



Tough Situations

Degree of Difficulty: Toughest

SITUATION:

One of your most valuable employees suddenly resigns.

YOUR MISSION:

Determine why he/she resigned suddenly.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO OR SAY:

You should determine whether you should take action yourself or perhaps ask someone other than you to take action. If your organization has an HR department, someone from the HR department may have this responsibility. Don't assume that you know why he/she resigned if he/she hasn't told you. Regardless, it's important that you understand his/her reasons for the sudden resignation. If you are going to perform the mission yourself, here are a few guidelines:

- Listen. Your mission is to understand why he/she resigned, not to judge whether it was a good decision.
- Resist the temptation to argue or debate with him/her.
- Don't justify anything you are accused of. Don't try to "set the record straight." There will be a time and place to correct the record but it's not now.

Begin a discussion with him/her:

- "I'd like to understand why you resigned. Can you explain your reasons to me?"

- “Is there anything else that you considered in your decision?”
- “Have you told me everything that you’d like to tell me? I want to make sure I understand completely.”

After you’ve listened:

- “Here’s how I understand what you’ve told me.” (Restate as well as you can what you heard them tell you. Don’t editorialize it, with statements like, “You said this, but that’s not true.”)
- “Is that about what you said? Have I heard everything accurately?”

WHY IT WILL WORK:

Successfully handling this mission will yield dividends for you into the future. First, the employee may want to return to work in your organization and if he/she is of value, you may want to welcome him/her back to work. Secondly, in terms of goodwill and reputation, handling this mission will enhance your reputation as a leader with everyone with whom the former employee comes in contact.