

Joseph's problem

My second doctoral student is just finishing his doctorate and has been a bit of a trial. In my view he has an unrealistic appreciation of his abilities which has made him:

- Miss deadlines or struggle in a blind panic in the last two days
- Start experiments without enough preparation and/or knowledge
- Generally do things on his own, badly as it turned out

On top of this he found it very hard to 'lose face' and confess that he was having problems and to ask for help from me or other members of the lab. He would also act defensively if I would ask him to discuss his progress with me. This made finding out what was going on difficult and confrontational.

My own assessment of the situation is that I am not sure a person with these personal traits can ever deal with team work or with job managers easily. However, there was no inkling of any of this when I interviewed him for admission and it could still be my fault. He is otherwise a very nice guy.

I would appreciate specific techniques to help with similar difficult cases.

Team task

On the acetate provided please suggest some guidelines for

1. This supervisor and
2. The department/school

in dealing with this kind of problem.
