

# Supervisor/HR Newsletter

Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program

Public Employee Benefits Alliance

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## Learn to Quiz Staff the Right Way



Quizzing employees on critical facts can help them acquire the knowledge they need to perform important tasks. But there's a right and wrong way to administer a quiz.

Say you pose a multiple-choice question and the respondent selects the correct answer. The next step is to work together to examine why that answer is right.

Employees who guess correctly may not be able to explain the reason that they're right. Help them understand and they're more apt to retain important information.

For those who provide an incorrect response, don't rush to divulge the right answer. Instead, stimulate learning by dropping a hint and encouraging the individual to think through the issue more rigorously. Prodding learners to dig deeper signals to them that there's more to it than picking the correct answer. You want to show them that you value learning as a process in itself.

If, after two tries, the respondent still selects the incorrect answer, shift into teaching mode. It's unlikely that another round of hints will advance learning, so reveal the answer and educate the employee by providing context and citing relevant data.

Avoid the trap of relying solely on e-learning modules. While self-study can help employees gather knowledge, online quizzes on their own rarely serve a lasting purpose as training tools. All too often, employees who take Web-based tests see their scores but don't learn why they got certain questions right or wrong. This leads to disengaged learners who never get a chance to understand what they need to know—and why it's relevant to their jobs.

Source: <http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/40551/learn-to-quiz-staff-the-right-way>

# Strategies to Maximize Employee Productivity



One of the primary roles of every manager and supervisor is to create a workplace environment that's both supportive and motivating for their employees. Of course, highly motivated employees are typically very productive. Below are several strategies that leaders can utilize to help create the kind of environment that will motivate, and maximize the productivity of their team:

- *Be a "caring" boss* – Dale Carnegie Training published a study that showed that being a caring manager is one of the key elements that drives employee engagement. When employees know that their boss takes an interest in them as people, it creates an engaging environment in which they can perform at the highest possible level.
- *Give employees input into the assignment of work* – Instead of just quickly assigning projects and tasks to your employees, take the time to get their input. For example, introduce the project or task, and ask the employee what they think the work plan should be, what resources are necessary, etc. When employees are given input, they'll typically be more motivated and invested in the work.
- *Use a coaching approach in your interactions* - In a coaching approach, instead of the manager taking the lead in solving problems, improving performance, etc., the employee is given the opportunity to think through and make the initial suggestions themselves. This process provides the employee with the opportunity to learn valuable problem-solving skills, take more responsibility for their behavior and performance, etc.
- *Be a positive leader* – Life is challenging for most of our employees. They oftentimes need recognition and encouragement to stay motivated. A good rule of thumb for leaders is to share praise and encouragement at least twice as much as you use constructive criticism with your staff.
- *Communicate regularly with each staff member* – In *Employee Engagement 2.0*, author Kevin Kruse stresses that managers should have a consistent communication process with each employee. He suggests, at a minimum, a regular team meeting and a conversation (i.e., weekly) with each individual to keep people connected and informed. When employees are "in the know" they will typically feel more empowered.

By:  
Greg Brannan  
Director of Business Development & Training Consultant  
Deer Oaks EAP Services, LLC

# 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. I think it's important to coach my employees properly, and because we work in a customer service environment, being assertive is simply a skill that folks need to learn. Any tips?**

A. Certainly there is nothing wrong with teaching your employees assertiveness skills. The depth to which you explore this subject, however, may touch on yours and your employees comfort or level of discomfort with conflict. Talk with your employees about the issues associated with resistance to being assertive. If the inability to be assertive creates a work performance issue, then refer your employees to the EAP. It may also be helpful for you to consult with the EAP to develop a strategy to assist your employees. It can be tempting to analyze people and consider or explore their psychology. We all do it, but as a supervisor, you possess significant authority, and employees won't easily reject your attempts to drill down and ask personal questions or explore their personal issues. So proceed with awareness.

**Q. As a new supervisor, I lack leadership experience and struggle with communication, delegation, and generally just trying to feel secure in my position. I admit to also feeling intimidated by those I supervise. Can the EAP help? Note, that we are very stressed and under-resourced.**

A. Yes, the EAP can help. You are describing a lack of experience but the additional issues you touch on are worth examining. The issues you describe are very common to those new to leadership positions. There may be certain skills that are more difficult to learn or feel comfortable using than others. These may point to a need for education, mentoring or perhaps coaching by another supervisor with the experience to assist you. There are many ways to acquire the help you seek online or through books and possibly courses. As you improve your ability to manage workers, the EAP can help you tackle periodic roadblocks to success and job satisfaction.

**Q. As a supervisor, I often struggle giving constructive feedback to employees. I am worried that they may become defensive and even resistant to my suggestions. Any tips on how to avoid this situation?**

A. Feedback is more complex than it first appears. Not only is there a process for giving feedback, but there is also a bit of an art to responding to defensiveness. Many employees do not relish constructive criticism, despite its value, so listen calmly to what your employee has to say and be understanding. With empathy, say, "I understand your point." Receptiveness to feedback (or something akin to it) is then likely to follow, helped by your noninterference with the venting process. Do not equate defensiveness with denial or complete rejection. What follows is likely to be your employee's asking, "Can you explain more about what you mean?" This is an indication that acceptance is near. Your goal is not 100% agreement with your feedback but agreement that your feedback includes things to be considered. That's a win.

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