

# THE FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR



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

March 2013

***Q.*** *I have been a supervisor 20 years and have heard the same complaints from employees about bosses over the years. I think many are excuses for performance issues, but what are the most common complaints? Perhaps it would help supervisors prevent these problems sooner.*

***A.*** Complaints about supervisors sometimes fall short of reality, but the more common ones include the following: "My boss has favorite employees, and they get the best assignments or are excused from undesirable assignments." "My boss doesn't seem to care about my problems." "My boss hasn't evaluated my performance in years and I don't know where I stand with the company." "My boss has personality issues and experiences conflict with me and other employees." "My boss often avoids me, doesn't say hello, or doesn't acknowledge me." "My boss doesn't trust me with key assignments." And so on. When you conduct performance reviews, listen carefully. Inquire about how your employees feel about their job and their relationship with you. You'll quickly spot trouble points if you keep the above complaints in mind. The EAP can help. It may be difficult to admit when some of these issues apply, but changes will produce big payoffs.

***Q.*** *I am an energetic person, and I have a positive personality, but I can't say it rubs off on employees. Other than staying enthusiastic and sincere, how can I inspire employees to maximize their performance?*

***A.*** Assume that each of your employees is capable of magnificent achievements. This will positively affect your attitude and interactions with them. Your current style of leadership is setting an example, but good communication is also crucial. Let everyone know what's going on within the organization and the importance of their role in the big picture. Cite successes, trends, and opportunities. Be realistic, but let employees know what awaits them personally and as a team for achieving goals. Check your behavior. Mistrust, inability to adapt to change, disrespect toward employees, or a perception that you are not performing at your peak can be magnified by employees and provide fodder for chatter. This will undermine your goal of keeping employees engaged. Process your stress with other supervisors and the EAP, and develop ideas for nurturing your staff. This will reduce isolation and keep you energized.

***Q.*** *When I recently referred my employee to the EAP, the response was a complaint that I was not "being fair." It sounded pretty odd, since the EAP is a positive thing. The supervisor referral seemingly was viewed by the employees as some sort of punitive step. What explains this reaction?*

***A.*** The reaction you received is caused by a common yet preventable problem of misperception. Just as you would support employees taking advantage of any organizational resource, initiate discussions with them around the importance of the EAP and the special opportunity it affords

employees. Not using the influence of your position to reinforce the positive nature of the program will have the opposite effect. A natural tendency exists for employees to view the EAP primarily as a counseling resource, even though EAPs do other things. This perception of the EAP as a place to go with personal problems can fuel stigma and avoidance. Promoting the EAP as a desirable resource that is pro-people and pro-organization requires active encouragement to change this perception. As a supervisor, you are an important part of this marketing strategy. With that kind of support, the EAP will become an attractive program, with correspondingly high utilization.

***Q. I have an employee who is shy and has always refused requests to speak in public. I have accommodated the employee's fear until recently, but it is now time to intervene, because it is part of the job description. Should I make a referral to the EAP now, or wait until the task is refused once more?***

**A.** Meet with your employee and discuss the nature of the position and its responsibilities. Be positive, hopeful, and supportive. Discuss how you have made allowances for their fear of speaking until now, but that going forward it will be an expectation of the position to make work-related presentations. Ask your employee if you can anticipate cooperation. Pay attention to the answer, but also recommend the employee assistance program. Your employee has shared this problem, so this step is appropriate. Do not counsel the employee. Offer training or other resources that the organization can provide or support. Anticipate change and cooperation going forward. If change is not realized, make a formal EAP referral. The EAP will help your employee challenge habits of thinking and believing, and help with learning new behaviors that focus externally on the social

environment rather than internally on fear, anxiety, and social performance.

***Q. Our company is trying to encourage employees to use less of the Internet for nonbusiness activities. What does the latest research say about these behaviors? Can the EAP help?***

**A.** A recent research report from Kansas State University found that about 60 to 80 percent of computer use at work is not work-related. Young people spend more time on social media sites like Facebook, and older workers spend more time on personal financial matters. Both groups, however, engage in this behavior, sometimes referred to as "cyberloafing." The research is not good news. Company policies against using the Internet for personal business are difficult to enforce, and they are typically ignored. Even when employees are warned, threats of disciplinary action may go unheeded. This makes enforcement of policies the most viable method of dealing with cyberloafing, but of course this can have other drawbacks. This is what makes the EAP so valuable. Refer employees who struggle with self-discipline in controlling their Internet abuse. Some may have compulsive use problems that the EAP will identify. Others may need other assistance to maintain self-discipline.

Source:

[www.k-state.edu/media/newsreleases/jan13/cyberloaf13113](http://www.k-state.edu/media/newsreleases/jan13/cyberloaf13113)

### Here for you as life happens ...

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything and realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, and legal issues, and, the EAP is free and confidential.

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[www.alliancewp.com](http://www.alliancewp.com)

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