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# FrontLine Leader

*Employees — Your most valuable asset*



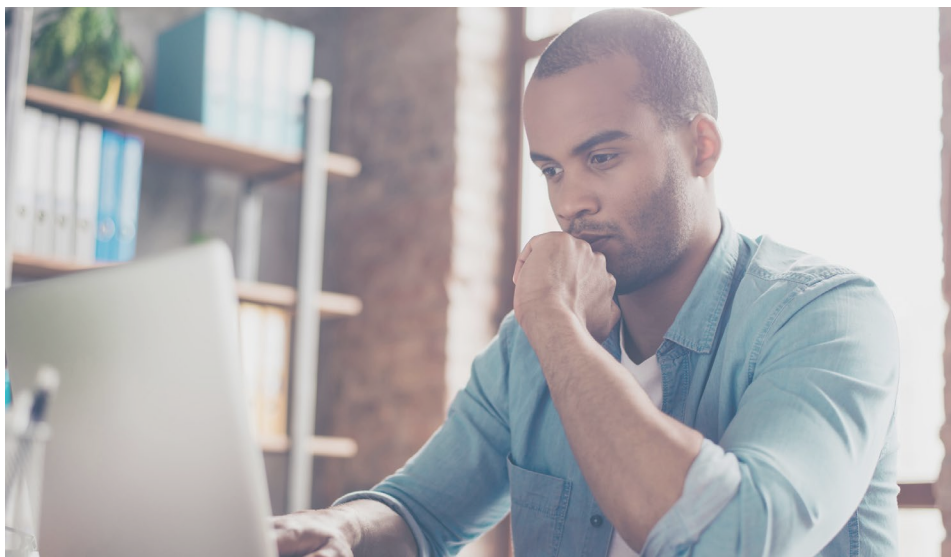
**How do I document a bad attitude? It is too subjective. I would almost need a video of the person's actions in order to accurately describe it.**

**A:** You're right. A bad attitude cannot be documented as such. It requires more quantifiable language. The Oxford dictionary defines "attitude" as "a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior." Behaviors that can be seen, heard, and therefore

described constitute the language that reflects attitude problems. But it does not end there. The next piece is linking these behaviors to undesirable or problematic effects. If, for example, your employee is constantly making cynical remarks in team meetings, asking the team how this behavior affects them and learning about its negative

impact on their enjoyment of the work environment or ability to be productive — or even how it undermines team members' confidence — is what's needed to create effective documentation. Can the EAP help? Yes, this is a common employee issue that can be addressed through workplace improvement coaching.

**If I call the EAP to provide information concerning a rumor I heard about my employee who was recently discharged from treatment and may be using again, will Continuum keep my phone call confidential? How will this information be used?**



**A:** A key principle in working with addictive disease employees is to avoid giving enabling and co-dependent-like responses to their behaviors. In this instance, seeking to verify such a rumor would be chasing something likely to be nearly undiscoverable.

The EAP, understanding this dynamic, will avoid engaging in such behaviors, but instead use the information as a backdrop to have a more effective follow-up discussion regarding the individual's

progress in treatment and follow-through with a recovery program. EAPs don't provide treatment, so follow-up with the treatment provider will be important and allow clinical staff working with the employee to better manage or intervene if necessary.

You would be doing the right thing in passing along this information, but your goal should be to help promote the satisfactory performance of an employee.



## How can I keep conflict within our team from negatively impacting clients and patients?

**A:** Two often-forgotten truths about teams are that conflict is normal and that teams must meet. To prevent team conflicts from spilling over to affect clients, patients or other departments, have a regular meeting to address staff concerns so they are resolved early, while they're small and manageable. Knowing that they have such a forum to air conflicts and internal issues will reduce the likelihood that frustrated team members will act out. Start with weekly meetings if employees interact with one another daily. Discuss content issues first (information, scheduling, reports, etc.) and

process issues second (communication, clarification of roles, frustrations, conflicts). In the second part of your meeting, ask the group to discuss process and issues or concerns among members. Next, move to concerns about roles and duties. Also discuss concerns associated with the larger organization or needed resources. As problems resolve, you will see meetings shorten. Start meetings on time, and always give the opportunity for the "process" discussions, even if weeks or months pass without staff raising concerns.

**I don't like reprimanding employees or telling them what they have done wrong. How can supervisors have an easier time with these tense meetings?**



**A:** There is an old saying in customer service: "A complaint is a gift." This idea sees negative feedback or criticism as an opportunity to improve and grow. This same model applies to correcting employees. View a corrective interview as a gift that will benefit your employee's career. Consider the term "corrective interview" over "reprimand."

It is more closely aligned with this model of supervision. See these meetings as opportunities to benefit employees. You will feel less punitive and more like a coach or leader. Be aware that employees who are your star performers may require more corrective interviews because they practice initiative and take more risks. Their higher productivity

may come with more mistakes if they naively cross boundaries, unwittingly step on the wrong toes, or simply rub people the wrong way. It's part of the growth curve. A corrective interview is an opportunity to develop talent. See these meetings from this viewpoint and they will be easier to conduct, and more beneficial to your organization.