

THE FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

Helping You Manage Your Company's Most Valuable Resource--Employees

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Q. I've observed employees who have heavy workloads resisting organizational change even when they are able to finally share their work burden or give up work they complained about for years. Why?

A. When employees face organizational change, resistance is often observed, even if they personally benefit from it. This resistance is usually not evidence of employees having personal problems, and it is usually not cause for alarm. Much resistance to change can be prevented by educating employees about how they may respond to it. This education can vary in its complexity. At a minimum, employees should understand that if organizational change calls for giving up something like job duties or prestige, changing an office location, or losing coworkers, then resistance can emerge. Even the loss of a familiar routine or pride in a specific task can create resistance or conflict. The common denominator, of course, is loss. It is not always possible to prepare employees for change, but your EAP can help or supplement organizational efforts at planning for change. This may include one-on-one counseling for groups of employees to help them examine personal reactions to change and loss, help them understand what's motivating resistance, help them confidentially with insecurities that undermine acceptance of the organization's change goals, and more. Talk to the EAP to learn more.

Q. Can I create a work culture where employees are passionate and excited about what we do, or is this an accidental experience like "charisma" that is out of my control? I would love to know the secrets of having a high-energy group of happy folks on the job.

A. You can set the stage for a passionate and positive work culture, but ensuring that it happens is less certain. There are accepted principles to consider, however. One commonsense idea is to hire passionate employees. (Their brilliance is important, but the energy they display is even more important.) Put them in key posts so they rub off on others. Use effective communication to help employees bond. Manage conflicts with efficiency, and you reap more positive outcomes from them. When difficult employees and employees with personal problems demonstrate performance issues, use the EAP to resolve these issues. There is no other mechanism that can substitute for this resource. Passionate people in workplaces have fun because energy "spills" into spontaneity and authentic relationships. These relationships naturally translate into longer working hours. Be sure to recognize, praise, and reward those who go the extra mile. Keep your employees in touch with the big picture, the dream, and the goal "we're all shooting for." Finally, expect and promote a respectful workplace as relationships emerge and develop.

Q. What is the most important leadership skill?

A. Deciding which leadership skill is most important is similar to determining what might be the most important bone in your body. It's difficult to say. Coping with complexity, being a strategic thinker, communicating well, developing teams, or being a good time manager are key skills, but for the most part, these skills are teachable. What is more meaningful is to ask, "What is the most important leadership trait?" A recent survey of leadership training experts by CareerBuilder.com and reported on by CNN found "honesty" to be the most important leadership trait. This was followed by focus and passion. Traits or personality characteristics are more difficult to acquire because they are aligned with values and personality. Do you see any traits in the article that you'd like to develop more adeptly? Consider how the EAP might help you. Source: <http://bitly.com/leader-traits>

Q. Can the EAP conduct an assessment on my employee for something like emotional intelligence or other aptitudes, and then with a release be allowed to report findings to me?

A. Services you describe can be referred to experts in the community rather than being provided by the EAP. An employee would then be free to communicate with whomever he or she wishes directly, with releases signed and in the possession of those service providers. An EAP operates within a set of principles called the core technology. These elements define, within the program's parameters, the limited communication necessary to allow you to manage an employee's performance. This is limited almost entirely to attendance and cooperation with a supervisor referral with a signed release. An EAP that extends its communications beyond these limits or adds

services requiring a release of significant, confidential information risks jeopardizing its perception of confidentiality in the workforce because it confuses employees about its mission. This can reduce utilization as a "program of attraction" for self-referring employees, and in turn can increase risk to your organization.

Q. What are common issues that interfere with a supervisor's motivation or desire to make a formal supervisor referral to the EAP?

A. Most supervisors know that an employee can be referred to the EAP for performance, attendance, or conduct problems. Unfortunately, this does not ensure that a referral happens. Unfamiliarity with the referral process or uncertainty about what the employee's reaction will be to a formal referral can create timidity and impede the referral decision. Supervisors who want to see an employee removed or dismissed, rather than helped, also create resistance to supervisor referrals. Not viewing the EAP as a positive management tool to correct performance can also reduce the number of supervisor referrals. Education and visibility of the EAP are important interventions to any of the above.



Employee Assistance Program

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything and realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Remember, your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, and legal issues. To access the services, call 1-800-343-3822 to speak with an Intake Counselor. It is free and confidential.