

FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

Summer 2013

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Common Employee Complaints

Q. I have been a supervisor for 20 years, and have heard the same complaints from employees about bosses over the years. I think many are excuses for performance issues, but I'd like to review the most common ones - perhaps it would help supervisors prevent problems sooner?

A. Complaints about supervisors sometimes fall short of reality, but the more common ones include the following: “My boss has favorite employees, and they get the best assignments or are excused from undesirable tasks.” “My boss doesn't seem to care about my problems.” “My boss hasn't evaluated my performance in years and I don't know where I stand with the company.” “My boss has personality issues and experiences conflict with me and other employees.” “My boss often avoids me, doesn't say hello, or doesn't acknowledge me.” “My boss doesn't trust me with key assignments.” And so on... When you conduct performance reviews, listen carefully and ask your employees to discuss how they feel about their job and their relationship with you. You'll quickly spot trouble points if you keep the above complaints in mind. The EAP can help. It may be difficult to admit when some of these issues apply, but changes will produce big payoffs.

Lesser Known EAP Benefits

Q. I know EAPs can help employees improve job performance and address personal problems, but what are some of the less frequently discussed ways an organization can benefit by referring employees to the EAP?

A. The positive ripple effects of EAPs are numerous. Many EAPs can have life-saving benefits if they intervene with behavioral issues long before such issues become critical, as in the case of workplace violence. EAPs can help supervisors improve supervision practices, prevent dismissals and turnover, and facilitate resolution of employee disputes with the organization before they become difficult litigious problems. EAP consulting may prevent an organization from needing to hire expensive trainers. They may assist in resolving coworker conflicts, which improves productivity, and can boost the functionality of work teams or get drug-dependent workers to the right treatment the first time. EAP activities may have an impact on reducing accidents, decreasing risk of employment practices liability, helping curtail counterproductive workplace behaviors, improving communication, and training employees in many types of soft skills. Many of these benefits are difficult to measure, report on, or quantify, but they are ongoing.

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Building Authenticity

Q. Admitting mistakes is one of the hardest things for me to do. I think perhaps it's out of fear of being taken advantage of. I know it doesn't win friends, but beyond that, what's the downside of this behavior?



A. Contrary to what you might think, employees are more attracted to an authentic supervisor than a smart and always right supervisor. You'll appear safer and more approachable to your employees if you are more real to them. This is what gives charismatic leaders their edge: their authenticity comes through. When you model being your true self, you prompt others around you to do the same. They may no longer feel the need to act as inhibited, and may be less afraid to show their vulnerable side or real selves. A work environment that facilitates and encourages authenticity is a valuable thing. It is a luxury to feel unencumbered by the need to be defensive and protect ourselves from the larger world. The more authentic you appear as a leader, the more your employees will want to be part of your inner circle rather than reject it. Admitting mistakes and being human is part of this authentic profile.

“What” & “When”

Q. What more can supervisors do to improve the likelihood that an employee will make desired changes in behaviors or productivity without threatening the employee?

A. Supervisors usually know what they want changed or corrected, but just as important as what they want is “when” they want it. Make sure your employee knows the specific date that you need to see changes by. Supervisors often omit the “when” from corrective interviews. Think about your own life experience. What leads you to actually take steps to accomplish a task, especially one you would rather delay? Your energy to get moving, take action, and finish a task is often prompted by a deadline, which creates a sense of urgency. Start thinking “EAP referral” when this strategy of identifying “what” and “when” fails to help your employee make the changes you seek.

Employee Accountability



Q. How can supervisors help employees demonstrate high levels of productivity on the job and the least amount of counterproductive work behaviors?

A. Managers positively influence employee behaviors in many ways, but the fundamentals include making sure employees know what they are supposed to be doing and how they will be held accountable. Counterproductive workplace behaviors are significant among employees who experience ambiguity about their work duties. A study by Florida State University's College of Business found that only 20% of employees knew what they were supposed to accomplish each day at work and how they would be held accountable. The other 80% experienced the most behavioral problems, such as personality conflicts, absenteeism, trust issues, job neglect, and morale problems. It is not uncommon for EAPs to hear employee complaints about ambiguity associated with duties and accountability. Rare or nonexistent performance reviews will make these problems worse. When difficult employee problems arise, always consider whether ambiguity about duties and accountability are compounding the issues you face.

<http://news.fsu.edu/More-FSU-News/A-question-of-accountability-What-happens-when-employees-are-left-in-the-dark>

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Employee
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800.451.1834
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