

Tackling Tardiness

Advice from Anderson & Associates discloses the importance of dealing with consistently late staff members.

Q. I couldn't ask for a better staff except when it comes to being on time. One of my best therapists is repeatedly late, which throws off the entire schedule and causes me and my managers undue anxiety. Unfortunately, she is also the spa's star therapist. Needless to say, she does more than her part in contributing to the bottom line due to her extremely loyal clientele. Despite repeated reprimands, she seems unable to make it in on time. Is there anything I can do to resolve the problem? I can't afford to lose her.—*Troubled by Tardiness*

A. Dear Troubled by Tardiness: Actually, you can't afford to keep her. Your employee is disrespecting you, your business, and her fellow staff members with her tardiness. Moreover, you are enabling her by applying the rules differently to her than to other employees. One of the crucial requirements of the job is to be on time. Once you are 100 percent clear that the employee in question has been completely briefed on this point, the emphasis shifts from being an issue of training to an issue of discipline. It appears that you are in the discipline arena. You need to be very clear and tell this employee that her tardiness can cost her her position. You need to document this in writing and have her sign a statement that she is aware of the consequences of her actions. If she continues to choose to be late, then you must take action, even if it results in her dismissal without a letter of recommendation from you.

If this is not enough food for thought, ask yourself what the cost would be to replace those employees who are fed up with jumping through hoops to support her. And let's not even consider the "dollar and reputation" costs of a lawsuit when you fire someone else who is less technically proficient



but equally tardy and they claim unfair employment policies, or, worse, discrimination.

If you do not take action, you are sending a clear message to the rest of your staff that you play favorites, you can be manipulated, and rules are meant to be broken. While she may be technically proficient as a therapist, she is far from one of your best.—*Peter C. Anderson and Michele A. Chandler*

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