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FrontLine Leader

Employees — Your most valuable asset



I referred my employee to the EAP several months ago because of attitude issues. The referral went well, but recently the employee shared untrue information with peers about our discussion that prompted the referral. I'd love to contradict what was said, but it would be improper. Do I have any options?

A: You can't share information with fellow workers, but you can meet with your employee to express your disappointment. One key concern about any sort of personal disclosure of EAP information is the reaction by fellow workers to whatever is disclosed and whether this causes any to question the degree of

confidentiality or the goals of workplace improvement coaching. If your employee has shared information related to your referral conversation and it is untrue and disruptive to the workplace, it might be important to gauge whether this requires some sort of corrective response in your meeting with the employee and/or a request that

they once again meet with the EAP to discuss this disruptive behavior. Continuum's standard practice is to keep management referral cases open for one year so the employee and the supervisor may easily reaccess services and support to address new or continuing performance problems.

What is meant by the term equitable workplace? Is this an new abstract idea, or is it something that can be clearly defined with a business rationale? What is the supervisor's role in an equitable workplace?



A: An equitable workplace is a work culture or environment where everyone, regardless of their background (ethnic origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, physical abilities, or neurodiversity), believes they have an equal opportunity to be happy, healthy and productive. The term evolved from diversity awareness and inclusion initiatives, but it is rapidly becoming the dominant way of describing a healthful workplace.

The workplace has undergone dramatic changes in recent decades. Employees no longer feel as loyal to employers, but personal meaning and fulfillment

in one's job have become paramount. As a result, employees are more aware of inequities, can spot them more quickly, and are less willing to tolerate working where they perceive disrespect or exclusion.

This makes workplace equity a priority concern for companies and gives it a clear business rationale. There are hard economic costs of ignoring workplace equity. They appear in terms of lower productivity, absenteeism and turnover. Managers can play significant roles in enhancing workplace equity by making changes in areas of communication, team development, opportunities, policies and practices.



- **I understand providing constructive feedback to employees is important, but to be honest, I have always been afraid of correcting employees. So I don't. How can I overcome this fear?**

A: Supervisors who do not correct employees sometimes struggle with other forms of communication as well, including giving positive feedback. Build your constructive feedback skills with the “sandwiching technique,” providing positive feedback and some corrective instruction, and then closing with a restatement of a positive observation about the employee’s performance.

Example: “Jane, good work on helping that customer find the right paint color yesterday. Give them the color list in the sales folder, and it will go faster for you. I was especially impressed with your patience!”

Imagine your boss offering no feedback. How would it feel? This awareness may motivate you to do it more often. A Continuum EAP professional can role-play a constructive conversation with you to build your skills. Note that before confronting employees, have plenty of documentation and examples. Not enough can prompt defensiveness and make it tougher to inspire the changes needed. You may also want to consider an in-depth discussion with the EAP professional about anxiety when confronting employees. They can help provide tips or referral suggestions to assist you.



I want to show maximum respect to my employees rather than overlook important ways to demonstrate that I value their expertise. I know this will build morale and enhance my relationship with them. What are some things I can start doing to help achieve this?

A: The more you engage in respectful behaviors, the more your relationship deepens.

Consider the following:

1. Respect and value your employee’s time by acknowledging it when delegating assignments.
2. If you promise something to an employee, deliver on it.
3. If you set a meeting time, don’t forget it.
4. Don’t offer an assignment without explaining what’s expected.
5. Use empathy to identify what employees need in order to be productive.
6. Reach out; don’t wait for a request or complaint to come if you anticipate it.
7. Never act like an employee is replaceable. Ultimately, an employee might be easily replaced, but don’t use this as a force in your relationship.
8. Treat employees as the experts, which means asking them for their ideas, opinions and suggestions. E.g., If you are considering a process change, ask those who will be directly impacted for input first so they can help identify holes or ways to make the change more efficient.