

"Dealing with Excuses at Work: How Leaders Should Handle Them"

From my cat vomiting on my laptop to reports mysteriously disappearing and hours of power outages... Of course, things can always go wrong when trying to meet a deadline or complete a project.

However, some employees routinely encounter issues and often get away with it using excuses. Why does this happen? - "evolutionary programming" behind it.

"Belonging to the group ensured our survival in ancient times. If you didn't do something right and didn't apologize, you'd be out of the group". Today, it's less about survival and more about connecting with your team or colleagues.

Excuses compensate for this need to belong. "You understand your place within the group. You sacrifice a bit of your qualities. You slightly lower your rank in the eyes of others, but that's what keeps you part of the group. It balances out".

However, the familiar "sorry, but..." is less successful. Even if a plausible reason is given, like unclear instructions, difficulties collaborating with colleagues, lack of time, or budget constraints, adding a "but" after an apology makes it seem "completely fake"..

"If you're consistently late every day, you can't keep blaming traffic". Colleagues pick up on the implicit message faster than the words

spoken. But those who use this strategy are trying to maintain their place within the group in the short term.

If overused, excuses lose their meaning. If you keep saying sorry in the long term but don't change your behavior, you'll eventually be excluded from the group.

So, what can managers do about this? Getting angry won't help; it only adds stress. Instead, address the behavior directly, explaining why it doesn't work for the team.

If a direct approach doesn't work, tap into your curiosity and coaching skills. Try to understand why the employee behaves this way, whether they are aware of it, and if it has become a pattern.

By holding up a mirror to them, you can see if their behavior shifts toward fewer apologies and more results. However, it's essential for managers to clarify expectations and goals for their employees.

Micromanaging isn't the answer, but setting clear goals and discussing them with your team can reduce room for excuses like "I didn't understand what you wanted" or "I thought this is what you wanted."

Explaining the purpose behind tasks can also help employees think beyond themselves and consider the bigger picture, including stakeholders, the ecosystem, and society.

Offering incentives for good results can boost motivation. If these approaches fail to correct the behavior, a performance improvement

plan may be the last resort. Sometimes, you have to stop tolerating it...

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