

Q. I do not like to micromanage my employees, but at least two of them won't finish their work in a timely manner unless I am directly involved in what they do. I could refer them to the EAO, but frankly I think things will get worse before they get better. So now what?

A. Rather than refer your employees to the EAO, consider visiting the EAO yourself. Many employees dislike being micromanaged, and it is a key complaint identified in surveys and research on employee morale. Micromanaging may cause some employees to become dependent on the supervisor. In turn, the supervisor feels secure that the work is getting done the way they would do it. Not all employees dislike being micromanaged. Some prefer assurance that the supervisor is getting what they want over having to be independent and in control of their work. These employees may feel anxious when they are not closely supervised, and they may avoid promotional opportunities that require them to be independent. To help you identify useful strategies for managing this, contact the EAO.

Q. My employee is late to work quite often, and I am helping with ideas and suggestions, hoping to put an end to this practice. I know that lateness can be caused by personal problems, so how long should I offer this help before making a referral to the EAO?

A. Make a referral to the EAO now. You can still offer tips for getting to work on time, and there is nothing wrong with doing so. However, recommending the EAO is the fastest route to resolving this problem. Chronic attendance problems are often associated with lack of enthusiasm, and personal problems. And it is the EAO that can most quickly identify either of these issues.

Q. I am a new supervisor. I am not well-versed in the subject of supervisory skills. I do not have time to read a lot of books. Can you recommend some important tips?

A. Here are a few tips to get you started, but they are not a substitute for more education.

- Be sure you know what your job entails and the performance expectations your manager and their manager have for you.
- Ask for a week to shadow a seasoned supervisor who is in good standing with your organization. This will allow you to model priorities, communication, and leadership style.
- Think about who can mentor you later when the going gets tough.
- Take time now to read organizational policies and familiarize yourself with the performance review system so later you are not caught off guard by violations, either employees' or your own.

- Use the EAO when conflicts arise and you need a listening ear or input. Your relationship with the EAO will also be confidential, like it is for any employee.
- Know who and where the experts in your organization are located, and create an easily accessible list of these individuals.

Q. I think supervisors are sometimes too worried about getting involved with the personal problems of employees. As a result, they appear impersonal and employees recognize it. This compounds problems because employees think the supervisor does not care about them. How involved should I be with my employees' problems?

A. There is a difference between getting involved in an employee's personal problems and being supportive. A supervisor does not have to behave in a detached and aloof manner to keep from getting involved with the employee's issues. The challenge comes when a personal problem appears simple or understandable to the supervisor. It is then tempting to offer advice, despite unknown dimensions to the problem that might exist. The other part of this challenge comes from employees who want the supervisor involved in their problems. These employees want a different type of relationship with their supervisor, one that meets their personal needs. Supervisors should resist, as it is important for them to understand that meeting personal needs and going beyond their normal role will likely interfere with managing productivity later. For more discussion around supervisory boundaries, consider setting up a management consultation with the EAO.

Q. Why is it important for supervisors to understand "psychological safety" in the workplace? Isn't it a burden for supervisors and a way of taking too much care of employees when it comes to their happiness and well-being?

A. A psychologically safe workplace is another way to describe a work climate that encourages employees to be vulnerable and authentic, present their talents and abilities, and do so without fear of disapproval from managers or peers. From a supervisory perspective, one key practice in promoting a psychologically safe workplace is to continually notice what appears to keep employees from sharing their ideas, notions, and concepts for improvement and change regarding products, services, and systems. This could be almost any tangible or intangible obstacle, from physical barriers in an office to employee meetings and coworker behaviors that discourage creative expression. It can also be your own lack of modeling risk-taking behaviors or failure to make psychological safety a tradition in your work unit that is continually reinforced by what you say and do.