

# FrontLine Supervisor

## Employees — Your most valuable asset

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types

This information is provided by Continuum EAP. If you would like more information on these or other topics, please don't hesitate to contact us.

**Q:** How can a supervisor become less fearful of addressing an employee whose performance is unsatisfactory? I think many of us live in denial, or rationalize avoidance of this unpleasant task. We want to be leaders, but this responsibility is the most distasteful. How can the EAP help?

**Many supervisors can temporarily** get away with ignoring employees who are not performing satisfactorily. Unfortunately, however, such problems grow worse, as do the risks they present. Helping supervisors understand the chronic nature of unresolved personnel issues can create an urgency to act sooner, before a crisis makes confrontation unavoidable. Shy supervisors usually are unaware of the secondary problems associated with poor performance. Failure by employees to follow work rules and disregard for one's professional development are examples. Supervisors' reluctance to confront employees is often based on fear. This might be fear of being lashed out at by the employee, disliked or labeled unfair. The reticent supervisor's goal is to avoid an undeserved reputation as an oppressor. If this sounds familiar, contact the EAP for consultation and support, and practice some tough role plays with the EA professional. You will be astonished at how such exercises can enhance one's confidence and fortitude to act.

## TEAMWORK

*Coming together is a beginning...*

*Keeping together is a process...*

*Working together is a success!*

Continuum EAP can help individuals become successful team leaders. Call and schedule a time to speak with a workplace consultant at **402.476.0186 / 800.755.7636** or email us at [easpecialist@4continuum.com](mailto:easpecialist@4continuum.com).

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**Q:** I don't want to be the cause of my employees burning out, but there is no way I can distribute less work. Can you offer tips for how to balance these issues? Any hard data to back up those tips?

**A:** When discussing burnout, it is important to describe what the term means, given the context of the work situation. A report from the National Institute of Health in 2017 reminds us that burnout is not an official mental health diagnosis, that the definitions are drastically nonuniform across research studies, and that many symptoms included in these definitions are also associated with depression. So, who is burned out and who is not is not easy to determine. A recent Gallup survey of German workers may have discovered an answer that will help you in considering how to engage with your workers. Those who received regular praise and recognition for good work, had proper materials and equipment to deliver quality work, and felt their opinion counted had lower feelings of burnout. How much control do you have over these factors? It appears that most supervisors have a quite a bit.

Source: [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com) [search: "German Workforce Stress"].

**Q:** I am new to my leadership role. Can I learn leadership skills from a book, or is leadership too complex? Is it an art form or the product of some creative process? What role can the EAP play?

**Much of leadership** is learned from the school of "hard knocks," but it is also an art and a science, as many books attest. Literature may increase desire and excitement for your new role, but it won't shorten the learning curve of practical experience. Some principles that can help you shape your own style are worth hearing. Be clear with employees about what you want from them — don't let them wonder about it. Offer a vision about what success looks like that they can grasp. Doing so will cause employees to establish standards of performance modeled after your examples. Never allow employees to think they aren't accountable, and be liberal with praise and celebrate successes. Be consistent with your employees by not confusing them with different or muted reactions to problems and concerns. Employees will march to the rhythm you set and this will influence the work culture. Don't let your leadership style develop accidentally. Make this a conscious process.

**Q:** I have an employee who behaves as if he "knows" everything. Other employees suppress their opinions around him, so I miss their input on issues that need to be resolved. The tricky part is that he really is smart, but how do I address a problem like this?

It is difficult for some supervisors to imagine that a very smart employee with significant skills and major contributions could also be a problem employee. This is an example of the "halo effect." This can make it a challenge to confront an employee about conduct issues. Obviously, it takes more than intelligence to be effective in the workplace. It also takes teamwork, soft skills and emotional intelligence — the ability to recognize others' needs and feelings and use this information effectively. These skills appear lacking or unapplied in this instance. You can quantify the effect that your employee's behavior, conduct and attitude have on others. You also can observe and record the behaviors that lead to these effects. Consider contacting Continuum EAP for consultative help on pulling these pieces together in a way that will be effective when you sit down to discuss the issues with your employee to help him make positive changes.