

FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

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Employee Assistance Program

800.451.1834

Available 24/7

Poor Employee Attitude

Q. My employee's work is good, and frankly, he is my best mechanic. There is nothing to document regarding performance, but he has a bad attitude with his lack of humor, gruff style, isolation, and cynicism; he does not mesh well with us. Can the EAP help?

A. Yes, the EAP can help. You do have job performance issues that you can document and upon which you can base a referral. It's attitude at work. Attitude can be described in a way that makes it measurable. The EAP can consult with you on useful language to consider in documentation, and it will do so with you confidentially. Useful language is critical because your organization may need such memos in the future to support performance management decisions. The task is to describe the manner in which your employee conducts himself, the disposition and temperament he displays, and most important, the impact on others. This is key to effective documentation—describing the harm or cost to the organization in lost productivity, lower morale, conflict, lost team cohesion, etc.

Sexual Harassment At Work

Q. What role can supervisors play in helping prevent sexual harassment? Please address modeling and work culture.

A. Supervisors represent employers and possess authority, so what you say and do is viewed as a standard of behavior, and may be directly modeled by workers under your supervision. In this sense, the actions are "amplified." Given this dynamic, not addressing inappropriate behavior when you witness it indirectly gives permission for it to be repeated. Your employees will take notice of what you say and what you don't say, and what you do and what you don't do, in determining how they should behave at work. Think back about past employers during your career. Was sexual harassment more likely to occur with some rather than others? Where harassment was less likely to occur, it is likely an institutional mindset existed to help communicate the unacceptability of such behavior. This is a top-down phenomenon reinforced by supervisors. This is part of your job — creating and nurturing an institutional mindset for a psychologically safe workplace and an environment less predisposed to behavior that could be considered sexual harassment. When you correct someone's behavior, be sure to also say to employees that the "type of behavior being discussed is not appreciated in this workplace."

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- Conflict Resolution
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- Depression
- Family Issues
- Stress Management
- Work Concerns

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Employee EAP Participation

Q. Can you discuss what supervisors accidentally or unwittingly do when referring employees to the EAP that undermines employee participation, or inhibits employees from actually going to or taking advantage of the program?

A. Common mistakes supervisors make when referring employees to the EAP that undermine the EAP's ability to help employees include: 1) Not communicating to the employee that the EAP is confidential and that the supervisor is not going to receive personal information about the employee from the EAP. 2) Not displaying a positive attitude about the EAP and its capabilities at the time of referral that "market" its benefits. 3) Failing to provide information to the EAP about performance issues discussed with the employee. (Absent this documentation, the employee commonly brings a different agenda to the EAP, or disagrees with performance issues paraphrased by the EAP as he or she understands them.) 4) Not completing the communication loop to discover whether the employee made it to the appointment, if the EAP does not phone to confirm it as expected.

Employee Engagement

Q. This year, I am on a mission to get my employees more engaged. If I do this right, what are the top benefits I am likely to see? Also, can the EAP help me with this project? It's not about counseling employees, but perhaps the EAP's "people knowledge" can assist me.

A. Yes, talk with the EAP. You will find many research reports and analytical data on this topic to guide you. You can anticipate that the most significant return on your investment of energy with this project will be employees who are willing to do more than expected, are more productive, and get along better with each other. You may also see improvement in attendance, fewer sick days, and higher morale. Hint: Research shows that you will make a big impact by listening to their opinions, being clear in what you ask and expect from them, and recognizing their contributions both privately and in front of peers.

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