

# Frontline Supervisor

**New Q&A Style**

**MIIA  
Employee  
Assistance  
Program**

**1.800.451.1834**

#### Management Consultation

- Employee Performance
- Change Management
- Workplace Trauma
- Conflict Resolution
- Layoff Support
- Lunch & Learn Seminars
- Management Trainings
- Organizational Stress

#### Employee Services

##### Confidential Counseling

- Addiction
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Family Issues
- Stress Management
- Work Concerns

##### Resources & Referrals

- Legal
- Financial
- Child Care
- Elder Care



#### In this issue:

- Avoid Getting Caught in an Employee's Web of Problems
- Managers' Communication Skills
- Consultation Services for Managers

## Do You Entangle Yourself in Employee Problems?

**Q. How do EAP's help supervisors stay emotionally removed from the personal problems of their employees?**

**A.** When employees share their personal problems with their supervisors, it can be tempting for supervisors to become overly involved and try to problem solve. Many supervisors entangle themselves in employees' personal problems. If those problems are difficult and chronic, this can become a burdensome task. But it doesn't end there; it takes an emotional toll. Concerned supervisors with strong emotional ties to their employees may empathize too deeply, adding to their own stress. This can increase leniency in your supervision even as an employee's performance deteriorates.

Your EAP can relieve you of this burden by teaching you skills to stay objective. You are then free to detach, so that you can manage performance while allowing EAP professionals to do the helping.

## Walking the Talk as a Manager

**Q. I've worked for managers who have had inadequate communication skills. Some did not communicate enough, gave vague feedback, or facilitated discussions poorly. Some were too aggressive or overly critical. How can I identify my own communication pitfalls and resolve them?**

**A.** Start by asking employees directly! It takes a strong supervisor to be this open to self-improvement. The increase of employee morale that comes with being this approachable is well worth it. Try it!

Consider asking these questions to get the feedback you need to adjust your style:

- Does my supervisory style match your needs/expectations?
- Do I communicate job expectations clearly?
- Do I ask for your opinion and allow input?
- Do I demonstrate respect? Fairness?
- Do I recognize, praise and inspire employees?
- Do I create opportunities for employees to grow and develop their skills?
- Do I make myself available to discuss issues and problems?



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Although this communication style may be a new method for you to engage your employees, your initial discomfort will fade with practice. Experiment with the questions—you'll be amazed at how a single conversation can change a long-time relationship for the better. Read the tips below to avoid typical communication pitfalls.

## Effective Communication Tips

Being an effective communicator requires knowing how to speak to various people, in various positions, with various personalities. Your success as a supervisor, and more-so as a leader, hinges on your ability to communicate well. Supervisors have to discuss the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Telling the good news is easy. However, disciplining employees, instructing them to complete tasks, or enforcing unpopular decisions are challenges for supervisors.

To get your message across without the intense emotions that cause breakdowns in communication, apply the following techniques:

- **Pay attention to your body language**  
If you're aggravated, it will show up in conversation. To release that tension, stretch and take a deep breath. Avoid eye-rolling, heavy sighs, angry facial expressions or hand gestures.

- **Use a normal conversation voice.** Choose an assertive tone that conveys respect. Avoid yelling, cursing or name-calling; this type of aggression will only cause tempers to flare.
- **Use I-statements.** Avoid a power struggle by using assertive statements or messages. "I've noticed that the last two reports you've submitted had significant errors and were turned in past the due date. I need you to check your work thoroughly and turn it in on time. Is there something I can do to help you accomplish this?"

## Related Trainings

- Talking the Talk: Effective Communication in the Workplace
- Send Your Message Up, Down and Across the Organization

## Management Consultations

Most of us care for our cars better than ourselves; we don't wait thousands of miles before we see the mechanic to cure that rattle. Why wait to call the EAP when those troublesome noises surface in your department?

Your EAP is available to assist you in effectively addressing problematic employee situations - **before** they cause a breakdown. It's free, confidential, and done at your convenience on a 24/7 basis. Schedule a phone consultation with one of our experienced counselors to discuss any work area that you think needs a tune up.

