

# FrontLine Supervisor Newsletter

**University of Wisconsin Employee Assistance Services**  
**Making Life Work...Better**

**OCTOBER 2019**

Q. I think I am a good role model for my employees because I am dedicated to the university, a good listener, a team-builder, and a problem solver. Is there more to being a good role model? Is there a checklist for self-evaluation?

A. Being a role model is leading by example. If you adopt this view of your role, it encompasses nearly everything employees can see you do or hear you say. There's no checklist. Employees reflect on nearly everything you do, and all the implications for them. This is a natural process. If you don't take vacations, employees may be self-conscious taking vacations. Some may even model this behavior. If you come in late, employees notice it. Some may feel more freedom to come in late, too, or not worry so much about it. This dynamic can be applied to numerous situations. To learn more about ways to lead by example, check out this article:

[5 Ways to Lead By Example in the Workplace](#)

Q. One of our employees works overtime almost every day. This is an outstanding worker with high productivity. However, I think help from the EAO is needed because the work effort is too obsessive. This employee does not have personal problems and poor performance. It's the opposite. How do I proceed?

A. Employees who work too much may not be performing at their best. Although their productivity may be high, their well-being is in jeopardy, and the organization's most valuable resource are their employees. Define what you mean by appropriate work on the job and how an employee can earn the top rating, then expect it. Overworked employees cost too much in burnout and decline in effective relationships on the job. Something has to fall short, and it is likely found among these factors. Counsel your employee to make the changes, and refer the employee to Employee Assistance Services to explore potential factors contributing to this situation and help the employee address it.

Q. I want to know how to show appreciation to employees but I don't have a budget to rely on for this. What are some ways of showing appreciation, beyond saying "thank you"?

A. There are many resources and dozens of books on how to show appreciation to employees without financial support to do it. Saying "thank you" periodically is one way, and nothing beats a handwritten note for doing so. In this digital age of texting and emailing, the psychological impact of a written thank-you note is important. Most employees will retain it or tell others. Your note should include saying that you appreciate the action/work/effort and why, and the positive impact of the employee's action on the organization. No one technique should be overused, because its impact may lessen with repetition.

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Q. I have discovered since being a supervisor that it's sometimes difficult to meet my employees' and my employer's needs equally. I try to draw a balance, but it is clearly not always possible. How do I straddle the fence of loyalty between these two groups?

A. Being a good supervisor should not be an issue of straddling the fence between competing groups. The first responsibility is to develop a productive relationship with employees so they can get the work done. A productive relationship means fairness, clear and good communication, recognition and reward. The needs of the employee are met as a result of these actions. The workplace should not be a "them versus us" environment. Some supervisors do not understand this point. Because their employees are directly in front of them all the time, it's easy to hear employee complaints, to be sympathetic and to feel as though they are the only focus. There is nothing wrong with looking out for your employees, but if the needs of the organization are pushed to second place in the process, you will not serve either.

Q. One of our employees recently shared that they are struggling to find reliable pet care during work hours for their new, energetic puppy. I know that they have used vacation time on a few occasions to be home with the puppy and this creates extra stress for the employee. They are looking for a long-term situation where they can rest assured that their dog is in good hands. Does the EAO have any resources to help?

A. It certainly would be time-consuming for the employee to search for all of the different options for dog care that are available within her community. Fortunately our new employee assistance partner, LifeMatters, provides *convenience services* to assist employees with locating pet sitters, travel planning, home maintenance and much more. A specialist will do a search based on the employee's specific needs. In this case, their budget, frequency of care desired, in home care or a dog day care center/kennel, etc., and will locate all available services that match their needs. To request convenience service assistance, phone **LifeMatters, 800-634-6433** or text **"Hello" to 61295** anytime, day or night. LifeMatters services are free and confidential for UW Employees!



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**Employee Assistance Office**  
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