

Advice Center

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8 tips for talking to employees about attendance

You've noticed that one of your employees is always out sick the Monday after a holiday. Or the Friday before. Another one always has a family emergency when projects are due. You understand the need for time off, and recognize that sometimes things come up. But all of these unplanned employee absences are making it hard to run your business. It's time to have a talk.

Talking about the problem

The time to talk about an employee attendance problem is when you first notice it. As you plan this conversation, here are a few points to keep in mind.

1. This isn't a disciplinary meeting, so be sure to keep the mood one of information-gathering and concern rather than condemnation or threats.
2. Remember, this employee is a valuable part of your business. Your focus should be on solving a problem, rather than punishing someone for breaking rules.
3. Meet with the employee privately. The sales floor, lunch room or an open cubical are not the right settings for discussing [employee absenteeism](#). If necessary, choose an offsite location like a coffee shop if no private location is available at work.
4. Prepare for the meeting by gathering all the facts, including dates of absences or tardiness, reasons given for each incident, and any supporting documentation or notes. Include information about how the missed work days have impacted the employee's performance.
5. Explain how the missed work days hurt the business, too. Often an employee is unaware of how one person calling off impacts sales, service or company image. Discuss the specific cost of the employee absences to your business.
6. Ask questions about the [reasons for the employee's absences](#). Identifying a genuine issue like transportation, child care or illness might allow you to work with the employee to address the absences more effectively. Be aware of the possibility that the employee may be entitled to [Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#) leave.
7. If there is a consistent reason [for the employee absences](#), see if there is a solution you can offer. A slight adjustment in work hours to match a bus schedule, or a shift in work days to allow family members to share responsibilities might be all it takes to correct the employee absenteeism issue.
8. After the meeting, monitor your employee's attendance and address any additional concerns as soon as they arise.

Pay attention to improvement in attendance

If you notice a marked improvement, be sure to let the employee know you appreciate the change. Unplanned employee absences will happen. The important thing is to address problems with [chronic absenteeism](#) before it becomes a problem. The right conversation with your employee at the right time might be all you need.

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