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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 am a supervisor overseeing an office with open workstations. Employees can hear each other's conversations. There are a few challenging personalities and everyone seems to know each other's business. How can I reduce conflict, tension, and communication issues?

Assuming you can't increase privacy with physical barriers, consider holding a team meeting to address ways to improve dynamics and communication. Your goal is to create an environment where distractions are minimized, and everyone is able to perform at their best. Be positive. These are challenges of the work setting, not a "who's at fault" discussion. At the first meeting, ask employees to think about ideas and schedule a second follow-up meeting. You'll likely notice that immediate improvements follow. At the next meeting, allow employees to suggest solutions. Consider having the team engage in a weekly "team health check" meeting. This brief, 10 to 15 minute gathering would be exclusively for team

members, focusing on monitoring and maintaining the group's overall well-being. During these sessions, employees can proactively discuss any communication issues or concerns that need resolution. This open dialogue allows team members to address potential conflicts early, encourages honest communication, and allows a safe environment where vulnerability can thrive. As positive changes occur, the team may be tempted to stop meeting. Keep it going to avoid slipping back into a less positive work environment. Consult with the EAP to discuss the basics of conflict resolution.

I am a new supervisor and want to make sure I demonstrate I am a strong leader, a supervisor whom employees can trust and who will support them. I'm concerned about how they'll judge my skills, style, and approachability over the next few months. What can I do to make a positive impression?

Your employees will notice your temperament, supervision style, communication skills, and ease of accessibility. But how does this awareness develop? First, employees assess your competence, your capabilities and expertise. Next, they observe how you communicate, evaluating your confidence, clarity, and effectiveness. They also consider whether you inspire them, a key factor in how they



judge a supervisor. Beyond these, employees—consciously or unconsciously—pay attention to your fairness, empathy, and team interactions. They notice how you handle relationships, navigate difficult situations, solve problems, and manage conflict. Additionally, they observe your commitment to their professional growth and whether you take responsibility for your actions and mistakes. This is the checklist to keep in mind as you start your new position.

Following a recent incident, we've decided to crack down on workplace bullying. I know we won't catch every instance, but what are the most subtle or hidden forms of bullying we should be aware of?

Most bullying behaviors in the workplace are difficult to spot even when directly observed because they are frequently disguised as normal workplace interactions. This is also what makes documenting them a challenge. For example, deliberately leaving someone out of meetings or social gatherings can be hard to spot. It might just be an oversight rather than intentional bullying. Snide comments are a little more observable, but tone plays a major role in bullying dynamics, especially mocking, condescending, and sarcastic tones. And what about excessive

micromanagement? This could be explained by the bully as simply demonstrating concern for high standards. Ultimately, it is important that you know your workplace policies and educate employees about workplace bullying. Use your HR business partner and the EAP as a resource.

I promised disciplinary measures against employees and then did not follow through when problems continued. My problem is that employees suddenly improve after these verbal confrontations, and then I am satisfied. However, problems return. How can I maintain consistency?

Managing difficult employees takes a focused approach. The EAP and your HR business partner can help you understand how to do this successfully. When a supervisor promises disciplinary action but does not follow through, it undermines credibility and negatively impacts employee motivation to change behavior. This dynamic erodes trust because employees are less inclined to take your feedback seriously. Although not a conscious process, empty threats are an indication that no real consequences follow poor performance or misconduct. They simply won't feel an urgent need to change. Recognize that promising adverse actions but not following through



encourages a work culture where employees act with indifference without following the rules. Employees who do follow the rules may ultimately lose their motivation to engage fully with the team.

What are the main ways that supervisors can use the EAP for themselves personally as a confidential source of support?

Supervisors can take advantage of EAP services to help in many ways. Consider utilizing the EAP in order to:

1. Obtain confidential counseling for one's own personal needs
2. Consult about improving communication in the workplace or resolving workplace conflicts
3. Learn stress management tips
4. Attain guidance on approaching employees prior to conducting corrective interviews and participating in constructive confrontation
5. Consult on handling specific situations involving difficult employees and reducing risk in managing problematic employee behaviors
6. Get help with pre-referral planning, post-referral communication, and post-discharge follow-up of formally referred employees

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



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