

## **Solving your People Management Challenges**

*Each month we will look at a challenging People management scenario and ask what would you do?*

*This month we are picking up on the post Christmas party fallout and posing the following...*

*You have noticed 2 team members being very short with each other and a colleague has suggested it may be stemming from a misunderstanding at the Office Christmas party. They believe a flirtatious conversation ended in an advance being rebuffed. As the line manager how would you deal with the situation?*

### **Guidelines**

- As with all tricky conversations, it is wise to start with your end goal... what do you want the end result of the discussion to be?
- Don't make assumptions. It is vital to go into sorting the situation out with an open mind and an intention to "explore" what has happened from both points of view. Keep any gossip you have heard out of the equation.
- Speak to each team member separately. Use specific examples of what you have observed in terms of their behaviour. If their behaviour is "out of character", highlight this as a way into the conversation.
- Ask open questions to help them open up. Do not be tempted to say too much ... let them explain how they see things.
- Be empathetic. Either or both team members may be feeling embarrassed, angry, or defensive. Don't use "company policy" at this stage - that could be a useful tool further down the line if things don't improve but these initial conversations should be supportive.
- Help them to think through how their actions and behaviour may be impacting on others in the team.
- Ask what steps they would like to take to get things back on track. Don't assume the next step is to bring the two parties together with you there... they may want to talk to each other under their own steam
- Agree specific steps and keep an eye on things. Nine times out of ten, simply addressing such a situation is enough to help resolve it, but if things don't improve, ensure you follow up with each team member again.