Speaker 1 ():

Hi there. Welcome to Mindset Monday. This is Jayme Dill, and this series is all about helping you to create a success mindset and the habits and skills that go with it so that you can create the business and life that you've always wanted.

So welcome. Today we're going to be talking about one of the topics that I get the most calls on between meetings. I have my regularly scheduled coaching meetings with my clients, but I also am like, "call me anytime something arises that you need support with that you could use some coaching", and this is by far the most common topic.

Dealing with a difficult employee situation. I was going to say a problem employee, but I think it's really more a situation. Sometimes high performing, really good employee where there's one particular area. Sometimes it is with an employee where there's a chronic area, but this is one of the things, as I said, that causes the most angst, consumes a lot of time, consumes time within the company.

The classic of "I would love leadership if I didn't have to deal with the people". It's the classic aspect of that.

So whether you're dealing with a situation where you have an employee who's chronically late or maybe chronically calls out sick, someone maybe who has a bad attitude, performance issues, maybe not hitting the performance goals or metrics that you've had set out, maybe it's someone who's emotionally volatile or inappropriate behavior with other employees, or lord forbid customers, other people, right?

No matter what the problem is, and no matter what level of employee that you're dealing with, whether it's a CEO with a c-suite level employee, or it's a supervisor with an entry-level employee, and whether it's a chronic issue or a one-time issue, I'm going to share with you today a process that I've supported clients in using for 30 years. It was one of the things that I was originally trained on in my coaching training and probably a tool that I've pulled out the most over the years.

So when we think of employee situations like this, we don't necessarily think of a process. Instead, we think of like, oh, people issues. It's overwhelming. Sometimes we get aggravated. We say, "I have a business to run. I have a results to produce. I don't have time to work with this drama. It's no time. It's time consuming."

Well, I'm going to share with you today a process that, as I said, I've consistently used that helps to support you in moving through this without as many headaches. I didn't say *no* headaches without as many headaches, and that will lead you to a resolution.

When I was originally trained on it it was called "employee problem resolution action plan". So dig that for what it's worth. So I've modified it a smidge over the years, but it's still pretty close

to the original process that I got from the E-Myth Academy when I was, as I said, originally trained as a coach.

So first step, this is one that I added through my own experience of working with leaders, and that is first thing, deal with your own state, your own emotional, mental behavioral challenge around this first. So first thing I always say lead yourself first. So here's what the conversation looks like when I'm talking to clients: very frequently they'll be describing to me the problem employee, sometimes complaining, sometimes just really frustrated or angry or at their wit's end. And I'll say, "okay, well, how are you with this?" "Oh, I'm fine. Let's just talk about Susie" or whoever, right? I'm like, "it doesn't actually sound like you're fine, it sounds like…." And then I'll reflect back to them whatever the emotional state that I'm guessing that they're in. And so that's the first thing, is not to gloss over where you're at because where we want you to be - not in a place where you don't have reactions. You're human. You're going to have reactions, and those reactions are actually useful information in the process - But we don't want you going into the resolution conversation in an activated emotional state, right? We want you instead to be able to be calm, an objective so that you can deliver a message. Actually I should say, use whatever emotional tones effective for the message, not whatever emotional tone you seem to be reacting in, if that makes sense. So the first thing we need to do is coach you or you coach yourself to a state of effectiveness around the situation.

Often people when they're angry, believe that's an effective state. Rarely do I see speaking out in anger as being an effective problem resolution state to be in. I said, rarely, not, never.

Step two, once you've got yourself kind of into a place of equilibrium is step two. What you're going to do is clearly define the problem first for yourself. We want to get clear, succinct language, narrow down as easily as possible. So someone being late to work, it's pretty easy. "For the last three Mondays, you were late to work or called out sick." That's pretty easy, pretty easily defined, and you want to stay at the scope of that. With either a behavioral or an attitude problem. What I usually get is narratives and monologues from clients as they're working through this. It's harder to nail down and get very, very specific, but that's exactly what we want to do: Get clear on two or three very specific points that you can clearly communicate and that are actionable by the employee. We'll talk about that in just a moment. So step two is you're defining, clearly defining the problem first for yourself and then so that you can communicate that to the employee.

So once you communicate with the employee, this is the first time you and the employee are coming together. Once you communicate, you use language something along the lines of, "I've observed that for the last three Mondays that you've come in late" or "I've observed that when we're in meetings and you become what appears to me to be frustrated, you roll your eyes and huff and start using a short tone with people". So you define in your meeting with the employee, this is what I'm observing, and then this is the third step. What you'll do, third is you'll gain agreement from the employee that this is something that's happening and get their agreement that they are willing or able to work on the resolution with you. And this is usually what people do is just completely gloss over this, right? So they then present solutions or expectations or demands, and those are not out of line. As an employer, you have the right to say, people, this is what I expect from you, and you can go straight to that step. However, I found if you get step three

really good, you can work together with the employee to create a collaborative resolution to the problem. And I'm not selling collaboration for collaboration's sake. I'm selling collaborative coming together in this case because you're more likely to get their buy-in and then therefore behavior change that you're looking for. So step three is get agreement that there's a problem. I've even had people go so far as to say, "do you agree that you've been late for the last three Mondays and you could see how that's a problem for the company?" Or "we can't have that happening", and you want to get them yes, nodding their head yes. So that's part of the reason why it's so important to create the clear, succinct message about what the problem is in objective language. That's as non-shaming possible. Because if you shame them and wrong make them and berate them or yell at them, they're more likely to shut down to go to shame or defensiveness, and that's not going to be effective. So that was step three.

Step four. Then if you have their agreement, you can do one of three things. You can brainstorm with them, how do you think we could resolve this? What are some things that you think you could change or what actions could you take differently so that you can be here on time or stop rolling your eyes in the meeting or whatever it is. Option 2 is that You could also just present the solution. "I would like you to…" fill in the blank, right? Again, you want to make it something that they can win at. Or third option, you could just say, "Hey, here's the outcome that I want. You figure out how you need to get here". "I expect a professional attitude. I expect professional behavior that involves no slamming of doors or screaming at other employees" or whatever the case may be. So you can just clearly outline the results that you expect from them.
Any one of those three brainstorming together and engaging them, though again, studies show that that will produce a higher likelihood of them taking action and consistently being able to move in that direction.

And then step five, a follow-up plan with a timeline. So that is, "let's get together again in a month after you've had a chance to be here for four Mondays on time, and we'll see how that's going and follow up and see if we need to make any changes". So "we'll follow up in a month unless you're late. Then we'll follow up that day." So you can set up what you're going to do for your follow-up plan. We're going to get together and discuss it in this case. And what is the timeline within which you expect to see the result?

I hope that you found this helpful. Like I said, over the years, those benchmarks have been extraordinarily helpful and practical to implement in the heat of a challenge. Again, there's some twisting and turning and art to each of the steps sometimes, but at least if you have a framework that helps you walk away as a leader from this big drama situation or overwhelming or aggravating situation to you into a place where you can really move it towards resolution.

So thanks so much for being here, and I would look forward to seeing you next week. Thanks so much.