



Communication is a two way street...

You believe a co-worker has a problem with you because of what you have heard from others. You don't know what the problem is because he won't come to you to talk about it. But, you haven't asked him either. Resolution depends on direct, open dialogue with one another, so how do you get those lines of communication open?

Avoid assumptions – Instead of listening to others and making assumptions about his behavior, go to the source. Second and third-hand information is rarely accurate and almost always laced with others' biases. Don't wait for him to come to you—use the opportunity to go to him to address your concerns.

Take responsibility – Each of us is responsible for our own behavior so it's important to remember your co-worker may be reacting to your behaviors or what he sees as a negative attitude toward him. Think about what behaviors of yours may have been obstacles to effective communication between you and own them.

Be approachable -- Your coworker may be purposefully channeling information through other coworkers because he's uncomfortable coming directly to you. Honestly answer these questions. How receptive are you when people come to you with problems? Do you get defensive, minimize others' concerns, or play the blame game? Does past experience with you tell him that open, constructive discussion is unlikely and he will just end up defending himself?

Extend an invitation – Show your co-worker that you are open to hearing his concerns with an invitation rather than a complaint or demand. Then open the door with behaviors that encourage honest, productive conversation. For example, you might say "I know I haven't been a very good listener so I'm going to use the ground rule of "no interrupting" when we meet."

In any relationship, effective communication is a two way street. When you do your part you, others will likely do the same.

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Words to Live By...

"He has the right to criticize who has the heart to help."

Abraham Lincoln



A BRIGHT IDEA

Deliver a difficult message...

Delivering a difficult message is something most of us prefer to avoid because it's uncomfortable and we don't want to be unkind. A respectful approach can make the task easier. Start by being clear about the problem yourself—focus on the facts of the situation and not the emotions. Avoid apologizing for having to deliver a tough message. Be direct and honest—sugar coating and beating around the bush are confusing and send mixed messages. Delivering a difficult message respectfully is, in fact, kind.

We can help...

Effective teams require commitment and resources. Resolving the conflicts that cause dysfunction and increase costs can be addressed through mediation or facilitated processes. Strong communication and conflict resolution skills that support a collaborative team can be developed through training. Coaching provides individual opportunities for focused leadership and professional development. Alternative Resolutions is the "one call does it all" place to find the resources you need to create the productive team that will make your organization excel.

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