

## 4 Possible Reasons Your Employee Is Being Difficult— And What to Do About It

*By Alison French and Shirley Tang*

For management, having a difficult employee on your team can be disruptive of your efforts to achieve certain goals. Executives and managers depend on their team members to work together as cohesive units. A difficult employee can not only detract from this effort, but also can create a toxic environment that impacts everyone on the team.

Fortunately, the challenges of managing a difficult employee can be overcome. In our work with HR and talent management directors and business executives, we have found that the reasons behind difficult behavior almost always relate to one of the following underlying factors:

- 1) *The employee resists change.* This could be a change in management, work tasks, strategy, or even work environment.
- 2) *The employee resists you.* The employee may have an issue with your management style or personality.
- 3) *The employee has a different work or personal style than you do.* From the employee's perspective, perhaps you are a micromanager, or you get too bogged down in minutiae or are too serious, or not corporate enough.
- 4) *The employee has a personal issue.* Out-of-work issues, whether in home or personal life, can trigger difficult behavior if the employee doesn't know how to manage them at work.

Motivating a team member to come back into the fold and contribute to success.

### **What to do**

Your focus should be on the difficult employee's behaviors and actions, not personality. It is important not to make assumptions about the individual's intent or reason. Document what you see. Then after a period of time, review what you have observed. Ask another executive or director, or your talent management team, for a second opinion.

### **The goal: a win-win**

With a more objective view, you can talk frankly and openly with the difficult employee and set clear expectations and responsibilities. You can then craft win-win solutions that inspire the employee to contribute to the success of your team.

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