



SUPERVISOR notes

A Newsletter of Personnel Management Ideas

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In This Issue:

An EAP consult may help you avoid a termination. My employee is good, but we don't get along.
Non-monetary incentives to improve morale. Employee out with back injury? EAP can help.

- An employee who committed an outrageous act was referred to the EAP, but we are also considering termination. If we had some idea about the nature of her personal problems, we might not terminate her. How do we proceed? She is cooperating with the EAP.

It appears that you are willing to accommodate your employee and not act to terminate her if you discover that some health-related or other treatable personal problem explains her conduct. Since EAPs do not discuss the nature of employees' personal problems, you may not learn the answer to this question unless your employee discloses it. You must depend upon the employee to take responsibility for requesting accommodation for health or other personal problems (in this case not getting terminated). Do not probe her for information about the nature of her personal problems. You could safely ask if there is anything she would like management to know before it finalizes its response to the incident. This would provide you with the opportunity to find out more without invading her privacy.

- I supervise an employee who is very bright and witty, but difficult in her interpersonal communication. She and I don't get along. Still, I tolerate her style because we need her expertise. Can the EAP give me pointers to "put her in her place?"

Use the EAP to find and make personal changes that will help you create a more effective relationship with this employee. You may need a combination of increased assertiveness skills and increased tolerance for the style she brings to the workplace. Focus on identifying what specifically is appropriate or inappropriate about her communication and what you can accept or not accept about it. Using the EAP for your own growth in this way and discovering how to manage a challenging relationship will be a more practical approach than considering the EAP as a "ring coach" in the conflict you are having with your employee.

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- I would like to improve the morale of my work group, but can't offer any monetary incentives or other tangible rewards. What can I do?

Most employees welcome monetary awards, but management research demonstrates that such awards alone will not sustain improved morale. Meaningful relationships and feeling valued will mean more. Here are four powerful steps any supervisor can take that will either help improve morale or keep it from getting worse: 1) Be accessible and approachable to your employees. Make conscious choices to listen, put your work down, and meet their needs to discuss work problems and receive feedback. 2) Morale difficulties mean that employees need to talk. Do not avoid the tough discussions needed for problem solving. 3) Visit employees where they work or create products. Let them see that you are involved and part of the business of the day. 4) Act quickly on problems you commit to solving. Employees will not forget the things you promise. None of these steps necessarily costs money, but you can win influence and improve morale with each one.

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- My employee injured her back at work and is out for the next several weeks. She is a good performer with an excellent work record. Should I recommend she contact the EAP?

Suggesting the EAP is a good idea. The EAP can offer support or locate services that your injured employee may find valuable. Injured employees out of work may experience unexpected stresses and personal problems that can delay their recovery. These setbacks can include depression from chronic pain, loss of mobility, and loss of work identity; anger at coworkers who don't call to inquire as to their condition; and conflict in relationships from sudden changes in roles, sharing of chores, and other responsibilities at home. Frustration and guilt over the inability to return to work or to function at pre-injury levels can also interfere with recovery. Men and women may react differently to these stresses. EAP help for an injured employee can mean the difference between a short time off work and an injury that becomes a chronic problem.

Call the EAP for a confidential consultation about supervisory concerns, job-related issues or personal problems.

Information contained in *Supervisor Notes* is for general information purposes only and is not intended as specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with your Employee Assistance Program professional.