THE SUPERVISOR/HR NEWSLETTER

Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program

CUNY Work/Life
PRESENTED BY **Deer Oaks**

Nov. 19

November Online Seminar

The Sandwich Generation: Meeting the Challenges of Multigenerational Caregiving

Identify common family dynamics, gain insight on knowing when it's time for additional caregiving support resources, and explore self-care techniques.

Available on-demand starting November 19th at www.deeroakseap.com

Helpline: 855-492-3633
Web: www.deeroakseap.com
Email: eap@deeroaks.com

Deer Oaks 2019 Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series
Employee Engagement

A series of practical educational programs designed to help supervisors and managers to build more engaged and productive work teams. This series is available to all supervisors, managers, and other interested employees and does not count toward your organization's training hour bank.

Webinar # 4: How to Motivate Your Employees to Be Engaged in Their Work
Motivated employees are engaged and productive. This important session discusses research on employee motivation, identifies the three primary needs that employees seek to meet at work, and discusses management approaches to help create and maintain a motivated and engaged team.

Friday, December 6th, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT
Register: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4945543224289664771

Monday, December 9th, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT
Register: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/774233603019167491

Managing Performance

Basics

You've just given Becky her annual performance appraisal and she's genuinely surprised. It doesn't matter whether the review was good or bad: You've let down your employee and your company.

Managing an employee's performance is often confused with the annual ritual of a performance appraisal. In fact, the performance appraisal should be an anticlimax, merely the written summary of the dialogue you've been having with your employee all year. Effective managers evaluate and supervise an employee's performance every day.

Imagine if a ship's captain made a course correction only once a year. The sailors need continual adjustments to their course. They need to know when they're headed for the rocks, and when they're on the right course. Employees need the same information, and their managers owe it to them.

Failing to manage performance can have serious repercussions:

- Employees can't meet expectations that they don't understand
- Employees' skills will stagnate
- Firing is difficult to substantiate if feedback hasn't been provided routinely

Managing performance effectively benefits your team and the whole company:

- Individual expectations match team goals
- Productive employees are praised and less productive employees are told how to improve
- Employees' strengths and weakness are recognized
- People who should be promoted are identified
- Working relationships are strengthened

Companies with well-structured performance management programs are more productive and profitable than those without such programs, studies have shown.

Key Tips

Never surprise an employee with an evaluation.
A good test of whether you're effectively managing performance is to ask yourself: Would my employee be surprised by anything in my appraisal if I gave the evaluation today? "No news is good news" doesn't apply to performance management.

Change your perspective on feedback.
The top reason most managers don't provide feedback is fear, incorrectly believing that feedback is usually negative. Changing your perspective on when, how, and why feedback is given will help overcome this fear. Feedback, formal or informal, helps motivate employees.

Think about yourself. Doesn't constructive feedback improve your performance and understanding of your boss's expectations? Effective feedback motivates you to work harder, meet new challenges and improve your performance. When feedback is given regularly, it usually springs from a genuine interest in recognizing and improving someone's performance.

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Providing feedback doesn't have to be a lengthy process.
It can be a compliment here, a nudge toward the right direction there. The more effectively you manage an employee, the less often time-consuming course corrections will arise. Every minute you spend providing feedback makes it more likely that your team will work efficiently.

Specifics

Monitor performance more than once a year.
Have you ever sat down at the end of the year to write a performance appraisal and all you had to go on was your memory? Doesn't work too well, does it? Managers are often accused of using only their "recent memory." Too often, they evaluate the most recent months or weeks because they can't remember specifics about how the employee performed throughout the year.

When monitoring an employee's performance, keep a few simple rules in mind:

- Document specific observable behaviors and outcomes; don't include assumptions or information based on hearsay.
- Document data based upon clear goals and objectives for the job description, not compared with other team members.
- Be specific about successes and shortcomings and give opportunities for improvement .
- Focus on monitoring results, progress, procedures and work habits.
- Let your employee know he's improved his performance; otherwise, monitoring, and documenting performance has little value

Give employees useful feedback.
Here are some techniques you can use to provide feedback:

Personal Inspection
- Go to the work area and observe the employees' quality of work, methods and rapport with team members.
- Ask employees how they perform certain tasks and coach them on any problem areas.
- When adding notes to employees' files, substantiate your information with dates, times, observations, and conversations.
- When you see employees doing something correctly, tell them.

Record Keeping
- Keep documents simple and you'll be more likely to use them.
- Install a reminder to record performance information. (Mark your calendar or do it the same day every month or quarter.)
- Check the goals and objectives and gauge how employees are meeting those goals.
- File performance notes in employees' personnel files or use preprinted forms that you design for simplicity.
- Record performance notes in your day planner for easy access.

Interim Progress Reports
- Develop a checklist for goals and objectives with space for comments, and share this with each employee.
- Have an employee complete a performance assessment of herself and discuss the assessment. Record notes from your conversation about her performance and the issues you discuss.
- Keep the lines of communication open. If you routinely discuss progress toward goals and objectives, performance will take care of itself and employees will want to improve.

Audits or Post Mortems
- Don't do reviews like an accounting audit or some scary formal process. Reviewing a project after it's completed allows you to identify successes and areas for improvement.
- Most importantly, discuss the audit with the employee.

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FAQs

My employees aren't performing as I think they should be. How can I get them to see eye-to-eye with me?

