

By Amanda Visser

# How to manage *that* person on your team

There's usually one employee who makes your life as a manager hell. What's the best way to deal with the troublemakers on your team?

**V**ery few managers have had the privilege of being the head of a team in which everyone gets along splendidly and not a single person rubs anyone else up the wrong way. Such a team is almost as far removed from reality as a married couple who never fights.

Most managers have encountered at least one person in their team whom they simply could not stand. The employee has the uncanny ability to irritate you by merely being present. They find your buttons and keep pushing them, incessantly.

Fatima van Toorn, labour specialist and owner of FvT HR Consulting, says that in many instances the manager and an employee are at odds because of poor work performance. Some people show their best side during the interview, but once in the job, their attitude changes.

Older managers may also struggle with millennials, because they are under the impression that the young ones lack an old-fashioned work ethic. Then there are the smarty-pants who sometimes are better qualified or cleverer than the manager – but in most instances, these individuals simply want to put their managers in their place publicly.

"This causes major disruption because other colleagues will notice, and the manager will be left exposed and humiliated," explains Van Toorn.

The manager might have inherited a team and find that they dislikes one team member merely because they're incompatible. They may have different political opinions or different values.

Paul Waldeck, an executive coach and founder of Winspire People, says the responsibility rests with the manager to find out what their own buttons are, how these triggers got there and why they react in the way they do when these buttons are pushed.

Waldeck focuses on "culture discovery" and how the misalignment of values causes interpersonal conflict. Negative emotions and reactions are – generally speaking – triggered due to value mismatches.

## The value mismatch

There are some key values that act as the filter for the way people interact with each other or perform tasks.

"If there is a value misalignment between the manager and a team member – which often happens – the connection is broken. It becomes a negative communication spiral purely because of the different value languages," Waldeck explains.

The task of the manager is to understand the values of the people they are managing. He says that in a world where people "have things to do", managers often neglect to "manage people" by understanding who they are, what their values are and what makes them do things in a certain way. Instead, they are managing items on their to-do lists.

Van Toorn says clear indications of a breakdown in relationships include: lack of respect being expressed non-verbally (like eyes being rolled when the other person is not looking) or body language indicating an unwillingness to communicate (like turning a back or crossing arms).

Other things to look out for is when a team member goes over the head of the manager, to another manager or even to the manager's superior.

Also, when one-liners are the only way of communication, or a team member seeks every opportunity not to be at their desk – longer smoke breaks, lunches, or staying off sick for the slightest sniffle – you know something is up, she says.

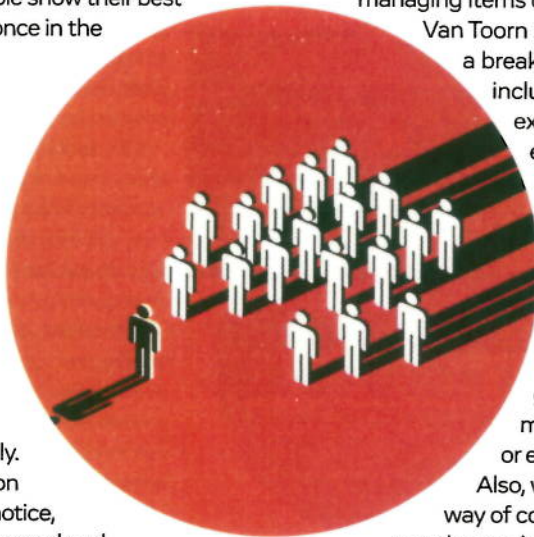
Waldeck says people are creatures of habit and tend to stick with behaviours that worked in the past – even if it is clear that they are no longer working. The manager might be avoiding the irritating team member – and may even start communicating through other team members with whom they have better relationships.

## Finding the solution

It is up to the manager to implement change and come up with a solution, Waldeck notes.



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Owner of FvT HR Consulting  
and labour specialist



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## on the money quiz & crossword



Congratulations to Lyle Pretorius, who won a book prize in a recent giveaway. Well done! This week, it could be your turn to win. We're giving away a copy of *Understanding Financial Statements: The Essential Guide to Understanding and Interpreting the Financial Statements of a Business* by Mark Graham, Jimmy Winfield and Taryn Miller. To enter, complete the online version of this quiz, which will be available via [fin24.com/finweek](http://fin24.com/finweek) from 7 May.

According to Van Toorn, a first step can be an "offline" discussion between the manager and the problem employee, without the presence of third parties. She calls it a "clear-the-air" session.

"Talk openly, and share your experience with the employee, and see if the employee is mature enough to work on the relationship."

If that doesn't work, and you're not able to set "the rules of engagement" going forward, it is time to call in the experts. This can be the manager's own boss, a human resources (HR) specialist, or a career coach who'll act as facilitator. It will probably take more than one session – it is almost like marriage counselling.

If the employee is at fault, they need to be aware of the consequences. They have chosen to act in this way, and have to make a career decision to work with the manager and give their full cooperation.

If the employee has legitimate problems with the manager, then the manager's behaviour needs to be addressed. "However, if the employee is not fitting in, and this causes disruption and influences work performance, or he or she is bad-mouthing the manager and it impacts on the company's reputation, then they must know that their actions could lead to dismissal."

