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MANAGING EMPLOYEES

# 7 Steps for Getting the Chronically Late Employee to Be Punctual

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When you own your own business, you rely on your employees to help you run your company efficiently. If an employee is consistently late, others in the company start to notice, oftentimes causing frustration and friction.

Sometimes being late is unavoidable, depending on the circumstances. However, chronic tardiness requires intervention before the behavior becomes a serious problem.

Here are ways to deal with an employee who is constantly late.

### **1. Identify the behavior.**

It's understandable if an employee has a legitimate reason for being late every once in a while. Traffic accidents happen, weather intervenes, kids get sick. Life happens and unexpected problems do come up occasionally. What's not acceptable is an employee who shows up late most of the time.

When a staff member consistently shows up late, he's essentially not respecting your time, or his own. That's when you need to decide if your employee's behavior is worth condoning or reprimanding.

**Related: [Time Management Tips: What to Do If You Are Always Late](#)**

### **2. Be proactive.**

Don't let a person's excessive tardiness go so long that you react in anger. Remember, you're tired of the behavior, not the person. Try not to lose your cool. It's counterproductive to use foul language or threaten an employee.

Deal with the situation as soon as you see a pattern arise; then be proactive. Schedule a time to talk and address the issue one-on-one. Bring documentation of an employee's tardiness into your meeting and ask him what is preventing him for reporting to work on time.

### **3. Verbalize your disappointment.**

It's a trick your mother probably used on you as a child. Most people tend to be disappointed in themselves when someone they respect is disappointed in them. When a team member doesn't follow through on a commitment, explain the consequences of his actions. If he is late to a client meeting, say something like, "The client waited ten minutes for you to arrive. I had to ask Ashley to fill in for you." Perhaps the employee doesn't realize (although he should) that his behavior affects his co-workers, as well.

### **4. Come up with an action plan.**

Don't act in haste. Your employee's excessive tardiness may be due to a medical issue or family obligations. In that case, you may want to make an exception and suggest a later start time or a more flexible work schedule.

**Related:** [How to Manage Time With 10 Tips That Work](#)

### **5. Respect a person's privacy.**

Always try to have difficult discussions in private, especially when disciplinary action might be necessary. If you confront an employee in public, he will be more likely to be embarrassed, humiliated or react defensively. Explain your concerns, cite specific examples and then solicit feedback.

Allow the employee to absorb what you've said and respond. Practice effective listening. Your employee will be more apt to respect a fair, honest and forthright approach.

## **6. Clearly outline the consequences.**

Develop a policy that addresses the consequences for tardiness. For example, if your employee is occasionally late, ask him to make up that time. If he is consistently late, you may choose to issue a written warning, dock his pay or decrease any bonus he receives. If the behavior affects your bottom line or tarnishes a client relationship, you may have to take more serious action.

## **7. Reward improvements.**

Reinforce change through praise. When you notice an employee has altered his behavior in a positive way, say so. Your simple acknowledgement will let him know he's on the right track and will also show him that you appreciate his efforts. You'll be surprised how a few kind words go a long way.