

Employees—  
Your Most  
Valuable  
Resource

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# Frontline Supervisor



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.

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## Continuum Top Shelf



### The New Art of Managing People, Updated and Revised: Person-to-Person Skills, Guidelines, and Techniques Every Manager Needs to Guide, Direct, and Motivate the Team

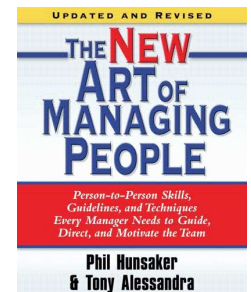
by Tony Alessandra & Phillip L. Hunaker

When a manager establishes a friendly yet productive working atmosphere, the benefits to the whole organization are substantial. *The Art of Managing People* provides practical strategies, guidelines and techniques for:

- \*Developing the interpersonal skills necessary to improve relations with employees
- \*Understanding the differences between people, and behaving accordingly
- \*Assessing, and then improving, current working situations
- \*Creating trust between managers and employees

Person-to-person skills are the key to developing an effective team of satisfied, energetic workers. Letting your workers express their own personalities and maximize their potentials will:

- \* Reduce stress within the work force,
- \* Create a positive spirit throughout the company
- \* Increase the organization's productivity and profitability



**I spoke to the EAP and made a supervisor referral. The employee was cooperative, and I was relieved. Then something flopped. The employee came back saying the EAP had no suitable recommendations. Should I refer the employee somewhere else? What should I assume happened?**

**Do not make a** referral to another source of assistance that your organization has not established for assessment and referral purposes. The employee may independently do this, of course. First, call the EAP to see whether a release exists and verify participation. You won't learn details from the EAP as to what transpired, but a signed release means there was follow-through. You may never be able to determine what happened in the EAP interview. This is why you must focus on performance. Did you send a detailed written account of the performance issues to the EAP and provide your employee with a list of those issues, after discussing them? If this did not happen, almost any outcome from a supervisor referral could follow. Whether the meeting led to arguing over performance issues or unsuccessful probing of the employee's personal problems, without documentation from the supervisor, a sense of urgency or desire to cooperate can be undermined in the EAP interview.

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■ **I have many employees whose performance I must document, but my write-ups are frequently delayed by days and I frequently lose important details. Are there things I can do to improve my recall?**

**If you can't write** documentation right away or must delay it for hours or days, your memory will fade. There are two solutions. One option is to memorize this suggested five-question outline. With each incident, go through the questions mentally. This may help to jog your recall more effectively later. The other option is to write down the answers to the questions quickly and retain them to assist you later. Suggested outline: 1) What happened? 2) How did you respond? 3) How did the employee respond/react? 4) What was the effect of #1 on productivity? 5) What was concluded at the time of the incident? This procedure should not take more than 30-40 seconds, but even a simple mental rehearsal will improve your recall and make documentation better when you finally get to it.

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■ **Things are pretty "loose" in our work unit. We do a lot of partying and know each other well. Our work culture includes a lot of swearing at each other, but it's never serious. In fact, I would say we have affection for each other. Is the swearing a problem? Should I try to get it to stop?**

**Talk to the EAP** and discuss a way of turning this around and curtailing this type of communication. If you swear at each other when things are going well, what happens when things are not going well or when you have an employee you wish to correct or discipline? It is likely that you are swearing at these times as well. The foul language is a risk issue for your employer because as a manager you have condoned a disrespectful communication style as a normal part of your work culture. If a complaint was lodged, you would face a difficult time explaining how this is nothing more than an affectionate form of communication. Intentions would count for little. Any of your employees who wish to argue that the work environment was offensive and hostile would have an easy time of it. You have a responsibility to protect employees from a hostile and offensive work environment, and it is virtually impossible to show that this sort of interaction supports that goal.

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■ **Can the EAP help our work unit learn more about treating each other with respect? Respect means a lot more than tolerance for one's ethnic or racial differences, right? I think we need it, but what does that include? Where do we start?**

**Yes, speak with your EAP** about respect and how to manage the work environment to promote a respectful workplace. There are several ways to approach your training needs, and it might be helpful to start with a confidential survey that the EAP might examine. Another alternative might be the EAP interviewing employees confidentially to get a keener understanding of the issues your workgroup faces. Other approaches also might exist for understanding your needs. Respect means many things. Some workgroups may have great problems with diversity and respect but have no problems with things like rumors and gossip that damage morale. So getting a snapshot of the needs is a good way to start. Employees will always look forward more to a training event of this sort when they can play a role in setting its agenda.