

## DTD Episode 17 Show Notes

### Defeat *YOUR* Drama: Two of my employees don't get along. What can I do?

#### Dave from Delaware

If you'd like me to share customized strategies for your drama situation go to my website <http://podcast.defeatthedrama.com/defeat-your-drama/>. You can type or record your message. Use your real name or an alias for anonymity. Note that recorded or written messages may be used on the podcast.

#### Dave from Delaware wrote in:

Two of my employees do not like each other. I think it started with a dating situation gone awry. They refuse to work in the same vicinity. They won't communicate directly with each other. I keep doing more and more to keep the peace but nothing works. They complain about each other to me constantly. They don't want to help each other. It seems like the entire team is constantly focused on keeping the two of them apart. Talk about drama! Please tell me what I can do!

Dave, so sorry to hear about your struggles. Let's get you some customized solutions.

As always, In the Defeat Your Drama segments, I will provide solutions based on the information provided. I will obviously not have full details so will provide customized strategies based on what you share. Always consider your own specific circumstances before taking any action. These are suggestions not guarantees.

#### #1 Realize that You Are Creating the Problem

Dave, you might not want to hear it, but you have helped to create the situation that you are in. No, I'm not suggesting you had anything to do with the dating snafu that caused the rift initially. But, your reaction to the situation has invited the chaos into your business.

Good news, though! It means that you can be part of the solution!

Humans don't make change without some motivation as a catalyst. There must be some sort of pain or consequence to motivate them to work through their differences. To date, you have accommodated their desire to continue the feud. Both you and the rest of the team are creating all the work arounds to support its continuation. You are, thus, bearing the brunt. The situation is working for them. They get to stay away from each other while the rest of the team does everything to help them avoid each other.

I am going to assume that since you took the time to write to me that this is NOT working for you or the rest of your team. You have motivation to change, correct?

## **#2 Stop Accommodating Them and Create a New Expectation:**

As soon as possible you need to call a meeting either with both of them together or each individually one right after the other. I recommend pulling them together over the individual meetings. Put them on notice that they need to start getting along and working together. Tell them that you can no longer coordinate the work schedule to accommodate them. They may, in fact, have shifts where they are working together. Share with them the burden it is to the business and the rest of the team. You've accommodated them as long as you can. You've given them opportunity to put the issue behind them.

Let them know that your hope is for both of them to continue working for you. Let them know the value they each bring.

Then share the new expectation which is: They don't have to like each other but they do have to respect each other and get along at work. Their disagreements cannot impact their work. Period. End of story. If either is not willing to agree to this then they must resign.

If they agree to it but do not follow through you will need to walk them through the discipline process and out the door.

You might think that I am being harsh right now. Remember, I've been doing this for over 20 years. I have helped many business owners and leaders go through this same exact process. Most often what I've seen happen is the two individuals ARE able to put their differences aside to keep their jobs.

When we lead from a place of fear – I don't want to be mean – I don't want to lose them – we tend to put up with more than we should. We do all the accommodating. When in reality, given the choice to modify behavior or lose a job, many employees will choose to modify the behavior. You just haven't made it a requirement yet so there have had no need to make the choice.

You are now giving them new decisions to make based on new circumstances. There are no guarantees. They may not be able to work out their differences but you are putting the business and your customers ahead of their petty disagreements.

This is you going to the mat for your business. Doesn't your business deserve to win over this petty feud? Shouldn't your customers win? The other employees?

And, truly, what is the worst that might happen? Are these employees so irreplaceable? Again, they will probably put their differences aside. If they don't, you still wind. Either way you are done with this silly situation.

Now, that said, they may not have the tools to work through their situation without some assistance. So, step three involves you providing them with some support.

### **#3 Help them Communicate with Each Other**

You don't say how long the conflict has been going on or whether the dating relationship that sparked the issue continues so it is unclear how wide the rift is or how entrenched.

Regardless, it is quite possible that they will need some assistance working through initial conversations. I recommend that you bring them together for some facilitated conversations. The goal should be to talk through basic work issues. Minimally they need someone to help them have a respectful conversation. Speak and listen well.

Have them make commitments to each other about how they will conduct themselves at work. Help them to start to build some trust. And it will also be good for you to reinforce the fact that success on the job and continued employment requires that they place their focus on doing their jobs well and working harmoniously together where required.

If the thought of facilitating this kind of conversation seems daunting to you you might want to enlist the help of someone skilled in the area. Do you have any leaders on your team with experience facilitating difficult conversations? If not, you might want to enlist the help of an outside resource like coach or consultant.

### **#4 Give them the Freedom to Choose**

Once you've clearly defined the expectations and given them some tools to work well together release the outcome. You don't have control over whether they will make the right choices.