

WORKING SMARTER

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# Why being too nice to new staff can store up problems

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It is advised to give new joiners a comprehensive verbal assessment after 60 days

It may feel right to go easy on a new member of staff but failing to give critical feedback early on will only store up trouble. By the time they receive real feedback, they may already have made substantial mistakes, damaged relationships and undermined their credibility.

“Negative impressions of a new hire tend to stick and can be virtually impossible to turn around,” says Professor Michael Watkins of IMD, the Swiss business school.

His advice is to give your new hire honest feedback early on but in a systematic way. If you give it haphazardly they might feel they are being singled out or are in serious trouble, he says. It is better instead to give a comprehensive verbal

assessment around the 60-day mark.

“Enough time has gone by for the new person and the organisation to get to know each other but it happens soon enough to catch early indications of trouble.”

Judge carefully whether an error is worth discussing in the first few weeks, says Edward Houghton, of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

“If it’s a minor niggle, wait,” he says. “If you pick up on small mistakes you might give the wrong impression and they might disengage.”

Prof Watkins recommends allowing 30 days for someone to demonstrate corrective action. If a new recruit ignores your advice, “it is never a good sign — you should prepare for their departure,” he adds.

### **Turn the music off**

A morning commute need not be a drain, so long as you use it to plan work rather than succumbing to instant gratification, such as listening to music. Harvard Business School research finds that commuters who use their journey to think through daily tasks are less emotionally exhausted and more satisfied in their jobs than commuters who do not.

By preparing ahead, they use their time at work more effectively and so are less time-pressed and stressed. Using the morning commute to think about work also helps you to go from being “home” you to “work” you.

While it has previously been found that a long commute might not necessarily equate to misery, this research goes some way to understanding why that might be.

It comes down to self-control, say the authors of the study. Commuters with less self-control tend to view their commute as something frustrating to endure and prefer to distract themselves with non-work pleasures: music or daydreaming. While those activities might be more pleasurable than thinking about work, it is the commuters who refrain from indulging that end up happier at work.

### **When two become one**

“We were worried it could all turn a bit *Game of Thrones* — you know, swords through the head-type problems.” So Sebastian James, chief executive of Dixons Carphone told Management Today recently about the 2014 merger of Dixons and Carphone Warehouse.

“But no. We’ve moved into our boyfriend’s flat, we’re off the honeymoon period now and have decided who puts the bins out and who does the washing up.” If only all mergers ended in such domestic bliss.

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