

Firm — & — Fair

The exact words and the paper trail for the employee problems owners dread.

32 conversations · 2 protocols · 18 templates

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The full contents of the Playbook (print edition, 153 pages). This sample holds one complete conversation, Script 1.

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1

EVERYDAY PROBLEMS

Late again

THE SITUATION

Your gym's 5:30 a.m. class needs the doors open at 5:15, and Logan, who coaches it, has the key. Four times in three weeks, members stood in the dark parking lot waiting on him: he clocked in at 5:22, 5:31 and 5:26, and at 5:34 this morning. Two members texted you about it, and one asked how to freeze her membership.

BEFORE YOU
SIT DOWN

- Pull the time-clock report. Write the four dates and clock-in times next to the 5:10 start, so the talk is about numbers instead of a feeling.
- Talk to him today after the 9:30 class, in the office with the door shut. Not at 5:30 in front of the class.
- Decide which talk this is. If you've never raised it, it's a coaching talk: the dates, the rule, what happens next time. If you already had this talk and the late mornings kept coming, use the documented conversation instead.

→ Script 24: The documented conversation

Know what you won't count. Absences and late arrivals tied to illness, a disability, pregnancy, family or medical leave, or your state's or city's paid sick leave may be protected. Check before you count them.

And 5:10 has to mean 5:10 for everyone, including the coach you like best. If you've let someone else slide, fix that first, or this talk becomes proof that the rule bends.

The Check: run it from Part 1 before anything goes on paper. On lateness, look hardest at two lines: has Logan told you about a health condition or about caring for someone who's sick, and has he asked for a schedule change for either reason? Any yes, stop and get advice first.

THE OPENING

"Logan, got ten minutes? It's about mornings. The 5:30 needs the doors open at 5:15. You clocked in at 5:22, 5:31, 5:26, and today at 5:34. Four times in three weeks."

"That's people standing in a dark parking lot, and one of them asked me about freezing her membership. I need you here at 5:10. What's getting in the way?"

THE BEATS

THEY "My alarm's been garbage. I'll get a new one."

"Get two. I need you in at 5:10, four mornings a week. If 5:10 doesn't fit your life anymore, tell me now, and we'll look at the schedule."

THEY "It's a few minutes. Half the class rolls in late anyway."

“They paid to roll in whenever they want. You’re paid to have the doors open at 5:15. That’s the part members notice.”

THEY “Mason’s late for the 6 p.m. all the time.”

“If Mason’s late, that’s a talk I’ll have with Mason. This one’s about your four mornings.”

Then pull Mason’s clock-ins tomorrow. If they look like Logan’s, Mason gets this same talk this week. Otherwise you’ve handed Logan his best argument.

THEY “Okay. It won’t happen again.”

“Good. I’m making a note of today. If you’re late again, the next talk goes on paper.”

IF IT TURNS

If he tells you it’s medical or family. “It’s the new medication, it wipes me out.” “My mom’s sick, I’m up half the night with her.” Stop asking. Don’t ask what the medication is or what’s wrong with his mom.

“Thanks for telling me. You don’t have to give me details. Let me look at what we can do, and I’ll get back to you by Friday.”

Don’t count those mornings until you’ve gotten advice. A schedule change for a health or family reason can fall under disability or family-leave law, depending on your size and your state.

If he says you’re picking on him.

“I’m going by the time clock. Here are the four mornings. If anybody else’s clock-ins look like this, they get the same talk.”

Then make sure that’s true.

If he gets hot: “Fine. Give the 5:30 to somebody else.”

“Maybe that’s a conversation for Friday. Today, the 5:30 is yours, and I need you here at 5:10.”

If he keeps going, end it: “We’ll pick this up tomorrow after the 9:30.” Tonight, write down what he said, word for word.

NEVER SAY

X “You’re always late.”

Why: He’ll fight the word “always,” and he’ll win, because he was on time Monday. Four dates and four clock-in times are much harder to argue with.

X “You’re not getting paid for that class.”

Why: He coached it, so you owe him for it. Docking pay for time someone actually worked can be a wage violation, and with a salaried employee, don’t touch the pay at all until you’ve checked. Put the consequence on paper and leave the paycheck alone.

X “Are you sick or something? You on something?”

Why: Guessing out loud about health or drug use is how a lateness talk turns into a disability claim. Ask about the mornings. Leave his body out of it.

WRITE IT DOWN

Tonight, on the Attendance Log: each date, the 5:10 start, the time he actually clocked in, and the reason he gave, in his words.

On a Conversation Record: today's date, that you showed him the four clock-ins, that 5:10 is the rule, what he said, and what happens next time. If he mentioned a health or family reason, write only that he raised it and that you're checking. Any details he gave go in a separate confidential folder, apart from his regular file.

If he's late again after this talk, the next step is the documented conversation, then the written warning.

→ **Template: Attendance Log**

→ **Template: Conversation Record**

→ **Script 24: The documented conversation**

→ **Script 25: The written warning meeting**

What's inside

32 **conversations, word for word**

Each in one shape: the situation, before you sit down, the opening, the beats, if it turns, never say, write it down.

2 **protocols used everywhere**

When they say “lawyer” · When an employee brings you a complaint

18 **Paper Trail templates**

Editable Word files and PDFs, each with a filled example on the page after the blank form.

32 **Quick Cards**

One phone-size card per conversation.

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Owner Edition

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- The Playbook, print and phone editions: the method, 32 conversations word for word, 2 protocols, and when it ends
- The Paper Trail: 18 templates in Word and PDF, each with a filled-in example
- Quick Cards: 32, one per conversation, on your phone

Team Edition

\$297

- Everything in the Owner Edition
- The Supervisor Kit: a 60-minute training for your leads (28-slide deck, facilitator guide, quiz with answer key, sign-off sheet, one-page guide)
- The 9 records your employees sign, in Spanish too
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