

Ask Mike: Telecom Q&A

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Q: *Dear Mike:* One of my trusted employees has recently started clocking in 5 or more minutes late 2-3 days a week. He's a good worker and works by himself at a remote site. I'd like to try to handle this myself before initiating formal disciplinary action. How should I do that?

A: I commend you for trying to protect your employee. Right now you can handle this as an informal counseling issue. It should quickly change to a formal disciplinary issue if there's not instant improvement. Try the following techniques:

- Meet with the employee face-to-face if possible.
- Explain that you value his service and compliment his performance.
- Describe the problem he needs to correct, the importance of getting to work on time, and company policy regarding tardiness.
- Ask for an explanation for the reoccurring late arrivals but don't get too personal.
- Explain the next step (i.e. disciplinary action) if the problem is not corrected.
- Agree on a corrective plan and the grace period before you take formal action.

If you feel that this is a time management problem, then put on your coaching hat to help him with that issue. If it's a family issue like taking the children to school in the mornings, look for ways to create a flexible schedule if possible. For instance, shift the work start time a little if it's within your authority. If the problem is more personal, refer him to your company EAP.

Good Luck.

- Mike