

Employees—
Your Most
Valuable
Resource

Frontline Supervisor



■ **I want to create a positive workplace for my employees. They seem happy as a group. Is that the only measure I need?**

You want happy employees, but high productivity is also important. Think of your workplace as having a “climate” like the weather. What is the work climate like? Many things contribute to a positive work climate. Examples include effective communication, supportive supervisory practices, and shared traditions that promote positive reinforcement, gratitude, celebration, and fun. Some work organizations establish climate committees to help monitor and influence happy, healthy, and productive workplaces. Although you do not have to establish a climate committee, you should have a means of understanding your work climate. Keep tabs on it, and view it as a strategic resource. When you consciously make your work climate a priority, you are more likely to nurture it into a positive force that facilitates employees deciding to work to their potential.

■ **I am hesitant about referring to the EAO because, frankly, I am disorganized. I am fairly slack in my style. If I refer an employee to the EAO, my work practices might be discussed. Will the EAO talk about me to other people?**

The EAO will neither make conversation about nor disclose information about your supervision style, work unit organization challenges, efficiency, or any perceived personal inadequacy. This is especially true if your employee imparts this information as a client in an EAO session. Even if information about you was discovered or learned from another source, it would not be discussed with others. The EAO is highly conscientious about their role and how they are perceived by the workforce. They know that what they say and what they do have strong effects on EAO utilization, program viability, and sustainability. Talk with the EAO about your personal organization issues and discover relief that comes with resolution.

■ **How can I be less of a micromanager, and can the EAO assist me?**

Micromanagers are usually supervisors who control and get involved in every aspect of a job that’s been delegated to a subordinate. This results in employees becoming frustrated. If this sounds like you, two approaches to resolving micromanaging behaviors can be considered. The first is to understand what delegation means. Delegation is the process by which responsibility and authority for performing a task or activity is transferred to another person. Is that what you are trying to

accomplish? If so, education, awareness, communication, self-monitoring, and feedback from employees or direct reports will eventually turn you into a proficient delegator. The other avenue of help is about overcoming the fear, anxiety, and distrust related to the proper completion of the work you have delegated. You may be aware of your difficulty in letting go, including multiple attempts that have not worked for very long. If this is your experience, visit with the EAO to develop a plan of action.

What’s the number one complaint that employees have about supervisors?

Complaints about managers being poor communicators usually top the list. Poor communication, in fact, beats favoritism, incompetence, never giving praise, having mood swings, and being passive-aggressive. Supervisors seeking to improve communication should not just communicate more often. Instead, they should engage and make communication reciprocal, **get feedback from employees about how the communication is going**, and create systems that ensure effective communication stays in place. Not doing so will allow poor communication to again emerge as a work climate issue. What kind of structure or predictable way of communicating should you establish? Get employee input and then decide.

I have an employee who has been with our organization for 24 years. During that time, he has worked at 101 percent capacity. No one could touch his energy, overtime ability, and creativity. He was a heavy drinker, but it never affected his work. That’s changed. Why?

Alcoholism is an acute chronic illness. This means it gets worse over time. This does not mean all alcoholic drinkers have the same behavioral pattern on their way to the late stages of alcoholism. Genetics, social factors, psychological factors, and environmental factors contribute to alcoholism’s manifestations. Some people may present alcoholic behaviors almost immediately or soon after a first drink. Others may remain in less acute stages of the illness for decades. They will show few obvious effects other than a growing tolerance and problems that typically only family members recognize. Acute problems that coworkers recognize may not appear for decades, but enabling terms like “functional” alcoholic will contribute to a pattern of denial that becomes difficult to break. It appears that alcohol has begun to take its toll on your employee. Contact the EAO for guidance and a referral strategy based on his performance. If you stay focused and hold the employee accountable, the probability of effective performance-based intervention and recovery is very high.

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