

FrontLine Leader

Employees — Your most valuable asset



Q:

I am a new supervisor. What supervisory skills can Continuum EAP best help me develop if I get into situations or experience problems I can't manage properly on my own?

A: There are many skills a supervisor needs to be effective. Sometimes it is difficult to identify the specific skill that is lacking to address a particular problem. This is where Continuum EAP is able to help. For example, if morale in your work unit is an issue, and you don't see it improving, is it because you lack

effective communication skills? Are interpersonal skills the problem? Could you improve your conflict resolution skills? Then again, is it possible the morale problem is mostly out of your control? Use Continuum EAP to troubleshoot issues you experience on the job, particularly interpersonal, intrapersonal

and soft-skilled-related issues. Continuum EAP may help you with personal issues, refer you to effective skill development resources or even send you back to your supervisor or organization for coaching or mentorship, but with clarification of your needs.

Q:

I have respect from employees

and I respect them but loyalty is something more. How is it defined and what is the best way to develop loyalty among staff?

A: A good way to look at loyalty versus respect is to see that loyalty is a layer of dedication to your leadership that has been built on respect over time. Your employees may respect your position, authority, skills and abilities, but whether they go the extra mile is a question associated with loyalty.

Loyalty is earned by respecting your employees over time and is nurtured by understanding the needs of each of your employees and what they need to be happy, healthy and productive. Loyalty is the dividend of investing yourself in the relationship you have with each of your employees. Loyalty is currency to get things done. When your employees respect you as a leader, they may deliver 100%. When they are loyal, they'll reach even further.



What reason do supervisors give for why they did not refer a troubled employee to the EAP following a tragic incident in the workplace where there were signs and symptoms clearly present?

A: Numerous tragedies that occur in the workplace have been associated with troubled employees, including accidental death, workplace violence and property damage, among others. These incidents may have been prevented if the worker was referred to their EAP earlier.

There are two dominant reasons for not having referred such employees early on. One is the supervisor's belief that no serious problem existed because evidence of behavior or performance problems was intermittent.

If periods of normalcy and satisfactory performance existed, it may have appeared that the employee's problems were personally manageable, and the unease associated with a formal EAP referral wasn't necessary.

The other reason is that the employee's awareness of their problem and what to do about it appeared convincing enough to the supervisor to dismiss the idea of a formal referral. If a supervisor periodically wonders if a referral to the EAP is necessary for an employee, contacting the EAP for a consult is the prudent action.



How do I document an attitude problem so there is no uncertainty later about what I mean? What really bothers me most is the cynicism, eye rolling, and sighing.

A: Behaviors such as rolling one's eyes, sighing and huffing may be triggering but are difficult to document. The key is discovering what is articulable and quantifiable and has an adverse impact. Do words like arrogant, aggressive, cynical, critical, indifferent or rude describe your employee's attitude? If arrogance is descriptive, documentation might be: "*John often demonstrates*

an exaggerated sense of his importance or abilities. For example, on (date, time) he remarked that 'everyone in the office is too lazy to learn the combination to the file cabinet' so they 'rely on him' to open it in the morning. Such a statement has a negative effect on office morale and creates conflict," (Note how this example does not label the employee as "arrogant" You are using the definition of it

followed by an example. This is more effective.) Formulate attitude documentation with:

- 1) behavior associated with the attitude.
- 2) a description of what was said or what happened.
- 3) its adverse impact.

(Hint: Continuum EAP can offer general guidance on documentation and a dictionary may provide descriptive words to help with describing situations.)