Part 1

Zac, a Project Manager has recently been promoted to manage a bigger team. He’s been noted as someone with a ‘no-nonsense’ approach who drives his team to deliver, ensuring projects come in on time and to budget. However, some members of his team are finding working with Zac difficult.

Introduction

Most people have good intentions. But sometimes, even when we mean well, we make the wrong choices.

Read this scenario and think about the questions, and about what you would do if this happened in your team, then discuss the scenario with your colleagues.

Yes! It was amazing. We have some fantastic photos – let me show you on the group chat.

It was great thanks – this holiday was much needed and has brought us closer together.

I don’t think we need to see that Gabby. Right let’s get on with this meeting shall we?

I’m glad you managed to get a holiday in before lockdown started – how was it? Did you and Naomi have a good time?

That’s great, glad things are good with you two. Did you manage to swim with the dolphins?

Part 2
During their project update meeting Zac interrupts Libby and shuts her down while she shares her update. Libby decides she needs to confront Zac and make him understand how his behaviour is upsetting her.

Later that day Zac and Sandeep are discussing the project over a Skype call.

In the project meeting, you shut me down a few times when I was in the middle of giving my update.

Look, don’t take it personally, this is just my way of doing things. That’s why I’ve been brought into this project – to deliver! You weren’t sharing anything new, and it was slowing down the meeting. Sorry, I have a call coming in on my mobile – I have to take this!

I want to reduce Libby’s involvement in the project because she doesn’t work fast enough, and she’s part-time. Also she’s always taking time off for hospital appointments because of her health condition.

Yes, she’s got a heart condition but to be honest it seems like there’s nothing wrong with her to me! But it’s clearly getting in the way of her performance.

Oh, I didn’t realise she had a health condition.
Questions

• What do you think about the conversation? Are there any alarm bells that signal something is wrong?
• How was the tone and general commentary?
• Are Libby and Gabby right to discuss the holiday?
• Is Libby right to challenge Zac?
• What advice would you give to Zac?
• What would you do in this scenario? Consider the viewpoint of all characters and their responsibilities.

Key messages

• Be mindful what you say about individuals – does the other person have a ‘need to know’, especially if we are talking about something sensitive such as health.
• Ethical business conduct starts with how we treat each other. Our culture depends on all of us treating each other with dignity and respect, regardless of the pressures to meet deadlines.
• Bullying, abusive, humiliating or intimidating behaviour is never acceptable – it goes against our Company’s principles.
• Everyone should feel able to speak up, knowing they will be treated with respect. If someone believes they are, or someone else is, being treated in an unprofessional manner they should report their concerns to their line manager, Human Resources or the Ethics Helpline.

Further reading

Code of Conduct
2.1 Inclusive workplace behaviour
2.3 Working with others
2.10 Marking and protecting information
2.11 Personal information

Policies and Guidelines

Our Behaviours
Respect and banter policy/training
Legislation: Equality Act
Work Life Integration policy
UK Sickness Absence Management procedures
Ill Health Capability procedure
Performance Management procedure

Our employee resource groups offer colleagues support and guidance, including OutLinkUK, the gender and sexual diversity network.

This scenario’s key themes were around Data Protection, Security and Ethics.