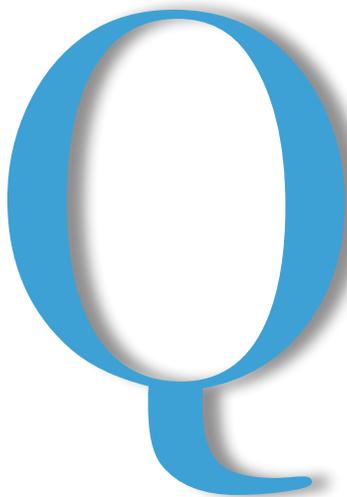




Roundtable Mentor,
Gabriella O'Rourke, National Director of Practice Management for the Commercial Litigation Group for Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG), shared her perspective with our team on what to do about a team member who behaves badly with others, yet delivers great results.

Mentoring **MATTERS**



An individual on my team is a great worker but really abrasive to other people. I've had several conversations with them about their behaviour but nothing ever changes. My boss has told me that I need to cut them loose but I'm hesitant because they deliver great results. What should I do?

Firstly, there are many components to delivering great results, and not all of them are about hard work or meeting sales targets. I would argue that someone who repeatedly ignores feedback and continues to behave badly towards others is not delivering all-round great results.

They may be strong in meeting their own personal goals and objectives, but their behaviour towards others is undoubtedly having an effect on the performance of the whole team. People deal with the negative emotion and drama that comes from working alongside a jerk.

Ask yourself why your boss felt the need to push you to cut this individual loose? This could be an indication that the complaints are starting to reach your boss's ears, and that team members who are most impacted by this individual's behaviour don't feel you are effectively managing the situation.

Warning – *the role of a leader is to ensure that you are balancing the needs of the organization and the needs of the individuals on your team to deliver great performance. If your team members have lost confidence that you are taking their complaints seriously, and worse yet, they see that there are no consequences for bad behaviour, then you are failing them as a leader.*

As much as you might enjoy the quarterly results that this individual's hard work ethic brings you, your lack of action may be diminishing the performance of the entire team. Even the most motivated and high performing team members will watch what you do to resolve known issues and to steer undesirable behaviour in others.

Bad behaviour which goes unchecked in one area can have a negative impact on the performance of others in the team as they waste valuable time and energy speaking to others about how

difficult it is to work effectively in your group because of this person (note – this is also true if you have people on the team who are underperforming and allowed to continue without consequence).

If your other team members interpret your inaction as focusing only on results - at any cost - they will begin to wonder why they should bother to behave well themselves. This is all wasted productivity.

Before you know it, your business unit will gain a reputation for being an extremely negative environment to work in. You may start to lose other high performers as they vote with their feet, and senior management will start to question your abilities as a manager.

Although you said you have tried speaking to the person, clearly they did not believe that there would be serious consequences for their behaviour. Perhaps when you passed the feedback along, you didn't make it clear to them that their attitude towards others needed to change or else you would be having a different kind of conversation with them. It's important to regain control and demonstrate to others in the group that you take all aspects of performance seriously.

For the individual concerned, they need to be made aware that doing nothing to correct or rectify an issue that has been brought to their attention multiple times by you as their line manager, is grounds for dismissal. You have given them multiple opportunities to comply and at this point it is clear that they no longer meet the expectations of the role.

I'm in agreement with your manager that it's time to cut them loose. You may be surprised how the performance of others in your group will flourish when they are freed from the negative impact of a badly behaved team member.

In summary:

Workplace performance has many factors. Delivering results is one, but so is teamwork and cooperation with others. In most organizations, the highest performance is delivered by teams who have figured out how to collaborate effectively.

Other team members are watching to see how you deal with undesirable behaviour. If you let it pass by unchecked, they wonder why they should bother behaving well. Before you know it, you will have a host of undesirable behaviours that are not being managed effectively.

Learn how to deliver feedback effectively, including setting expectations for the response you need to see, how the desired adapted performance will be measured, and consequences for not responding to the feedback provided. Ask for help with this if needed.

Your boss mentioning that it's time for you to let this individual go is their way of providing you with feedback on your management priorities. Are you listening?

Speak to your boss about how you have now executed their recommendation to let this person go. Then speak to them about how challenging you found this dilemma. They will understand and appreciate the difficulty of prioritising teamwork and culture over individual performance. Hopefully they will provide you with mentorship and support to reinforce the organization's values. This is also your opportunity to show that you listen and respond to feedback to improve your leadership skills.



Gabriella O'Rourke is currently serving as the National Director of Practice Management for the Commercial Litigation Group for Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG) - the largest Canadian-based full-service law firm.

In this role she is accountable for improving total group performance in a number of critical areas, including financial performance (P&L), pricing, business strategy, talent and workforce planning, process improvements and client service standards. Before BLG, she served as the Director of Marketing and Business Development for a regional law firm and has held National Marketing and Business Development leadership roles at international consulting firms Grant Thornton and KPMG respectively.



Glain Roberts-McCabe is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.