



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

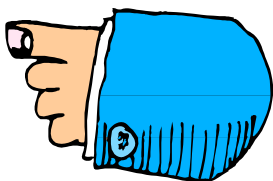
Douglas Adams, LCSW, EAP Clinician

Cathy Connors, Psy.D, EAP Clinician

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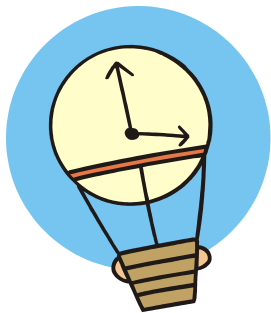
- > High Expectations or Bullying
- > Micromanaging
- > Dealing with Furloughs

I am a supervisor with high expectations, but could I be called a bully? Is there an officially recognized definition of bullying in the workplace?



There is no official definition of bullying, although there is an ongoing legal and legislative movement toward establishing one. Most well-honed definitions include a variation of “repeated health-harming mistreatment toward one or more employees by one or more perpetrators that undermines the normal flow of productive work.” This definition of bullying links it to its harmful effect on work. The bottom line is that behavior toward employees that is persistently troublesome will adversely affect their well-being and work situation. You can be a tough supervisor but still not be a bully. It’s helpful for supervisors to know a few of the common issues that influence bullying, such as feelings of incompetence in handling one’s job as a supervisor. Feeling stuck and angry, believing that the organization has overlooked one’s promotion, is also common to bullying supervisors. Feeling that one’s position is threatened by a highly popular or competent colleague or supervisee can be a precursor to bullying, too. Personality clashes are also common, and personal problems at home that add to feelings of insecurity and inadequacy can contribute as well. Are you particularly hard on (a) certain employee(s), or are you uniform in your expectations? Bullying tends to be selective.

How can I know if I am a micromanager? And how can I stop this supervisory practice?



As we begin the process of furloughs, what can I do to help those I supervise deal with the uncertainty that lies ahead?

Micromanaging means “overseeing” the details of work assignments given to your employees, beyond the amount necessary for successful completion of the job. This overseeing is usually done in a meddlesome manner. Although micromanaging affects employee morale, its disruption to the professional development of employees is perhaps its greatest harm. The goal of the micromanaging supervisor is to have work done correctly and productively, yet the opposite usually occurs because everything must pass through the micromanager. The other consequence of micromanaging is the undermining of employee initiative. Most micromanaging supervisors have difficulty accepting someone else’s work as adequate; they “have” to find corrections or changes. Trust your employees to show competence. If you still can’t let go, talk to the EAP.

Recognize that everyone is dealing with additional stress during this time; the uncertain job future, the certain decrease in income, and the increase in work demands as positions are not filled. Also recognize that others may react in a less than ideal manner as a result of the stress and this will also have an impact on your employees. Keep them informed with as much factual knowledge as you have, making it clear that things are changing frequently and you may not have the answers now, but that you will provide them as soon as you are able. Build trust so they know you will share factual information when you have it. Make an extra point to recognize the efforts and accomplishments of your employees as they work through these difficult times. Look for opportunities to acknowledge success. Providing validation and encouragement can go a long way in decreasing the stress and concerns of those we supervise.

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.