



## Dear Joe:

I have a fifteen year employee who is struggling to complete her duties accurately and in a timely fashion. Her performance is becoming unacceptable to me, her fellow employees and our members. She is making too many mistakes, of which we have documentation. She is unable to complete tasks that she has completed many times in the past. Members are avoiding her and I am worried they will take their business elsewhere. Help?

*Sincerely, Struggling Supervisor*

## Dear Struggling Supervisor,

Two words come to mind in this situation - performance and compassion. As a leader, your job is to ensure that all members of the team perform at a high level. It's also your obligation to address issues with compassion. In many organizations, those two words are mutually exclusive...but they shouldn't be. One to balance them is to invite the employee into the conversation. Here's how you can start the discussion:

"Sara, I have a problem that I need to discuss with you. I'd like to tell you my concerns and then listen to what you have to say. My goal is that we work this out together."

This approach establishes a sense of camaraderie as you both look to solve the problem. From here, you want to clearly explain your observations and the impact they've had on the team, the credit union and the members. Once you've explained your view of the situation, ask for her thoughts on the matter. Listen to the reasons she gives for making mistakes and why she is taking so long to complete routine assignments. You may learn something you weren't aware of, leading you to make adjustments or reassign work. The matter of performance is non-negotiable, so you will need to end the meeting with clear expectations moving forward. Depending on the direction of the discussion, I'd also include a timeline and an explanation of what will be happen if the performance standards can't be reached.

After you've met, the performance/compassion connection will require continued coaching and feedback. If productivity remains poor, termination may be your best option. If so, make sure you consult an HR professional.

*Stay Positive – Joe B.*