Having the Difficult Conversations... Working with Underperforming Staff

Too often, 80% of a tertiary supervisor or manager’s time is spent dealing with persons who they and their colleagues find difficult to deal with. This program explores some strategies for minimising conflict and fostering a productive work environment.
Overview

To many, tertiary institutions appear to attract more than their fair share of difficult people. It is true that most staff in tertiary institutions have been high achievers all their lives and have high expectations of themselves and of others.

Unfortunately, a small proportion of high achievers either cease achieving, or become increasingly disruptive in the workplace. The supervisor's time is spent dealing with their behaviour or the consequences of it.

Behavioural issues may result in aggression or bullying; refusal to participate in departmental strategies; acrimonious fights over research infrastructure; or bitter disputes over issues such as workload allocation. Sometimes, the behavioural issue is temporarily resolved while the staff member thinks that the supervisor will resolve concerns in their favour, only to break down in even more bitterness when that does not occur. Dealing with these behaviours is both difficult and debilitating, particularly as the supervisor may also be a colleague.

Managing behavioural issues through the standard industrial processes is complex, and likely to be unsuccessful. Other processes, such as informal mediation may be more successful, however, dealing with the behaviours is likely to take up 80% of the supervisor's time — to the detriment of other staff in the department and their own careers.

Who should attend

Designed for academic and administrative staff in leadership roles including: Directors, Deans, Heads of School/Department, HR Managers, or tertiary sector managers with staff management responsibilities.

This program will be limited to 30 participants.

Delivery mode

One day, non-residential program.

Dates and locations

7 June 2011, Brisbane.

Program fee

$950 ($1,045 incl. GST).

Program content

Key themes explored over the course of this program include:
- understanding what drives high conflict individuals
- dealing with different types of conflict personality
- alternate forms of managing conflict
- the legal/industrial framework.

The program will feature short presentations and a facilitated group discussion.

Learning outcomes

Upon completing this program, participants will gain an understanding of:
- drivers of high conflict behaviours
- appropriate forms of interaction with high conflict staff
- alternate means of managing conflict.

Registration

To register for this program, please visit: www.lhmartininstitute.edu.au

Registration closing date: 24 May 2011 (unless filled earlier).
Program facilitators

Dr Angela O’Brien, BA, LLB (Hons), LittB, MA, PhD, DipEd, GradDipEdAdmin, GradCertArb, FTCL, LSDA, MIAMA, Barrister-at-law, Victoria, Nationally Accredited Mediator, Arbitrator.

Dr Angela O’Brien is a Barrister-at-law, Victoria, Mediator, Arbitrator and independent consultant with specialist expertise in the areas of dispute resolution, education and the arts.

In 2009, she retired from the University of Melbourne, where she was an Associate Professor, Deputy Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Discipline Chair of Creative Arts in the School of Culture and Communication, Faculty of Arts. Prior to these roles, she was foundation Head of the School of Creative Arts (2001–2004), University of Melbourne and Dean of the School of Studies in Creative Arts, Victorian College of the Arts (1995–2000). She has also worked in the vocational education sector in Australia and England and has specialist expertise in curriculum development and review, educational management and dispute resolution in the tertiary sector.

An elected member of the Institute of Arbitrators & Mediators Australia (IAMA) National Council 2004–2010 and IAMA President in 2008–2009, Dr O’Brien was a member of the National Mediator Accreditation Committee, which implemented the National Accreditation Standards in Australia. She is currently a member of the IAMA Victorian Chapter Committee.

Dr O’Brien has been a member of the Prahran College Council, The University of Melbourne Council, the Victorian College of the Arts Council, and federal and state councillor for the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU).

[To view full biography, please visit the LH Martin Institute website].

Liz Barè commenced her working life in charge of a small specialist library in a government agency, supervising two other staff. There she learnt valuable lessons in management, supervision and working in complex organisations. She moved through a series of technical and line management positions in that agency, and in 1983 was appointed to head its 50 strong personnel branch. There she fell in love with human resources management and decided that this was her true vocation. Her next assignment was to create a human resources function in one of the world’s largest volunteer organisations.

She has now headed the human resource function in three different organisations. Her longest appointment was as Vice-Principal (Human Resources) at the University of Melbourne. She and her colleagues developed the HR function at the University from a personnel function to a well regarded human resources division. In recent years, Liz has been Head of Administration at the University of Melbourne, where she was responsible for service delivery of IT, Finance, Research, Marketing, Property and Grounds, as well as overseeing a major restructure of administrative service delivery.

Liz is currently a Senior Fellow of the LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management and also a Senior Fellow in the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne. Liz currently advises universities in Australia and overseas on management and human resource management issues.
Executive Education Program 2011

The LH Martin Institute’s executive education programs provide relevant and practical professional development for leaders and managers working in tertiary education.

These programs are highly contextualised to the contemporary tertiary education environment, research informed and evidence-based. Recognising the diversity of interests in the sector, the Institute has collaborated with a range of organisations in the development of its programs.

To view the full suite of programs, please visit the Institute’s website.

Other Specialist Short Courses

The LH Martin Institute will be running a number of short courses in 2011, including:

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<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
<th>City</th>
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<tr>
<td>Beating the Toxic Challenge – Restoring an Academic Department to Health</td>
<td>29 March 2011</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budgeting &amp; Financial Management for the Tertiary Sector</td>
<td>31 March – 1 April 2011</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
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<td>6–7 June 2011</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
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<td></td>
<td>29–30 September 2011</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing a Scholarly Culture</td>
<td>Workshop 1: 6 April 2011</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
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<td>Workshop 2: 10 May 2011</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
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<td>Enhancing Academic Workload Management</td>
<td>12 August 2011</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
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<td>Engaging with Politics – the Art &amp; Necessity of Lobbying</td>
<td>2011 date &amp; location TBC</td>
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<td>Negotiating the New Regulatory Environment</td>
<td>2011 date &amp; location TBC</td>
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<td>The Sustainable Campus</td>
<td>2011 date &amp; location TBC</td>
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About the LH Martin Institute

The LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management has been established with the support of the Commonwealth Government to enhance tertiary education in Australia and New Zealand, by providing a suite of programs and activities focused on institutional management and leadership, tailored to the particular needs of the sector.

Specialising in postgraduate award programs, executive education, research and consultancy, the Institute provides a forum where tertiary sector institutions, public policy makers and experts can explore, assess and anticipate the changing national and international environment in which the tertiary education sector operates.

Further Information

The Institute, in response to the needs of the sector, is continually developing and delivering new programs, research and collaborative projects. To be kept informed, please visit the website and subscribe to the Institute’s monthly e-newsletter.

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