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FrontLine Leader

Employees — Your most valuable asset



What can supervisors do to help their employees correct performance more efficiently? I have often met with employees to discuss a problem that needs fixing, but I have later been surprised by what's been forgotten or not understood despite what appeared to be a well-communicated meeting.

A: If you have been a supervisor for any length of time, you have likely noticed how an employee may be very attentive in a corrective interview as you explained the problem, but later, it is as though they were daydreaming the entire time they were looking you straight in the eye. You may have asked to have key points in the meeting

repeated, but later the details are surprisingly overlooked. There are many reasons for this phenomenon, including attention deficit issues due to stress, fear or even possibly depression or medical issues. It is common for such employees not to return later for clarification, fearful of the managers response to their apparent lack of attention.

For these reasons, practice putting problems in writing along with the key points needing attention. Doing so early when problems arise may eliminate the need for any future meetings. If the pattern of inattention remains, refer the employee to Continuum EAP based on performance shortcomings.



I was discussing my employee's attendance problem when she mentioned that family issues were causing her lateness. She added that she would be contacting Continuum EAP. I look forward to positive changes, but should I have done something more?

A: Beyond following up later and affirming the positive changes in her attendance, the situation with this employee seems to have been handled well. This is a self-referral and a great example of how Continuum EAP can help, but there are a couple of tips worth considering. Depending on the seriousness of this attendance issue, offering the employee the opportunity to use your phone or to call Continuum "now" from your

office might be effective in helping ensure she does in fact contact us. It is the employees choice if she would like to utilize her EAP benefits. The second is to be firm and supportive but clear that if the attendance problem does not change, then you will be considering the next steps in correcting the problem. This will also facilitate follow-through because a disciplinary step is implied without it being committed to it yet.

My department manager just informed me that one of my employees went over my head to complain. It made me look bad and I am upset. How should I intervene? The concern is related to a disagreement we were having about her job description. My boss hasn't said anything about the end-run.



A: End-running can be a problem among troubled workers, but it can also be a naive decision by a new or younger employee without experience in understanding how hierarchical organizations function. End-runs are usually managed with two issues of concern: addressing the importance of the complaint and the organizational problem of the end-run itself. Referring the employee back to the subordinate supervisor is a common response by the upper-level manager for issues that are not serious.



A: As you point out, a more supervisory relationship with employees has many payoffs. Beyond focusing on quality or quantity of work, these payoffs include communication and a closer, more trusting relationship between supervisor and employee. This reduces supervisor stress and negative emotions that create unwanted, unnecessary distraction when problems arise. Employees become more interested in their work, improve self-awareness, accomplish more goals and experience improved job satisfaction, which

Most end-runs are an irritation, but not calamitous. They are teaching moments for employees, and they can help the supervisor examine areas of improvement in conflict and communication management. Discuss with your employee the complications that result from an end-run. If your employee has more serious conduct issues making behavior difficult, then work with Continuum EAP to help the worker improve conduct, attitude and performance.

I have been a department head overseeing other supervisors for many years. I think many don't see all the benefits that come with managing a more complete relationship with a worker beyond simple concerns about work output. What benefits accrue from more engaged relationships with employees?

can reduce turnover and loss of a valuable worker. Ultimately, proper employee management reduces conflict as well. Trust and respect between the worker and manager grows, and a collaboration develops that benefits the work unit. Continuum EAP can help supervisors develop more engaged relationships with employees by helping analyze personnel problems, conflicts and communication issues, as well as assist in finding creative approaches to help workers make changes that the supervisor can consider.