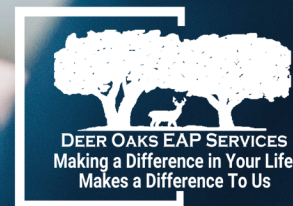




THE SUPERVISOR/HR NEWSLETTER



HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR
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July
2020

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Deer Oaks 2020 Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series *Employee Engagement*

Advanced Communication Skills that Improve Employee Motivation
February 3rd, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/794103984746779139>

Successful Approaches to Difficult Employee Conversations
May 4th, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/444956266369821443>

Maintaining Effective Communication Channels
August 3rd, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5196350630268998915>

Advanced Coaching Skills for Leaders
November 2nd, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8703449675246617347>

Celebrating Diversity at Work: Pro-Diversity Management

Lead the way.

From the lowest rung to the highest, everyone can be a model for good behavior. But managers set the tone for the entire department. Watch your own behavior and the language you use. It's okay to express an interest in someone's cultural background, but tread carefully. Too many questions may be interpreted as rude and prying. And be discreet if a worker asks for a special accommodation for religious or cultural reasons.

Be fair to all.

Expect the same quality and standard of work from all of your employees. Nothing increases tensions more than unfairness or even the appearance of inequity. Distribute the workload equitably, be evenhanded with criticism, and praise all who deserve it.

Cultivate sensitivity.

Ban racial and sexual jokes. Misguided attempts at humor can build resentment, harm work relationships, and open the door to discrimination and harassment lawsuits.

Be sensitive at holiday time. A diverse workforce means that employees don't celebrate the same events. Keep that in mind when you're planning holiday activities.

Benefit from diversity.

People from different backgrounds often have unique perspectives. Varying viewpoints can improve problem-solving strategies, increase creativity, and bolster communication. As a manager, you can help elicit these perspectives in a cooperative manner.

Source: Workplace Options. (Reviewed 2017). Celebrating diversity at work: Pro-diversity management. Raleigh, NC: Author.

Managing Employee Stress

Stress—physical, mental, and emotional wear and tear—is a health risk and as a serious hazard in the workplace. Employee stress can take many forms and have a significant impact on both individuals and organizations. It can manifest as anxiety, aggression, irritability, dependency, withdrawal, or depression. Regardless of the form it takes, stress results in reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, employee burnout, high turnover, increased medical expenses, health insurance costs, and stress-related compensation claims.

Work to counter stress.

It is important for companies and their managers to begin to treat workplace stress like any other work-related health hazard by taking an active stance to prevent and manage it. Simply dealing with the symptoms of stress when they arise isn't enough. It is most important to address the causes.

The first step is identifying sources of stress in your organization. Possible stressors include high workloads, organizational changes, lack of employee control, the organization's culture and operating style, emphasis on competition, fears of job loss, increased technology, and the push for multitasking. The best ways to gauge the sources of stress are to observe trends during high stress periods, and to speak with employees.

Once you have identified your workplace stressors, you can take steps to alter or eliminate those elements.

- Review and work to change policies, procedures, and practices that undermine employees' personal power, sense of control, or motivation.
- Make changes in the work environment that increase employee involvement and give them as much control as possible over their tasks. Involve them in setting goals, making decisions, and solving problems.
- Adopt new cultural and communication styles that encourage open sharing of ideas and that avoid misperceptions.
- Make sure employees are clear about expectations, what tasks and activities take priority, and why.
- Keep employees apprised of changes and how those changes will affect their work in both the long and short term.
- Supply employees with the resources needed to get the job done.
- Consider physical changes in the work environment to make it more comfortable and user-friendly.

Building Stress Resilience

Helping employees learn to cope with personal stress, to balance their home and work lives, and to build stress resistance can benefit everyone.

