

# FrontLine Leader

Employees — Your most valuable asset

1135 M Street, Suite 400, Lincoln, NE 68508 • 402-476-0186 or 800-755-7636 • [4continuum.com](http://4continuum.com) • [eespecialist@4continuum.com](mailto:eespecialist@4continuum.com)



November 2018

## In this issue:

Tips for helping  
employees  
succeed

\*

Does positive  
peer pressure  
work?

\*

Recommending  
the EAP for  
family issues

\*

Open door  
policy

\*

When an  
employee refuses  
an EAP referral

**Q.** **I want to do everything I can to help my employees perform well.** What is the most important task to accomplish in order to make this possible?

**A.** **Form good working relationships.** Supervisors can learn many different skills and tactics, but few will be effective without positive relationships. Understand the concept of “essential attitudes” for a supervisor. Essential attitudes for success exist in every profession, whether you are a teacher, scientist, minister, pilot or supervisor.

**Here's one:** Assume your employees are doing the best job they can from their point of view. This attitude will affect the way you speak, act, nurture and support them. It might even help you remember to use the EAP more often as a resource to improve performance.

**Another:** Spell out for employees what they need to do in order to succeed and then give them the ability to do it. Imagine how these essential attitudes influence a positive relationship, and how lacking they are with many managers. Can you think of more essential attitudes critical to relationship success?

**Q:** Why can't employees monitor themselves and use peer influence to ensure a respectful workplace? It seems as though supervisors must still take the lead role and play a large part in supporting a positive workplace and discouraging disrespect.

**Employees are certainly capable** of exerting peer pressure on fellow workers and helping maintain a respectful workplace, but they need your help. When management (supervisors) don't act or step in when witnessing bad behavior, this is more or less excusing it. This then undermines employee peer pressure dynamics and group influence. Managers represent “punitive authority” within the employment setting. This doesn't mean punishment. Instead, this means the ability or potential of the employer to impose penalties for fault, offence or violation of rules. All employment settings possess this natural dynamic. When undermined, employees toss self-discipline to the wind and experience far less urgency to respond to positive peer pressure.

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.

Visit [4continuum.com](http://4continuum.com) or follow us on:



**Q:** One of my employees has a teen who was caught selling marijuana in school. I learned this from another employee. The father of the student is an excellent worker. Should I leave this alone and not say anything, or mention the EAP as a resource?

**Q:** I have an open door policy. I let my employees know they can come to me at any time to share concerns or problems. I rarely get visitors. I'm assuming this is because everything is going well. Am I correct?

**In a private conversation,** let your employee know that you have learned of his child's problem. Mention Continuum EAP and say that the professionals there can offer several types of support helpful to the family, including referral to expert resources in the community, help for understanding unique issues associated with parenting a teenager with a drug use problem, and free legal consultation services.

Encouraging use of the EAP may also reduce lost productivity or future attendance problems as your employee manages the legal problems, treatment issues, probation and potential enforcement of his child's participation in a recovery program. This can be a rocky road that involves relapse, parenting challenges, and crises requiring the support of experts that the EAP can help locate.

**Well, maybe.** An open door policy encouraging workers to visit and discuss issues and concerns requires more than simply a door swung open. You must also have a psychologically safe workplace. A psychologically safe workplace naturally encourages employees to stick their necks out, approach you, and take advantage of what you are offering. They do so because they are confident they will not be rejected or punished for admitting a mistake, bringing a complaint, asking a question, or offering a new idea. Help employees feel respected, accepted, and comfortable at all times. Model this to others. The bottom line is: How you interact with employees outside your office will determine whether they will walk through your "open" door later.

**QUESTION:** I worked with Continuum to formally refer my employee to the EAP because of ongoing attendance issues. He insisted no personal problems were to blame. What should I have said to win this argument? (He never went.)

**ANSWER:** There is no need to argue or verbally joust with an employee who refuses an EAP referral. Has your employee's attendance improved since your discussion? Watch for improvement and then recurrence of the problem. This is a common pattern with personal problems that interfere with performance. The urgency felt by your employee resulting from the confrontation may have been enough to create positive changes in his behavior. If attendance remains good, consider your confrontation a success. If attendance issues return, work with Continuum to formally refer the employee again. Ultimately, your human resources advisor or management may formulate a disciplinary consequence for continuing problems. If appropriate and within company policy, leverage this disciplinary action alongside a referral to attend the EAP.