



SUPERVISOR NOTES

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A NEWSLETTER OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IDEAS

Employee Assistance Program

278-5018 ↔ eap@csus.edu

Webpage: www.csus.edu/eaprogr

Douglas Adams, LCSW, EAP Clinician

Cathy Connors, Psy.D, EAP Clinician

In This Issue:

- > Common Traits of "Best" Managers
- > Effective Performance Reviews
- > Transparency in Supervision

Q. What makes a good manager or supervisor of employees? What are common traits that the best managers possess?



A. The Gallop Organization has examined this issue quite thoroughly through a massive in-depth survey based on interviews and studies they conducted with about 80,000 managers. They arrived at a set of four characteristics worth knowing and thinking about. What is interesting is that "attitude" of the supervisor is directly or closely associated with three out of the four. That's an argument for examining any personal issues and how they help or impede your ability to be a good manager. The four common denominators are wanting to see employees grow and succeed; matching the right people with the right roles; defining desired outcomes while being willing to give people the latitude to accomplish them in their own ways; and focusing on what's best in people, not what's worst. In short, empowering the people around you to reach their full potential while providing the standards and the support they need to reach your vision. (M. Buckingham and C. Coffman, 1999, *First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently.*)



Q. I am not the only supervisor who dreads performance reviews, but is there a way I can make better use of them during the year rather than simply churning them out annually and saying good-bye to the employee until the next year?

A. Performance reviews and performance management systems are powerful productivity processes. But when not used to their full potential, performance reviews can instead become a burden to both supervisor and supervisee. At the very least, use employee reviews as springboards for discussions. Share your goals and visions for the past and upcoming years and indicate how their contributions have/and will help make these happen. Discuss with your employees about their goals and aspirations. Discover the degree of inspiration your employees possess to do their best work, and learn how to increase it. Chances are that you will discover something you did not know about your employees' needs that, if met, would better serve the University's mission and goals. Remember to let your employees hear from you firsthand the importance of what they are doing and how it fits with the unit or department mission. All employees look and hope for pay increases, but hearing that they personally are valued fulfills a level of need that the paycheck won't reach.

Q. My employee is very smart and capable, but this person is not producing the quality of work I expect. I'm starting to feel a little like a broken record harping on productivity. Completed projects continue to disappoint me. Is it time for a supervisor referral?

A. Typically, if your reasonable attempts to correct performance have not worked, that's a signal to consider a referral to the EAP. Before doing so, consider whether you have used appropriate management tools. For example, proper accountability is frequently overlooked by managers although they think it exists. For example, have you set up a procedure in which your employee is obligated to report decisions to you and justify those decisions and actions as they occur? Do you have a mutual understanding about the consequences of failure to meet certain defined outcomes? This is also called "transparency" in supervision. Negative feedback (and positive) should not occur only after the fact. Accountability and transparency in supervision relationships change the mind-set of employees and for many are all that's required to produce the results.

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 one of our Employee Assistance Program professionals.