in the best-case scenario, change. It's crucial to be objective and give feedback only to specific behavior, not their personality, and find the right time and place for the conversation. Help the employee develop an improvement plan and schedule regular feedback sessions to see how it is going.

Ewelina Melon, [Tidio](#)

Remain Calm in Tense Situations

When dealing with a hostile employee, it's important for everyone handling tense situations to remain calm and not get angry or defensive. This can be difficult when people are feeling attacked or belittled, but when you respond in an emotional manner it can leave you looking irrational and aggressive. Try to respond as calmly as possible and try to understand where they are coming from. De-escalating tense situations is important if any headway is going to be made in understanding the issues that caused the situation in the first place. Use an even tone of voice, be clear in communicating that you just want to help understand where they are coming from, etc. You don't want to add to their anger by being upset also.

Nathalie Walton, [Expectful](#)

Utilize Empathy

Typically a hostile employee is reacting to a feeling of being attacked, causing complex workplace situations. One of the best ways to approach these types of conflicts is to come with legitimate empathy and seek commonality and understanding. Approaching hostility in this way can quickly diffuse a situation and help you find a growth-centered scenario.

Kashish Gupta, [Hightouch](#)

Remind Them of Company Culture Expectations

If you have already set particular standards for your company culture, this will be helpful for when you are dealing with hostile employees who choose to rebel against these standards. For example, if you have been clear about expecting a company culture of supportiveness and collaboration, you can remind difficult employees of this. This way they will definitely know what is expected of them from that point forward and, by you repeating standards that you have already mentioned before, they will know that you are serious.

Schuyler Hoversten, [Swoopt](#)

Promptly Address the Behavior to Put An End to It

To deal with hostile employees, an employer should address their behavior as inappropriate for work. They must explain that the behavior needs immediate correction before it becomes detrimental to working relationships. The employer also needs to mention the consequences of continued bad behavior and how it affects teamwork and production. If the situation continues, consequences such as suspension or termination may be necessary to maintain a respectful workplace.

Sam Santa, [Zeitholz](#)

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