

MARCH
2022

FrontLine Leader

Employees — Your most valuable asset



Q:

My employee apologizes constantly for her inadequate performance. I know she is sincere, but I feel a bit guilty putting pressure on her and taking some action that could cause her to lose her job. She won't go to the EAP. What should I do?

A: Your employee may indeed be sincere, but she is not a satisfactory performer. When she apologizes without correcting her performance, she effectively avoids disciplinary action you are unwilling to take. Until now, you have been manipulated to avoid taking stronger measures to correct her performance.

But remember, discipline is not punishment: it is a tool for correcting performance. Your own performance is suffering because you are not managing the situation properly. What's more, if her problems are chronic, eventually the current performance issue will get worse. Consider this: by not acting more

decisively, you have enabled her problems to grow worse. Not all employees are defensive when confronted. Some simply agree with you, but do not feel motivated enough to change. Consult with your EAP about your indecisiveness. They will help you with your personal issues that keep you avoidant and indecisive.

Q:

EAP has been a wonderful service for our organization and it has helped many employees. Other than a lack of training, why are some managers hesitant to use it?

A: Although EAP's help both employees and supervisors, and protect the organization by reducing behavioral risk, some supervisors may feel that the EAP takes away something that has given their job meaning: counseling or at least advising employees about personal problems, in addition to using persuasion to inspire changes. Some supervisors possess a style that includes being a confidant, a friend and wise advice giver. Some supervisors are more empathetic than others and are more interested in the human experience. This can be a positive, but their identity may be too closely connected to how others look up to them beyond pure performance and leadership matters. The desire to play a larger role in employees' lives can conflict with the role of supervisor and the critical link needed in facilitating referral to the EAP for workers with severe problems that the supervisor is unable to resolve.



Is bickering a problem I should refer to the EAP? I have a few employees in our small office, and they seem to get on each other's nerves quite a bit. They don't complain about it, and they are great performers. Personally, however, I don't like the tension.

A: Strain among employees in close quarters is probably not something you are going to be able to entirely eliminate. It is the nature of relationships, even good ones, to experience conflict, especially in tight quarters. As you observe, performance appears unaffected. However, not all small conflicts are the same. You may want to delve deeper just to ensure something small won't later turn into something

serious or risky to the workplace. For example, is the bickering or tension caused by inequity or unfairness? Are work roles not balanced well? Does one of your employees believe they have a better future than another? Inquire about these or similar issues periodically so you understand what may be underlying the conflicts beyond the apparent issues they involve.



I supervise a diverse group of workers. Many, I think, would not visit the EAP for counseling help. How can I better motivate these workers, to consider using EAP services?

A: When correcting performance issues of employees or helping them resolve workplace problems that interfere with productivity, view Continuum EAP as a resource but avoid discussing clinical aspects of the EAP. Certainly Continuum EAP assess and may counsel on personal problems but the business rationale for the program is not based on counseling.

It is based on improving productivity and preserving human resources. Likewise, management referrals are based on performance issues. So it is appropriate to focus on Continuum EAP strictly as a performance-enhancing service. This will help resistant employees see Continuum EAP as a more attractive resource. Ironically, this view of an EAP

as a "productivity improvement program" may yield more referrals and help for "at-risk" employees. It's natural for employees to hesitate about sharing personal information, but EAP professionals are experts at working with clients at their pace and avoiding pressuring clients to disclose information they aren't ready to share.