

Frontline Supervisor

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



Addressing Frequent Tardiness

Q. My employee is frequently late to work. I've not made a referral to the EAP because



the problem is plain and obvious. The employee is a single parent trying to get three small children off to school in the morning. I feel like a heel writing the employee up, but should I?

A. It's a tough assignment for a parent to get three youngsters off to school in the morning, but your employee's lateness probably has more to do with a lack of consistent planning and organization. Your unwillingness to enforce the standard of being on time interferes with his or her motivation to solve the tardiness problem. To prove the point, ask yourself whether you see short-term results immediately after a confrontation regarding tardiness. If so, something worked successfully; but it didn't last. Are you fearful that taking a stand will lead to a disciplinary action, possibly dismissal? Have a discussion with your employee assistance professional to get past this roadblock. A problem like this one has multiple layers. It is a good one to illustrate how supervisors and employees may both benefit.

This issue:

- Addressing Frequent Tardiness
- Employee Conflict—Who's Job is it to Work it Out?
- Tips to Manage Conflicts Effectively
- Mediate When Necessary
- Management Consultations

Employee Conflict — Who's Job is it to Work it Out?

Q. Employees in conflict can be very disruptive to the work group. I have no problem making a referral to the EAP, but supervisors should attempt to resolve conflicts first. The question is how early to step in. Also, does a "formula" exist for doing it right?

A. There is no sure formula for resolving employee conflicts, but there is ample evidence from the world of work to guide supervisors in how to manage workplace conflict. One key observation is that you don't always have to intervene. In fact, intervening early can make conflicts more problematic for you and your work unit. If the conflict is not interfering with workflow and productivity, and it isn't prone to violence or associated with a serious employment practices allegation, then let employees work it out for themselves.

Two people in conflict are capable of resolving differences, but it isn't easy, and it's not typically fun. Let's explore some tips you can share with your employees in conflict. The overall message to share with them is that when a conflict arises there are two concerns they need to manage – the issue itself, and the relationship with the other person or people.



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Tips to Manage Conflicts Effectively

Discuss These with your Employees

Pause before reacting. Avoid jumping to conclusions. Whenever possible, allow time to collect information about the situation and then reflect on it before lunging into battle. Tell the other party, "Now that you've made me aware of this, I'll look into it and get back to you as soon as possible." Follow up, as promised, in a timely manner.

Choose battles wisely. Not all issues need to be addressed. Weigh the pros and cons of tackling the issue versus leaving it alone. Ask: "Will the problem resolve itself?" Or "Will the problem grow bigger and negatively impact the relationship/ work environment?" Under certain circumstances, no action may be the best action.

Avoid blame. Accept responsibility for your actions and the impact they have on others.

Apologize. Apologies, when truly fitting, have an exceptionally positive impact on restoring trust and respect.

Speak assertively. Use I-statements when discussing the conflict. For example: *"Our working relationship is very important to me, and I want to tell you something in the hopes of improving it. I feel angry when you talk about me with coworkers and say that I'm not doing enough to get our projects done. I feel like I am contributing to the department's needs as well as everyone else. I would like for us to talk about it before you discuss it with others so I that I understand what you need from me."*

Collaborate whenever possible. Collaboration allows multiple people to participate in resolving a problem or achieving a goal. When you want commitment/dedication to the outcome or buy-in from others, be sure to collaborate on the issue. Not only will you resolve the conflict, you'll be less likely to see that issue repeat itself.

"Everything happens through conversation. Language is the link that creates community, culture, and the future." — Judith E. Glaser



Mediate When Necessary

When your employees can't work out their differences themselves, and it is affecting the productivity of the workgroup or morale, it may be time to step in. Mediation is an option to consider. It improves communication, helps to uncover the real issues in the workplace, and allows employees to design their own solutions. Rather than calling the conflicted employees into your office and insisting on the resolution of their issue, you might try offering mediation. Mediation sets the stage for your employees to "buy-in" to the experience of problem solving face to face, removes you from being the judge and jury and puts the responsibility of problem solving squarely on the employees' shoulders. There is a greater chance that employees will follow through on the solutions they devise on their own. Call your EAP to discuss the best plan of action.

Got a Management Issue? We can help.

When you're not sure how to handle a tough situation, give us a call. We'll help you work it out. Call for:

- Professional Coaching
- Strategizing for performance discussions
- Referral options for employees with personal or job performance problems
- Managing workgroup conflict
- Navigating through layoffs/reorganization

