

THE CONTINUUM **EDGE**

INFORMATION FOR LEADERS

Q: I'm a new supervisor, and I want to ensure I demonstrate strong leadership. Over the next few months, how will my team evaluate my leadership skills, communication style and overall approachability?

A: Your employees will notice your temperament, supervision style, communication skills and approachability. But how does this awareness develop? First, employees assess your competence, your capabilities and expertise. Next, they observe how you communicate,

evaluating your confidence, clarity and effectiveness. They also consider whether you inspire them, a key factor in how they judge a supervisor. Beyond these, employees — consciously or unconsciously — pay attention to your fairness, empathy and team interactions. They notice how you handle relationships,

navigate difficult situations, solve problems and manage conflict. Additionally, they will observe your commitment to their professional growth and whether you take responsibility for your actions and mistakes. Keep this info, and that Continuum EAP is a resource to you, in mind as you navigate your new role.

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I oversee an office with workstations that face each other in groups of four. Employees can hear each other's conversations, a few personality issues exist, and everyone seems to know everyone else's business. How can I reduce risk of conflict, tension and communication issues?



A: Assuming you can't increase privacy with physical barriers, have a team meeting to discuss reducing tension for better communication and psychological safety. Be positive; these are challenges of the work setting, not a “who's at fault” discussion. At the first meeting, ask workers to think about ideas and schedule a second meeting. You'll likely notice that immediate improvements follow. At the next meeting, members offer ideas. Consider having the team engage in a weekly “team health check” meeting. This brief, 10–15-minute gathering would be exclusively for team members, focusing on monitoring and maintaining the group's overall well-being. This open dialogue allows team members to proactively address communication issues or conflicts early. As positive changes occur, the team may be tempted to stop the meetings. Keep them going to avoid slipping back into a less positive work environment.

For additional conflict resolution tips, reach out to Continuum EAP.

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I promised disciplinary measures against employees and then didn't follow through. My problem is that employees suddenly improve after these verbal confrontations, and then I am satisfied. But then the issues return. Help!

A: Managing difficult employees takes a focused approach. Continuum EAP can help you understand how to do this successfully so the risk of losing your employees by dismissal is minimized. When a supervisor promises disciplinary action but does not follow through, it undermines credibility and negatively impacts employee motivation to change behavior. This dynamic erodes trust because employees are less inclined to take your feedback seriously.

Although not a conscious process, empty threats are an indication that no real consequences follow poor performance or misconduct. They simply won't feel an urgent need to change. Promising adverse actions but not following through encourages a work culture where employees act with indifference without valuing following the rules.

In addition, employees who do follow the rules may ultimately lose their motivation to engage fully with the work unit.



Q

- **Following a recent incident, we've decided to crack down on workplace bullying. I know we won't catch every instance, but what are the subtle or hidden forms of bullying we should be aware of?**

A: Most bullying behaviors in the workplace are subtle and difficult to spot even when directly observed because they are frequently disguised as normal workplace interactions. This is also what makes documenting them a challenge. For example, deliberately leaving someone out of meetings or social gatherings can be hard to spot. It might just be an oversight rather than intentional bullying. Snide comments are a little more observable, but tone plays a major role in bullying dynamics, especially mocking, condescending, sarcastic tones, etc.

And what about excessive micromanagement? This could be explained by the bully as simply demonstrating concern for high standards.

Ultimately, it is important to educate employees about workplace bullying. This does two things:

- **Encourages them to come forward.**
- **Lets them know how to articulate a concern effectively.**

Talk to a Continuum EAP professional for more information. They can help arrange such training.