When Waldeck does executive coaching, he uses an innovative way to teach managers how to be sensitive to the value language of their team members – horse riding. He teaches them the basics of horseback riding and then gets them to complete an obstacle course on horseback while being timed. Once they are done, Waldeck explains what makes the animal feel safe – in other words, he helps the people on the course speak the "value language" of the horse.

"Once you understand what the horse needs, the dynamics change," he says, using the example of a manager who had never been on the back of a horse. She did the initial course in two minutes. After understanding the "value language" of the horse she cut her time by a full minute.

Van Toorn's advice to employees who have been given the opportunity to clear the air and to work with and not against the manager, is to choose to be happier. Otherwise you have to choose to be unhappy somewhere else, she says.

### The don'ts in a troubled relationship:

- Don't take it personally.
- Don't pick on the employee.
- Don't abuse your power by overburdening the troublemaker.
- Don't be provoked by what the employee does.
- Don't ignore the issue.

### The dos in a troubled relationship:

- Try to get to the bottom of the problem.
  - Deal with the matter sooner rather than later.
  - Act fairly.
  - Escalate to a neutral party if you can't find solutions. ■
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- 1 Which soccer team recently won the local Premier Soccer League title?
- 2 True or false? The president of South Korea is Park Geun-hye.
- 3 Which local businessman has sued Steinhoff for R59bn?  
■ Markus Jooste  
■ Patrice Motsepe  
■ Christo Wiese
- 4 Supply the missing word: IAAF stands for: International Association of \_\_\_\_\_ Federations
- 5 Of which healthcare company is Shrey Viranna the CEO?
- 6 True or false? The latest addition to the British royal family is Princess Victoria.
- 7 In which South African city is the Moses Mabhida stadium located?
- 8 True or false? Icas recently ruled that MTN, Cell C and Vodacom must allow data to roll over so customers can use it after 30 days.
- 9 In which country is the city of Chernobyl, associated with a notorious nuclear disaster, located?  
■ Ukraine  
■ Russia  
■ Finland
- 10 True or false? Russian President Vladimir Putin went to the US on a state visit recently.

### CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

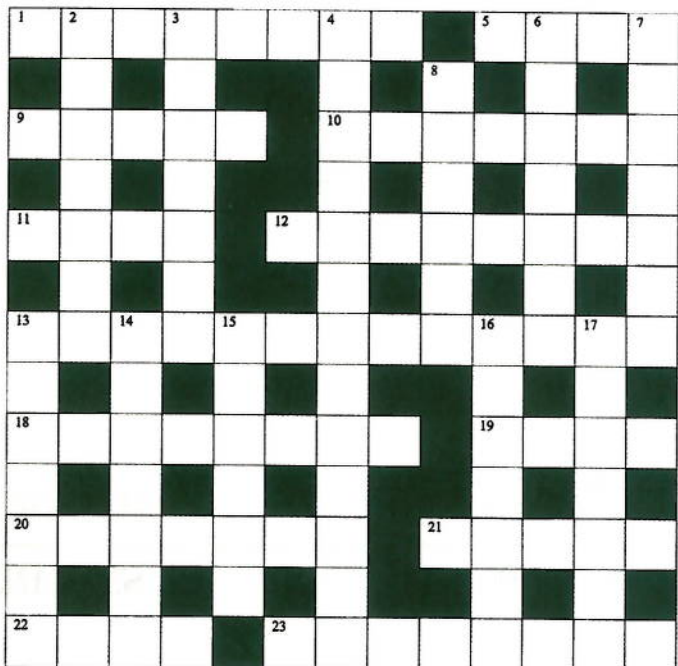
NO 706JD

#### ACROSS

- 1 Specially select kind chap for review (4-4)
- 5 Soundly mock boy's school (4)
- 9 Stir up tea to the colour of moleskin (5)
- 10 Function or source of power (7)
- 11 Row at English banquet (4)
- 12 Fellow, we hear, steps in to give counselling (8)
- 13 Manipulating English, deaf and stubborn as a mule (5,2,6)
- 18 Rescues survivors of French origin (8)
- 19 Call for Tyneside editor (4)
- 20 English dramatist devours the French delicacy (7)
- 21 Having two right by Thursday's opening (5)
- 22 Look about for wisdom (4)
- 23 Humanitarian touch initially intended to make one happy (4-4)

#### DOWN

- 2 Penny-pinching woman with a crop (7)
- 3 Take one's finger off or put it on? (7)
- 4 Edge round interchange to the barrier (13)
- 6 Non-diet concoction hummed (7)
- 7 Roll-on operator (7)
- 8 Common to the French carriage (6)
- 13 Get funny sleeping bag (7)
- 14 Sort of cast without supporting actors? (3-4)
- 15 Ambassador not involved in the flap with the coral islands (6)
- 16 It's possible to have engagement without exploitation (7)
- 17 Determine to back alternative form of shock treatment (7)



#### Solution to Crossword NO 706JD

ACROSS: 1 Robotically; 9 Elevate; 10 Reeds; 11 Inner; 12 Gawkie; 13 Daniel; 15 Kenyan; 18 Roister; 20 Epsom; 22 Noema; 23 Vlogger; 24 Bewhiskered  
DOWN: 2 Odeon; 3 On a free; 4 Ice age; 5 Arrow; 6 Leerily; 7 Bewildering; 8 Astronomers; 14 Naivete; 16 Eyesore; 17 Craves; 19 Teach; 21 Segue