



Dealing with difficult conversations

"Sam phones in unable to come to work again. This is the 5th day this month. On top of this, you know he missed TAFE last week and is struggling to keep up with his TAFE work generally. In the past, you've been able to raise this with your apprentice's parents but in this case, you know your concerns would fall on deaf ears. You've had the distinct impression lately that Sam isn't taking his role seriously and while you don't want to take on the role of parent, you know you need to have a difficult conversation with him about his attitude to work."

Tips for difficult conversations with you apprentice:

1. Good feedback is timely, specific and relevant.

When there's a problem with your apprentice is behaving, don't avoid the conversation, act on it immediately.

2. Explore what' happening for them:

Start the conversation by exploring what you've noticed and give them the chance to raise anything with you. For example, "Sam, it's now been 5 days you've been off in the last month. This isn't the way we agreed to work, is there anything going on for you that you want to discuss with me".

3. Set our your expectations

Once you've given them a chance to discuss what's happening for them, it's time to reinforce your expectations. Clearly and simply, set out your expectations of their behaviour. Remind them of the contract they signed and commitment they agreed to when they became your apprentice. Also, raise awareness about the impact their behaviour is having on you and the broader business.

4. Reach agreement:

Once you've explained your expectations, re-gain agreement about whether this is something they still agree to and can commit too. For example, "I know we've discussed this before, but I need to know is this something you can commit to because I need 100% commitment in all areas, otherwise this relationship isn't going to work out".

5. Follow-up after the conversation:

Once you've re-established your expectations, keep on top it. Firstly, make sure you role model the behaviour you expect from your apprentice and reinforce your messages. If their behaviour changes, give them positive feedback about this. If their behaviour doesn't change, reinforce the conversation you had previously and you may even decide to reinforce that conversation by offering a time frame to see the change. For example, "If we don't see a change in the next two months, we're going to have to discuss whether this relationship is working out".

If you want to discuss a particular issue with a coach, or learn how to apply these tips to your specific situation contact ABLAC today. We're here to help.