Most employees want to do a good job. Sometimes the manager and the employees have different perceptions of the job or how the job should be performed. To align those perceptions, develop specific goals and objectives that are linked to job descriptions, then clearly communicate those goals to employees.

Don't overlook employees' input. What you expect may not match daily realities and the employees' abilities to actually perform the work.

I tell my employees how they're doing all the time. Why does our annual performance appraisal always seem shocking to them?

Saying "That's a good job Carmen" or "Dan, I need that faster next time" is vague. By providing specific information at regular intervals, there shouldn't be any surprises at the annual performance appraisal. Setting aside time to discuss performance is necessary on a regular basis.

Talking about an employee's performance always seems so personal. It's embarrassing when they give personal reasons for why their performance is slipping.

As a manager, it's inevitable that you'll know a little bit of your employees' personal lives. They may volunteer more personal information than you want to hear, but it may indeed be affecting their performance at work.

Your role as a manager is to concentrate on their performance at work. Using statements such as, "I can appreciate that you're facing some challenging personal issues at this time, and we can discuss some ways to get you help or take some personal time, but I have to let you know that we still need to see the following things improve..." Offering help, but remaining focused on work performance, will let the employee know that work and his personal life are really separate issues and continued poor performance could have additional consequences.

I need to fire an employee for poor performance, but this is the first time I've ever spoken to her about a performance issue. Can I really fire her?

Much depends on the situation and severity of the poor performance. If you haven't provided feedback, are you sure that she really understood the expectations? If you're unsure whether you can point to a time when the goals and objectives were clearly identified, be careful about terminating someone. Wrongful termination lawsuits can easily be avoided by clearly communicating expectations, standardizing goals and objectives, and documenting performance regularly.

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Alcohol Use Disorders in the Workplace

Most people with alcohol problems work—and the majority work full time. Alcohol problems result in increased accidents, health care costs, absenteeism, and lost productivity. The good news is that alcohol problems can be effectively and inexpensively treated.

Tips for Employers

- **Screen for alcohol problems using the validated tool Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT).**

    - How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?
    - How many drinks containing alcohol do you have on a typical day when you are drinking?
    - How often do you have four or more drinks on one occasion?

- **Encourage and incentivize health plans and EAPs to screen for alcohol problems.**

- **Promote the use of employee assistance and health programs.** Early intervention is key. Remind employees of the availability of resources for staying healthy and productive. Ensure that employees know how to access care confidentially and quickly by providing information on how to do so in multiple places and throughout the year. Heavily push these messages during times of stress, at the holidays, and so forth.

- **Integrate mental health educational messages in health communication strategies.** Include content about alcohol use disorders in company newsletters, on the intranet, and in other regular employee communication platforms.

Source: Partnership for Workplace Mental Health. (n.d.). Alcohol use disorders. Retrieved August 17, 2016, from http://www.workplacementalhealth.org/

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Ask Your EAP!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to the EAP for a management consultation.

Q. There is usually a lot of tension when I conduct annual reviews. If employees are surprised by the results or if their scores are less than they imagined they would be, I often face hostility and anger. How can I reduce this tension?

A. Follow the performance review process of your organization, but make the effort to increase communication. Meet with your employees at the beginning of the year and discuss with them what they would like to achieve in the coming year, along with other measures of performance consistent with the goals of your work unit and the organization as a whole. These goals should be achievable and measurable and include defined criteria for outstanding performance and lesser achievement. Meet several times during the year and coach employees toward success. Ask employees each time, during these meetings, how they would grade themselves against the performance criteria they set. At year's end, you should see far less angst at performance review time, more satisfied workers, and higher levels of achievement that benefit the organization.

Q. I read that great leaders are eternal optimists, along with many other traits. I would like to be more optimistic in my leadership style. However, am I able to change my outlook with help from the EAP? I realize how powerful this can be for employees, so I am open to whatever it takes.

A. Yes, you can learn to be optimistic. It starts with understanding the value of optimism for your work unit. Optimistic leaders exude positive energy because their attitude is one of hope and confidence about the work unit's direction and success of its goals. The good news is that optimism is a habit of thinking, acquired by changing a few beliefs, practicing new skills, and seeing the results from doing so. For example, you can learn the habit of challenging negative thoughts. You can also learn how to focus more on the solution to a problem than on the negative ramifications of it. And you can act and behave optimistically—even if you don't feel like it—and then observe the positive results for yourself and others. These exercises and more will, over time, flip the switch to help you practice a more optimistic leadership style. Read about optimism, discuss your goal with the EAP, journal your results, and watch the positive effects on those you lead.

Q. Can I refer an employee to the EAP to help him or her deal with boredom? One of my best workers expressed loss of interest in the work and labeled it boredom. I know this is not a psychological problem, but can the EAP help address it?

A. Work with your employee to examine how the job can be structured in a way that rekindles interest. If you don't see an immediate rally, suggest help from the EAP. Your employee's boredom could be linked to depression. Depression costs business and industry about $44 billion a year, according to the American Psychiatric Association. There are other symptoms of depression visible to others in the workplace. Do you see any? They include withdrawing from the team, isolating oneself, being indifferent, putting things off, missing deadlines, seeming absent-minded, procrastinating, being late to work, and more. All are quantifiable performance measures. Your employee may not go to the EAP, so be prepared down the road to consider a formal referral as needed. Note that the problem of boredom is a good example of how something that appears minor could be a symptom of a serious condition.

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