

REPRIMAND ROAD MAP

by Rosanne Ullman

Five smart steps can make criticism easier to swallow.



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Nobody likes criticism—neither receiving it nor doling it out—but in every business there are bound to be times when a reprimand is in order. Success coach **Bryan Durocher** says it's possible to reduce the pain of the process if you keep two rules in mind with every reprimand: Issue it in private and document everything.

"Praise in public; reprimand in private," notes Durocher, whose **Durocher Enterprises** consulting firm is headquartered in Coral Gables, Florida. "Even a verbal warning should be documented and signed by both parties." Doing so makes your expectations clear and legally protects you as an employer.

Simply handing a written reprimand to an employee may not permanently improve the situation, though, so you should also schedule a face-to-face meeting. Durocher has developed a road map for that employer-employee conversation. In fact, he claims

his "change model" is effective for any kind of conflict. Here's how it works.

Five-Step Model for Change

1. Acknowledgment

"Always look for something good that someone did and specify that first," Durocher says. "This praise should be genuine and sincere, and it should have nothing to do with the complaint."

2. Observation

In a neutral tone, state exactly what you've observed without judgment. This allows the person to prepare in advance, before you deliver the criticism. For example, if the person habitually arrives late to work, say, "I've observed that you have been late for your shift three times in the past week."

3. Change

Designate exactly what must change. In the case of the chronic late-comer, you might say, "You must be here 15 minutes

prior to your shift every time that you're scheduled to work." Identify the benefits of making the change. For instance, you can point out that getting to work 15 minutes early will give the stylist time to prepare for that day's clients and contemplate new ideas for servicing them.

4. Consequences

Specify any consequences of failing to change the behavior. Inform the person that he or she will receive a second warning, get put on probation, be terminated or whatever follows your policy if the objectionable behavior continues.

5. Commitment

"Closing the sale" in this case involves three steps: a statement from the person that he or she understands the reprimand, a commitment to attempt to change the behavior, and a date when you both agree the behavior will change. The time frame can be immediately, beginning next week or whatever suits your purpose. ■