

DTD Episode 103 Show Notes

Hiring a Friend? Be Real About Your Reasons!

Recently I was working with a client and, as is often the case, they began sharing about a challenge with an employee. The employee was missing deadlines and it was becoming a problem. We talked through some strategies and then.....there it was.....

“I feel bad. He’s my friend.”

Hiring friends is not a complete no – no. I have seen it work out well. But, more often than not, the situation goes awry. And, as is often the case it usually boils down to unrealistic expectations or lack of communication.

You love them as a friend and certainly don’t want business to ruin a great relationship.

So, how do you avoid the feelings of regret and frustration?

First, be clear in your own mind what your reasons are for hiring them and then treat the situation accordingly.

Is the job strictly a favor to them? Perhaps their skills and abilities aren’t even aligned with your business needs. You know they need the job and you have the ability to help them out. If this is the case be real in your own mind set your expectations accordingly. You knew he wasn’t Accountant material when you hired him in so don’t feel frustrated when he can’t keep an Excel spreadsheet straight.

Often I’ll hear a client lament about the friend who’s not fulfilling their role well. The frustration is welling and I’ll ask, “did they have the skills you needed for that position?”

Don't set yourself up for resentment and frustration. If you're hiring them as a favor minimize the negative impact they can make and find something at least semi-productive they can do but don't expect to get much for your money. You've made the hire for their benefit not yours.

Do have a conversation up front. Share that you want to help them but that there are minimum expectations they must follow like showing up for work and following through on basic work assignments.

Perhaps they needed a job and you've hired them in the hopes of gaining some benefit for the business even though they aren't a complete fit. You plan to create a win-win over time. Be real about this as well and make a corresponding plan. Talk about it up front. Indicate your desire to help them out and acknowledge that they lack some of the required skills. Create a process for teaching them what they need to know so that over time they can be fully successful. Then, in your mind, prep yourself for the time required to maneuver that learning curve!

In that initial conversation also communicate about what will happen if they aren't able to gain the required skills. Do you have an alternate spot for them or would you have to part ways professionally? You are much more likely to keep a personal relationship in tact after a professional break up if you talk about it while all is good.

Maybe you're in that rare position where your great friend had the exact personality, skill and experience to fill a needed role in your organization. Great! They've got what it takes. Your communication in this scenario will focus on clear expectations about a separation of the personal and professional relationship and the specific expectations of the job. You don't want a sense of entitlement or a blurring of relationship lines to stand in the way of their success.

So, if you feel so inclined, yes, hire your friend. Just be clear about your reasons and communicate ahead to avoid the challenges that can do damage to a valued relationship.

If you need help contact me!

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