There is evidence that strong stress management skills result in improved ability to cope with work pressures. Consider helping employees by doing the following things:

- Offer training programs that teach stress management techniques, relaxation, time management, positive thinking, and assertiveness.
- Institute flexible work schedule or telecommuting options if possible.
- Be flexible, within reason, in allowing employees to take time away from work to deal with personal and family issues. Unresolved personal, health, and family problems are a considerable source of stress.
- Consider providing a relaxation space in your workplace.
- Be aware of yourself as a role model. Try to demonstrate good coping and stress reduction behaviors.
- Encourage and support employee self-care efforts by promoting the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle and the building and use of solid support systems. This might include the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and other benefits.

Be aware of the danger signals of acute stress.

Chronic anxiety, apathy, feelings of hopelessness, withdrawal, alcohol or drug problems, or depression all can indicate the need for immediate help. When an employee is in acute stress, the situation may warrant a call by the manager to the EAP or the company's medical department, if applicable, to decide how best to proceed. (Some signs of acute stress can also be signs of serious health problems which might require immediate medical help.) You may need to insist on a referral to your employee assistance program and even help the employee contact the EAP office. If you are unsure of how to deal with an employee who appears to be in acute stress, seek help from the EAP.

All organizations will have some degree of stress among their employees. Stress is a part of life. The keys are in seeking solutions that target the sources of workplace stress, and teaching people to cope with those personal and professional stressors that are inevitable. Offer your employees a variety of stress prevention and management techniques. Doing so will benefit your employees and your organization.

Source: Workplace Options. (Reviewed 2019). Managing employee stress. Raleigh, NC: Author.

Ask Your EAP!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to the EAP for a management consultation.

Q. What is the most important consideration to keep in mind when meeting with an employee to correct behavior or performance so the employee is cooperative, appreciative, and motivated to change?

A. The manner in which you speak to employees when confronting them about their performance plays a big role in facilitating cooperation and correcting their problems. Speaking down to the employee will elicit one type of response. Speaking “up” to the employee will elicit another. So approach any problem as though both you and the employee have a stake in its resolution, and as though it is a problem you mutually desire to resolve. This does not mean you as a supervisor will resolve it. It is still the employee’s responsibility to correct noncompliant performance. However, this “mutual desire approach” aids cooperation, motivation, and focus. And it decreases defensiveness. This approach does not minimize the importance or severity of the problem. Share with employees that the EAP is a resource to help them find the solution, and obtaining a signed release of consent from the employee in the case of a formal referral is a way to facilitate appropriate communication.

Q. I am a new supervisor. I am feeling insecure about my job and the type of work I am overseeing. It causes me to be a little heavy-handed and dictatorial, based upon my position as “the boss.” How should a supervisor act when they are new and know the least about the details of the work unit?

A. New supervisors to an unfamiliar work unit must elicit from subordinates knowledge necessary to make decisions or choose courses of action. The words “I don’t know” or “What is your opinion?” or “I need to rely upon you until I get up to speed” are perceived by subordinates as compliments. Employees see such statements and questions from managers as respectful of their knowledge, thereby eliciting trust. Unfortunately, some supervisors experience great anxiety with this approach. Admitting what they do not know makes them feel incompetent and exposed. They unnecessarily fear subordinates will take advantage of them and disrespect their leadership role. They then believe they must resort to a “do what I say because I am the boss” approach. This has severe consequences because employees feel ordered around, less invested in outcomes, and less responsible. If you struggle with vulnerability as a new supervisor, talk to the EAP. They can work with you on a personal development plan that will accelerate your success as a supervisor.

Q. My employee went to the EAP after disclosing domestic violence issues at home. I’m nervous. Issues of this type can spill into the workplace. I’d like her to sign a release so I can at least hear that things are working out well at the EAP. Is this appropriate?

A. This is a self-referral encouraged by you, and of course she is not obligated to sign a release of information. Nothing prohibits you from asking your employee to voluntarily sign a release so you can receive the most minimal information, but trust the EAP to manage this referral properly. If a threat or safety issue emerged or was discovered by the EAP, confidentiality provisions would permit disclosure so you could be readily informed. This is the recommended approach to helping you feel assured that this case is in good hands. This approach is also in line with proper EAP principles and application.

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