



Volume 27, Issue 2

Solutions

A newsletter designed to support leadership and human resource staff.



The following questions and answers offer practical guidance on common challenges supervisors may encounter in the workplace. Acentra Health, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), is here to provide confidential support and consultation to managers seeking assistance with a wide range of workplace issues.

I'm having a hard time connecting with a new employee. Our personalities don't seem to mesh, and I'm concerned this could lead to future conflict. Can the EAP help?

Yes. This is a common workplace challenge, and the EAP is available to help you navigate this situation. What you're describing as a lack of chemistry often comes down to differences in communication styles, personality traits, or mutual expectations. These can subtly erode trust and make collaboration more difficult over time. Without addressing it, this dynamic can lead to unintended behaviors such as micromanaging, overlooking accomplishments, reduced communication, or even unconscious bias in decision-making. These actions, even when subtle, can impact morale, performance, and retention. The EAP can help you take a step back, look at what's going on objectively, and explore

strategies to build trust, improve communication, and foster a more productive relationship. Small shifts in awareness and approach can make a big difference.

One of our senior managers once said the best way to treat employees is to always assume they have the best intentions, no matter what. This stuck with me as an interesting piece of advice. What does it mean?

Always treating employees as though they have good intentions is a strategy for managing workers that produces many payoffs for you and the organization. If you always assume that your employees have good intentions, it will be reflected in the tone of your voice, your attitude, and how you interact with them. It builds trust, makes it easier for employees to come to you with their concerns, and lets them feel valued and respected. This, in turn, contributes to higher morale, making them more motivated and engaged with the organization. Your employees will view you as a supervisor who seeks to discover the root causes of problems rather than assigning blame. They will be more receptive to feedback as a result, and you will witness fewer conflicts among them. Best of all, those you supervise will adopt this orientation toward other employees.



My employee has a tardiness problem that I verbally addressed in a casual setting during her lunch hour. The tardiness has continued, so I have written a warning. She's claiming our discussion was a chat, not a verbal warning, and is protesting my disciplinary letter. What should I do now?

The initial discussion does not appear to have been an official verbal warning because you did not declare it as such. The fact that it was during her lunch break supports this view since such discussion should be in private. She likely felt it was also intrusive, which affirms the idea of the discussion being "off the record." Check your organization's policy in addition to discussing the situation with your own supervisor and HR. The policy likely says that all disciplinary actions should be documented. Be explicit when a conversation constitutes a formal step in progressive discipline, such as saying, "This is a verbal warning about your tardiness." If the verbal warning wasn't affirmed following the discussion, for example, by saying so in an email, then no record exists to demonstrate it occurred. Focus on resolving the employee's problem at this stage, consider consulting with the EAP, and avoid allowing a larger issue to develop over this disagreement.

I read that employees aged 30-39 experience the highest levels of stress. Why is this the case? What is the best thing I can do as a supervisor to help beyond referring to the EAP?

Employees aged 30-39 have historically faced the most stress dealing with financial pressures, such as mortgages, student loan debt, and family expenses. This is not new, but inflationary pressures have added to this stress with the cost of living far beyond what their parents experienced 35-40 years ago. In addition, 82% of the workforce is currently at risk of burnout, according to Forbes. The best thing that you can do is provide a safe space where you can meet with your employee to discuss stress if you believe you are spotting symptoms. A simple conversation may have a significant uplifting impact, but consider workload, flexible work hours, encouraging time off, delegating, and examining whether skills or a shortage of skills adds to the stress. You can also remind employees of the free and confidential support available to them through the EAP. The EAP provides employees with professional counseling, financial guidance, and other resources to manage life's challenges.

Source: forbes.com (Find with Google search using "82% workforce at risk")



Acentra
HEALTH

I want to be objective when evaluating employees, even with those troubled employees I manage. I admit that a likable personality sometimes inhibits my ability to be more critical in performance evaluations. How do I ensure fairness in my assessments?

To be more objective, especially when you have a favorable opinion of your employee's personality, requires objective measures so you ensure fairness. Assuming you have a well-worked performance evaluation process, consider the following to help put your personal feelings aside. Most supervisors who encounter this challenge are not keeping accurate accounts of achievements and concerns regarding performance. When evaluation time arrives, it becomes more difficult to recall performance over the past year accurately. Being non-specific in your criticism won't help. It's essential to quantify performance, for example, saying, "In August this past year, there were three instances when team members complained that you missed deadlines." Admittedly, this takes effort if you are a busy supervisor. Also, it sounds simple, but being aware of this tendency can be its own check to help ensure the evaluation demonstrates accuracy. Be sure not to overlook constructive criticism of work performance during the year because of a generally positive impression. It can make evaluations more difficult if only workers hear praise all year.

Employee Assistance Program

The EAP provides counseling sessions at no cost, as well as a wide variety of services to enhance overall well-being and support healthy work-life balance. In addition, the EAP is available to provide meaningful solutions to address the many challenging situations facing those in management roles. Leaders can take advantage of unlimited management consultations and receive guidance and assistance related to employee and team functioning concerns.

The EAP can be accessed anytime. For no-cost, confidential support from a licensed, experienced counselor, call today. You can also access helpful management tips and resources on the website.

 **Phone: 1.800.833.3031**

 **Website: EAPHelplink.com**

 **Company Code: IOWA**

Solutions is a newsletter for managers, supervisors, and human resource staff eligible for Acentra Health services. Acentra Health EAP services provide assistance and guidance to supervisors dealing with workplace performance issues. This newsletter is intended for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. Individuals should follow the policies and procedures laid out by their human resource management department concerning use of the EAP. Some articles reprinted with permission from DFA Publishing and Consulting, LLC. Acentra Health, McLean, VA. All rights reserved.