

### FOCUS ON THE DISAPPOINTMENT IN TERMS OF THE OUTCOME, NOT THE PERSON

Successful teachers know that when you discipline a student, you focus on the behavior, not the child. The same is true for business

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Of course, if there's been an intentional violation of an important principle, value, or standard that compromises the integrity of the organization, then anger is understandable. However, true anger should be reserved for the most egregious acts.

vent your anger? Is the goal to find a solution to rectify the current circumstances? Or do you really want to help the employee learn and grow from the situation?

### ASSESS YOUR ROLE IN THE DISAPPOINTMENT

As part of managing yourself, take some time to reflect on your role in the disappointment. Before you declare, "I did nothing. It was entirely the other person's fault," realize that as a leader, you are ultimately responsible for your people. So ask yourself, "What role did I play?" and "How did I contribute to this disappointment?"

Perhaps you didn't give the employee enough training. Maybe you threw them into a situation that they were too "green" to handle. Perhaps you didn't adequately prepare them for the meeting. Whatever the disappointing outcome was, chances are you had some role in it—even a small one. Acknowledge that prior to your conversation.

### ASSUME GOOD INTENT

When you take the stance that the employee didn't intentionally cause the disappointment, it naturally takes the edge off of your approach and any anger you may have. And in the majority of cases, that stance is absolutely accurate — the employee didn't set out to cause harm. They simply made a mistake or a bad judgment call, which resulted in a less than ideal situation.

Additionally, realize that the employee knows they messed up, and they've probably given themselves a thorough thrashing by now and are terrified to speak with you. Therefore, any anger you display will be mild compared to what they've already dished out to themselves.

# DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

## HOW EFFECTIVE LEADERS RESPOND



**D**isappointment is inevitable for leaders. At times your people will disappoint you, and there will also be instances where you disappoint others. So the fact that disappointment occurs isn't the challenge. The real issue to address is how you respond to the disappointment.

Unfortunately, far too many leaders react to disappointment with anger and punishment. You've likely seen the scenario. An employee loses a key client, misses an important deadline or does any number of common things, and the leader responds by demoting the employee, removing responsibility, not allowing the employee to take vacation time,

firing the employee or doing other punitive actions.

Such consequences are really nothing more than a knee-jerk reaction on the part of the leader ... and a missed opportunity for the leader to shine. In reality, how you handle disappointment speaks volumes of your leadership style and your credibility in your organization.

To make the most of a disappointing situation and use it as the coaching opportunity it is, consider the following suggestions:

### MANAGE YOURSELF BEFORE YOU CONFRONT THE EMPLOYEE

Before talking with the employee about the disappointing situation,

you first have to manage yourself. In other words, you have to be clear on what your intention is for the conversation. Because you're in a position of authority, what you say during these moments will have a ripple effect.

Of course, this isn't to say that you aren't justified in your anger or justified in your disappointment. You most certainly are. However, your expression of those feelings has an impact on how others view you and on what the employee will do in the future.

So before initiating the conversation, take some time to step back and get clear about what you want to have happen as a result of the meeting. Are you simply looking to

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leaders. Even if the disappointment occurred because the employee was negligent in some way, you need to separate what happened from the employee personally.

State your disappointment in terms of the outcome, and then explore with the employee the cause in an inquisitive and coaching way, rather than a punitive way.

Why? Because when employees feel punished or that the boss is scolding them, they become fearful, which decreases creativity and innovation on the job — the exact things you often need them to employ to

rectify a disappointing situation.

**LEARN FROM DISAPPOINTMENTS**

It's human nature to lash out during disappointing times, and because a leader can, he or she often does. But remember that how you handle disappointment reflects more on you as a leader than on the person who caused the situation.

Additionally, realize that the majority of disappointing moments are actually coaching moments in disguise. Savvy leaders recognize this and make the most of these situations. So if you want to be

viewed as a leader with courage, credibility and reason, use the suggestions presented here the next time you feel the need to punish an employee for a wrongdoing. When you do, you won't be disappointed in the results. **CS**

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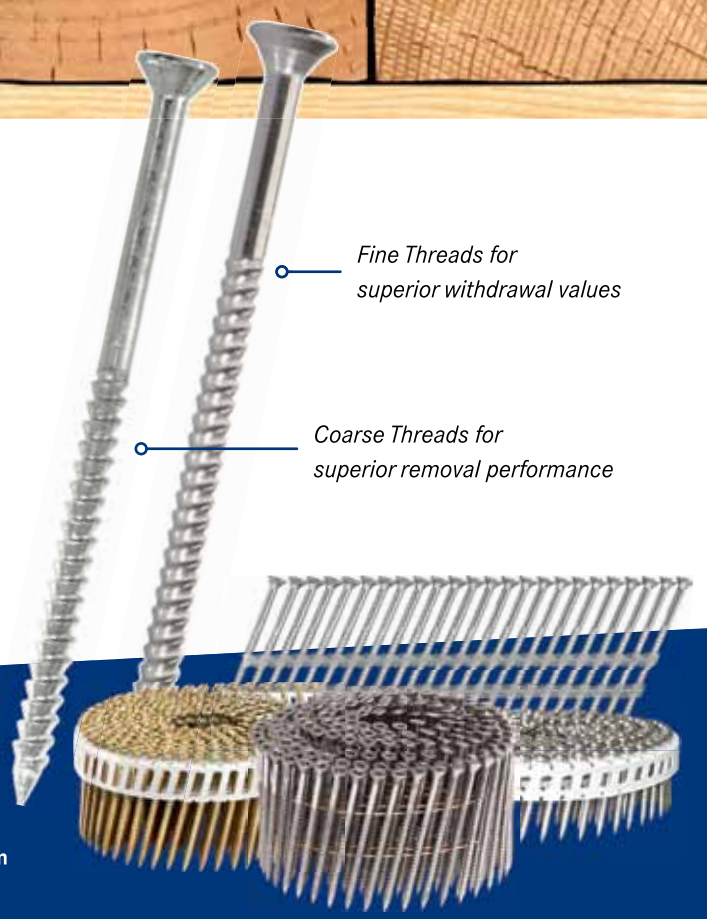
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