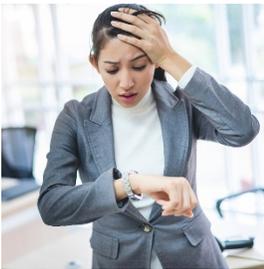


Fizzling...

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Last month we introduced [Grizzle](#), a relatively new employee who stirred conflict in you as a time drain in the complaint process. This month we have Fizzle, who has moved up in your organization over nearly a decade of employment. You've been her champion along the way, appreciating her growing skills but never directly working with her. Until now. Fizzle is now one of your direct reports, and supervising a small team that reports to her.

You want to connect with her in a new way, as you haven't had a lot of experience beyond your peers sharing positive comments about her work product. You set up an initial meeting to understand style, determine appropriate reporting timeframes, and understand the projects and challenges on her plate, and with her team. This meeting goes well, and you agree to a standing meeting that is bi-weekly for 30 minutes where Fizzle will bring at least 3 items to share, and you will do the same.

The first meeting happens very quickly, after all two weeks is slightly more than a blink, especially when taking on a new role. At least this is the language that she uses to explain how she doesn't have anything to share with you. You have a couple things relative to progress measuring with her and her team, and some information to share from leadership.

The second meeting happens during a crunch time, Fizzle shows up to the meeting slightly breathless and noticing it on her calendar only moments before as she paused from the deadline she and her team are under. She asks to skip this one, and you, being the understanding person you are, agree.

Fizzle is 5 minutes late to your third meeting, because 'she hadn't had a break all day and needed to refresh her coffee' before she arrived. You know that feeling, and you nod in agreement, even though you were wondering where she was while you waited for her arrival. She brings two things for you to offer decisions on, both of which you wonder why she didn't bring a recommendation, but she is new, so you don't ponder aloud.

By the fourth meeting Fizzle is two months into her new role. You've noticed some *things* and have chosen not to say anything with some justification about her newness and some relatedness about scheduling challenges. In this meeting you are aware that Fizzle is both a few minutes late and distracted. She shares that another project has turned urgent and she would prefer to skip this meeting. You have your own deadline looming and are happy to have the time to focus on it, so you excuse her.



Here's where it gets tricky. As a leader, you know it's important to understand the challenges Fizzle has in her role, with her team, and with their workload. Yet it has gotten easier and easier to skip the standing meetings, and to gloss over the very small things that are happening during the meetings that stick. Notice the pattern? Fizzle is slowly moving away from your care and into habits that might be problematic over time.

These habits continue to grow until Fizzle falls into the designation of problem employee. She's clearly a good worker, but conversations turn to 'not being a good leader of people'. Maybe you know a Fizzle?

What do you do? It starts by setting the stage in your first meeting. You did that here, with the request that she bring 3 things to the meeting, and you would do the same. Now your role is to ask the same question every meeting, even if doing so in slightly different ways: What are your three things today? Or 'What do you have to share today?'. You don't need to strictly adhere to 3, although if there is something you learn about beforehand and it's not shared, you want to emphasize the necessity for sharing by talking about how you support her or how the information sharing supports the organization, returning to the request for at least three things in your next meeting.

There is another habit forming here that is subtle and risky: being fully absorbed so she is missing her calendar for the meeting. You heard about it the first time as it was schedule overload, and by the third time it surfaces (remember it's only been 2 months) your antenna is up about workload and time management and calendar management. This is the place to pause and regroup. Check back on the intent of the standing meeting in the first place, and measure against your success - and do that together so you are each reinforcing the importance because of the value. Now you can check on what is getting in the way of this valuable meeting, and how she can address her calendar issues to free up the time for your conversation.

This all roots itself in accountability. Having meaningful conversations at the beginning and returning to the purpose and value as you lead your team. We all have challenges from time to time, that's understandable. Leadership comes back to comfortably holding accountability in your people. The outcome is a very even-keeled team that drives the business forward. And who doesn't want that?

For more information and further reading on Conflict and Accountability, visit our [online library](#).



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Judy understands leadership and teams. And, she knows how to help you maximize the potential of yours. For over two decades, Judy has applied her vast knowledge of team dynamics, emotional intelligence, work/life balance, leadership, and finance to help organizations improve their people, process, performance and, ultimately, profits.

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