



# SUPERVISOR NOTES

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A NEWSLETTER OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IDEAS

## Employee Assistance Program

278-5018 ↔ [eap@csus.edu](mailto:eap@csus.edu)

Webpage: [www.csus.edu/eapprogr](http://www.csus.edu/eapprogr)

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It is with great sadness that we tell you that Demetra Mihalakos, EAP Clinician, passed away on January 7th after a long battle with cancer. Demetra worked for many years in both the EAP and Psychological Counseling Services. She was a wonderful clinician and colleague and will be missed by all of us. Cathy Connors, PsyD, will be joining our staff as an EAP clinician this month. Dr. Connors will be providing counseling services to faculty and staff on a part-time basis. She joins us after working several years in her own private practice.

### In This Issue:

- **Attitude problems**
- **Work-family boundaries**
- **Successful transition from staff to manager**
- **Being an effective boss**

**Question:** My employee does not seem to have an attitude that indicates he buys into a shared vision of our workplace mission. Is this an EAP matter? I don't see a mental health issue here.

**Answer:** A referral to the EAP is appropriate whenever an employee exhibits an attitude problem that adversely affects performance or relationships with coworkers. The question to ask is whether it is continuing despite your efforts to change it. The EAP provides a safe outlet for your employee to express his frustrations about his role in the organization and his opinions on what the vision should be. Through the EAP, he may develop a better understanding of how his beliefs and/or behaviors sabotage his effectiveness. He may conclude that he has more to gain by displaying a cooperative, team-oriented attitude—and that might motivate him to change. He can then use the EAP to practice voicing his concerns in a more persuasive manner. Another plus of referring him to the EAP is that it signals your faith in him to adjust his attitude for the team's greater good. That's better than simply demanding that he "shape up or else."

**Question:** My employee's wife called me and asked that I arrange an EAP referral for her husband, due to his anger problem. She asked me not to tell her husband we spoke. However, I have seen little evidence of his anger at work. Should I ignore her request, or should I use the information in some way?

**Answer:** Occasionally, family members who are desperate to see loved ones receive counseling, addiction treatment, or other kinds of help for personal problems, ask managers or bosses to intervene. Crossing this work-life boundary is something you should avoid. Your best response would be to refer family members or concerned persons to the EAP. Meanwhile the information provided by your employee's wife about his anger problem is not appropriate in your supervisory relationship. You should not accept on face value the complaints of family members when they make unsolicited calls to the workplace. If your employee's performance and personality do not pose a problem in the workplace—and if he rarely expresses anger—you are not in a position to act. Information offered by a family member, even if consistent with workplace behaviors, cannot be used to manage the employee.

**Question:** I am a newly promoted manager. Instead of being part of the staff, I now supervise them. There is a lot of gossip and snickering behind my back among my employees. I want to end some of the friendships that existed before, but how do I do it?

**Answer:** Now that you're a boss, you're going to face some sniping from discontented or resentful employees. Most experienced managers come to realize that they cannot remain friends with their former peers. Instead, they strive to earn employees' respect. Rather than terminate friendships abruptly, it's better to hold private, heart-to-heart talks with each of these individuals. Explain that you will measure your success in your new role by the extent to which everyone performs at their best and achieves team goals. Express your admiration for their strengths and ask how you can help them attain their personal and professional objectives. By presenting yourself as a listener who's eager to facilitate their success, you can earn their trust even as the nature of the friendship changes.

**Question:** My boss called me a stress-monger after some of my employees complained about my hard-charging style. I am not as bad as these employees have made me out to be with my boss. If others get stressed because I push them to excel, why is that my problem?

**Answer:** If you are as tough as others report, it is your problem because you are contributing to an unhealthy work environment. Employees cannot perform at their best if they report to a supervisor who exerts constant pressure and creates an atmosphere of anxiety. Workplace stress more than doubles the risk of death from heart attack, stroke, and other cardiovascular conditions, according to a recent British study. End-running to your boss may indicate that you are not doing what it takes to understand the impact of your work style on employees. Collaborate with your employees when setting ambitious goals, and reward them for superior results. You can damage your career prospects if you develop a reputation as an unrelenting drill sergeant and disappoint your bosses who see complaints, high turnover, and surging absenteeism as signs of poor leadership.

*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.