



# SUPERVISOR NOTES

NE S ETTE O PE SONNE N E ENT I E S

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Employee Assistance Program 278-5018  
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**In This Issue:**    Developing delegation skills  
                                 Supervision of under-performers

Using EAP for personal problem referrals  
EAP referral: Sending a clear message

- **I know delegating is an important supervisor skill. I must admit it's difficult because I fear "letting go." How can supervisors get more excited about delegating?**

You are not hearing it here first, but it's worth repeating, none-the-less: delegating is a powerful managerial tool. When you delegate tasks you greatly expand the amount of work that can be done. On the other hand, the tasks you delegate will not always be accomplished to your satisfaction. This is the problem. Managers become comfortable with delegating work when they can fully accept *both* of these truths. Delegating is a skill and an art requiring follow-up at the right times, and in the right amounts. The lessons you learn during follow-up will improve your delegating skills. Managers who are particularly hard on themselves when they make mistakes have a harder time delegating. They need to remember that a successful manager is not a manager who "does it all." To succeed, you must give up some personal control. Relinquishing control requires letting go of the illusion that perfect outcomes are possible. If the fear of making a mistake inhibits your willingness to delegate, consider talking to the EAP about it. Overcome this fear to experience the power and satisfaction of the delegation process.

- **My employee asked my opinion about where he should turn for help with a family problem. He did not want to use our EAP. Why should I not suggest another source of help?**

The university provides a professional Employee Assistance Program as a resource for employees. When you send a staff member to the EAP you can be confident that your employee is being sent to a reliable and appropriate source of help. If you refer employees to unapproved sources of help, you could be accepting unnecessary risks for yourself or the university if the source of help is inappropriate, unqualified, or even harmful. Once you adopt the role of a referral

agent in addition to your role as a supervisor, you establish a dual relationship. The relationship of “personal helper” can easily pull you into an examination of the nature of the personal problem, the effectiveness of treatment you recommended, and other issues that interfere with your supervisor role.

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- **I think some supervisors make their employees’ performance problems worse. Many supervisors learn “on the job.” Some with problematic styles fail to salvage good employees. What can supervisors do to learn faster and salvage more employees quicker?**

Many supervisors have not been well prepared for their roles. Trial and error combined with ability, a seminar or two, and perhaps some luck produce most good supervisors. Effective supervision steps, practiced early, can often salvage employees with performance problems. To increase the likelihood of salvaging a poor performer rather than making a situation worse: 1) provide enough job orientation and instruction; 2) hold corrective interviews and follow up; 3) issue a written memo with a clear list of the performance issues; 4) show a reasonable amount of patience and support for the employee; 5) be empathic during the corrective process; 6) have a personal belief in your ability to help others develop; and 7) refer early to the EAP when a pattern of performance problems develops.

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- **I strongly suggested my employee use the EAP in regard to his ongoing performance problems. As far as I know, he didn’t go. I considered that discussion a supervisor referral, but looking back, I’m not sure he took it that way. Could I have been more direct?**

Failing to communicate directly and clearly when referring an employee to the EAP is a common supervisor error. Concern about an employee’s negative reaction to an EAP referral often underlies this indirect or vague communication. An off-handed suggestion that the employee consider the EAP is not the same as a clear statement that this is a recommended course of action. When you are less than direct, your employee may not fully understand the seriousness of your recommendation or the seriousness of the performance issues that prompted the referral. The EAP can be a useful resource for employees with performance problems. When you are more direct you communicate a greater sense of urgency and motivate the employee more effectively. If you are unclear about the importance of the EAP referral, your employee may miss an important opportunity for corrective change that can help avoid future disciplinary actions.

***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 Professional.