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FrontLine Leader

Employees — Your most valuable asset

I am a new supervisor. What are some important tips to follow, mistakes to avoid and considerations to think about to help keep me on track to becoming an effective manager and leader?



A: Here is a collection of tips worth considering: Avoid assuming your position gives you the privilege to be pushy or demanding. Admit you need help as a new supervisor and turn to experienced managers for it. Understand nearly everything you say and do is modeled and will be remembered. This includes what time you come in, how late you stay, how organized you are, how you dress, the loyalty you demonstrate to your employer, admitting what you don't know and whether you practice work-life balance. Prepare to discover that being a supervisor is more challenging

and demanding than you expect. As the boss, you have more control over your schedule, but do not abuse this privilege by doing personal business on company time — especially taking longer lunch breaks than others do. Don't be "invisible", hide behind closed doors or have your employees wondering where you are. Do not borrow equipment or supplies for personal use. Engage with your employees. Identify their strengths and yearnings, and then utilize this knowledge to achieve the goals of your work place.



On several occasions over the past year, I was told that my documentation was not good enough to support a disciplinary action. Needless to say, I am frustrated. What are the most important issues in documentation for supervisors?

A: Most supervisors have heard repeatedly that writing "the facts" and details — what, where, when and who — are the critical parts of documentation. The parts to avoid are your opinions, analysis and psychological appraisal of the worker. One of the most important things to keep in mind in regards

to documentation is the timeliness of the documentation, which refers to the lag time between the incident and when you write it. You may be busy, but the more time that passes between an event and the documentation, the less accurate that documentation will tend to be and the more likely it will

contain judgments and overtones of your emotional response to the incident and the employee's personality. The reason is that you will remember how you feel and emotionally respond to the worker or incident longer than you will remember the facts and details of what actually happened.



What are the most important steps for supervisors and managers in helping prevent workplace bullying?

A: The single most important step for a supervisor to take in preventing workplace bullying is informing employees that the behavior won't be tolerated. Even if your company has an anti-bullying policy, as about half of all companies do, personally stating your position will make a lasting impression. Be aware of the work climate, and do not hesitate to ask an employee you suspect of being victimized about whether they are being bullied in any way. Periodically educate employees about workplace bullying.

Also, have a discussion about different types of bullying behavior, because some employees may be practicing bullying behaviors while being completely unaware of their seriousness. Continuum EAP or an HR advisor can offer guidance on education and awareness. Hint: Searching for bullying prevention materials associated with specific professions may yield a more applicable list of workplace bullying behaviors. Consider a meaningful staff follow-up discussion about the content.



I do not always provide an accurate rating of my employees performance. I tend to grade higher than what is deserved. My purpose is to avoid conflict and the souring of the relationship, which I depend on to get work done. What am I risking with this practice?

A: The practice of grading an employee's performance higher than you should is called "rating inflation". It's a well-known phenomenon in management. Most of the time, the reason it occurs is that the manager is trying to keep peace with the worker whose performance is problematic. Unfortunately, the short-term gains of "rating inflation" are usually outweighed by the longterm negatives. For example, getting a higher rating than they deserve will give your employee a false sense of pride in their work, it can undermine

their career growth, lower productivity standards and prevent your employee from realizing their potential in their current position. Consider meeting with a Continuum EAP professional to examine this issue more fully. Discuss what contributes to your fear of grading the employee properly. Also discuss strategies likely to help you meet your goal to establish a more truthful supervisor-supervisee relationship that will benefit you, the employee and the organization.