

Frontline Supervisor

Spring 2011

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Pointing a “Know-It-All” in the Right Direction

Q. I recently hired an employee who acts like he knows more than I do about our work. He tells everyone, including me, how every task should be handled. This employee does have some good ideas, but, frankly, I’ve been a supervisor for over 20 years and there’s no way he’s going to succeed with that approach. His “know-it-all” attitude is getting on my nerves and others’ too. Am I reacting too harshly?

A. It can be challenging to adapt to such eager newcomers and sometimes our “insecurity button” gets pressed. Sounds like you’ve gained a bright addition to your team, but one who appears to need some guidance on maturing his communication style. Helping him speak effectively—so as to engage others and to have his ideas well received—is the goal. After giving him feedback on how he’s being perceived, consider sending him to professional development trainings or working individually with the EAP to advance his assertiveness skills.

Motivating the Unmotivated Employee

Q. My employee is not self-motivated. She has worked here over 10 years and knows the business well. Despite that, she is slow to act on regular assignments and does her everyday routine without ever initiating any new ideas or projects. After all this time of demonstrating this work style (I call it complacency), how can I possibly inspire this employee to step it up?

A. Even after 10 years, you have the right to expect satisfactory performance. Long-term performance issues sometimes have long histories of being accepted by the boss. Consider how your supervisory style may contribute to the employee’s lackluster performance. Good news: It’s never too late to initiate change! If you want to see changes in your employee, you have to start by changing your ways first. Consider working with the EAP to identify ways to shift your supervisory style. (continued on next page)

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Motivating the Unmotivated Employee (cont.)

Meet with your employee privately to pinpoint the specific performance issues that you'd like to see change. Discuss the effect of their performance on the organization, their coworkers, and you. Let them tell you their view of their performance and why they do what they do. An often overlooked motivational tactic is to act on the fact that employees wish to be appreciated for what they do; everyday, include genuine public praise and recognition of your employees. Another tactic may be to give more weight to the annual performance evaluation tool and use it informally, apart from review time. This gives employees the chance to know where they stand today, and the power to choose where they want to be when their performance is formally reviewed.

Build Your Skills

~ Motivational Strategies ~

Be human—let them know you recognize your part in allowing this long-standing performance issue to continue, and that today's the day we **both** commit to make some adjustments. Inform the employee of the specifics of what's not satisfactory and what is. Motivate the employee with the idea of improving their performance evaluation rankings. With a blank evaluation tool in hand, tell them, "If I were to complete this today, I'd have to rank you a 1 in this category. When it's time for your review in 3 months, I'd like to be able to rank you at least a 3. What can we do to get you there?" In case the employee can't come up with any, be ready with specific ideas which they can incorporate into their day to rise up to your newly defined expectations. For more assistance with this supervisory challenge consult with your EAP.

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Spring into Action!

Use this spring season as an opportunity to make a fresh start. Allow all the growth that happens outside the office to inspire growth within your office.

- Freshen up the format of long-standing meetings by opening with an inspirational quote or closing with a clean joke.
- Schedule a skill-building seminar for you and your staff.
- Engage in weekly or monthly (formal or informal) teambuilding activities to foster cohesion and productivity.
- Host a health/benefits fair to remind employees of all the resources available to them to live a satisfying and healthy life.

Talk to your Employee Assistance Program for more ways to spruce up your work environment.