

Have you ever had to hold a difficult conversation at work?

At some point as a manager we would have held a difficult conversation, whether this was through poor performance or there may have been a conflict that needed resolving.

Many managers will go into these conversations without preparation, so when you're next holding a difficult conversation, consider the following points:

Firstly, you must plan an appropriate location to hold this conversation.

You need to ensure that the location is discrete and neutral and that nobody else can hear or interrupt you during the conversation. For full neutrality maybe go off site away from work so that you're not seen as a manager and just another person.

If the conversation is more formal, think carefully about seating arrangements, sitting next to someone can be seen as less intimidating than sitting directly opposite someone.

Secondly, you should gather and establish all of the facts.

Certain difficult conversations will be performance related, others may be discipline related.

It's essential that when holding these conversations you are fully aware of all of the facts related to the subject of the talk. Is the conversation related to someone being persistently late? Make sure you have records and timesheets of how often and how late they were.

If you go into this without the relevant facts and evidence, it will only make your difficult conversation a whole lot harder.

Finally, you should check your company policies and look for support from higher up the hierarchy.

Sometimes there are conversations you must hold that require you checking your company policy before you hold them.

For handling disciplinary measures and grievances your company policy should outline any potential consequences you should be handing out. There may be instances of a person using social media at work or watching other inappropriate materials – you will have to refer to official policies before knowing when to approach and how to discipline that member of your team.

Similarly, you should check your policies and procedures as you may not be the right person in the first place that should be holding this conversation, it may be a manager higher up the hierarchy or someone from HR.

So before holding your next difficult conversation, you should consider the following points.

Number one – think about where to hold this conversation - it should be somewhere where you cannot be overheard, preferably somewhere neutral and arrange the seating depending on the formality.

Number two – establish and collate all of the facts possible, you need to back up everything you say during the conversation with factual information.

And number three – check your company policy, how should you deal with certain disciplinary measures and grievances in accordance with your organisation's guidelines?