

Don't Suffer Fools

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Not suffering fools doesn't mean being harsh.

It means being accurate.

Most owners confuse the two. They think tolerating a bad performer is kindness, and removing one is cruelty.

It's the opposite.

People deserve a clear standard, a fair chance, and an honest answer. Keeping someone in a role they can't handle isn't kind to them. It isn't kind to everyone standing next to them either, covering the gap, absorbing the mistakes, and watching the owner pretend not to notice.

If you want a company good people want to stay in, you can't also run one that lets the wrong people stay forever.

Tolerance Isn't Kindness. It's a Cost You've Handed to Someone Else.

An owner who keeps a struggling employee too long thinks they're being generous.

They're not.

They're transferring the cost of that decision onto the rest of the team.

Every job that superintendent runs poorly gets cleaned up by someone else. Every deadline that estimator misses gets absorbed by whoever's downstream of it. Every client that project manager frustrates becomes a relationship the owner has to personally repair.

The owner feels good about not having the hard conversation.

Everyone else pays for that feeling.

Kindness that costs other people something isn't kindness.

It's avoidance with better branding.

The Best People Leave First

Top performers have options.

Poor performers usually don't.

That means the moment a company starts tolerating fools, the clock starts on losing its best people, not its worst.

The strong superintendent who's tired of covering for a weak one will leave for a company that doesn't ask that of them. The sharp estimator who's watching a sloppy one get away with it every week will start wondering why they bother being careful at all.

Meanwhile, the poor performer who's being tolerated has nowhere better to go, so they stay.

A company that suffers fools doesn't keep its team together.

It keeps the wrong half of it and slowly loses the other half.

A Bad Trade Partner Costs More Than the Hassle of Replacing One

Owners keep unreliable subs for the same reason they keep struggling employees: switching feels like more trouble than it's worth.

It isn't.

The sub who's late every time, who needs to be chased for a schedule commitment, who leaves the punch list half done, isn't a

minor annoyance.

They're a recurring tax on every job they touch.

The superintendent's time spent managing them. The schedule slip they cause. The client's patience they burn. All of that is real cost, every single time, and it's easy to underweight because it never shows up as one big number.

It shows up as a hundred small ones.

The discomfort of replacing a bad trade partner is a one-time cost.

The discomfort of keeping one is a cost you pay on every job, forever, until you finally stop.

Suffering Fools Sets the Standard for Everyone Watching

The team doesn't need to be told what the owner will tolerate.

They watch who stays.

If the person who consistently underdelivers is still on the crew after a year, that tells everyone else exactly how seriously the standard gets enforced.

It doesn't matter what the handbook says.

It matters who's still getting a paycheck despite everyone knowing they shouldn't be.

Every day the wrong person stays in the wrong role, the company is quietly teaching its best people that performance isn't actually what gets rewarded.

That lesson lands whether the owner meant to teach it or not.

Being Decisive Isn't the Same as Being Cruel

The fear that stops most owners from acting isn't really about the person.

It's about how it'll feel to have the conversation.

But not suffering fools doesn't require anger, drama, or public humiliation.

It requires clarity.

Tell the person plainly where they're falling short. Give them a real chance to close the gap, on a real timeline. If they close it, keep them. If they don't, move on, respectfully, and quickly.

The cruelty isn't in acting.

It's in the alternative.

Letting someone drift for months or years in a role that isn't working, while everyone around them, including the person themselves, already knows it.

What This Actually Means

Not suffering fools isn't about being tough.

It's about being honest with yourself faster than you'd like to be.

Can you see who's actually underperforming, or have you stopped looking?

Does anyone own the conversation that needs to happen, or is everyone waiting for someone else to have it?

Can you act before your best people decide they've watched enough?

The company you build isn't the one you describe in the handbook.

It's the one your best people are still willing to stay in.