

Supervisor/HR Newsletter

Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program

Public Employee Benefits Alliance

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Ask the Staff: ‘What keeps you up at night?’

Motivating people rarely works if you appeal to something that’s temporary or superficial. Dangling a reward that they perceive as minor or inconsequential will doom your attempt to spur them to excel.



A more effective motivational strategy involves connecting employees with a noble purpose. Help them see that their effort translates into a greater good—an outcome that’s truly meaningful to the larger world.

How can you tell if people are driven by a noble purpose? Ask them, “What keeps you up at night?” The most motivated employees respond by describing their overriding goal to make a life-changing impact on others.

Dirk Veldhorst is Director of Corporate Health for AkzoNobel, a global chemical manufacturer based in Amsterdam. What keeps him awake at night?

“The health and well-being of 55,000 people around the world,” he says, referring to AkzoNobel’s employees.

For Veldhorst, he sees his role as improving the mental and physical health of his workforce. He’s passionate about supporting healthful initiatives such as offering programs to improve wellness and avoid burnout.

“Well-being is a means to an end,” he explains. “With it, you can create value for yourself and your organization. Without it, short-term productivity is less probable and long-term growth is almost impossible.”

Make it easy for your employees to develop a deep conviction that flows from an admirable purpose. Prod them to consider the larger purpose of their job and their potential to enhance others’ lives.

Source: http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/41096/ask-the-staff-what-keeps-you-up-at-night#_



7 Habits of Highly Effective Supervisors

In the spirit of Stephen Covey's popular book, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People", below is a list of seven of the key habits/management practices utilized successfully by supervisors and managers today.

- *Be a Positive Leader* – Employees look to their leaders for encouragement, especially during difficult circumstances. Effective supervisors maintain a positive mind-set and set a positive tone for their teams on a daily basis. They manage their own attitudes and emotions well, so that they can stay optimistic for the staff during challenging situations.
- *Get to Know Your Employees Well* – Effective supervisors make spending time with their employees more important than their own task list. They get to know their employees as individuals - their needs, interests, and strengths. Through this focus they learn what's important to each employee, and how to best support and motivate them.
- *Engage Your Team* – To maximize employee engagement, it's important to solicit their input into department goals, project plans, etc. Employees will get more enthusiastic about the work when they have an opportunity for input. When assigning work, highly effective supervisors will determine the "what" (project, task, goals, etc.), but let the employees have input into the "how" (specific work plan, methods, etc.).
- *Practice Supportive Management Techniques* – To create an environment that improves employee motivation and initiative, it's important to utilize management approaches that are less directive and more supportive. For example, employees typically respond more positively to supervisors that use a collaborative coaching approach than they do to those who are highly directive and micro-managing.
- *Become an Effective Coach* – Supervisors who utilize a collaborative coaching approach create a respectful environment for their team that improves employee morale, motivation, and initiative. The key communication strategy utilized in a coaching approach is "often ask" for the employees input, instead of "always directing" them.
- *Interact Well with Your Staff* – Having a good relationship with their supervisor is one of the most important aspects of job satisfaction for most employees. Highly effective supervisors are sensitive to the importance of their day-to-day interactions with their staff and are careful to be attentive (spend time), courteous (friendly & kind), and respectful (listen well) with their employees.
- *Skillfully Manage Difficult Situations* – Highly effective supervisors skillfully and tactfully handle difficult situations and issues with their employees. For example, they listen respectfully to the employee (even if they disagree), and remain kind even when correcting performance or behavior.

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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. How do I get an employee to do something that is part of the job when he or she doesn't want to do it and refuses to do it? By the way, termination is not an option. Can the EAP motivate this person?

A. You're hobbled without credible authority in this situation. Refusal to work is usually enabled by a perceived lack of consequences. So the real problem is lack of leverage or influence in the employment relationship. The proof is that the employee is calling the shots. Your focus for a solution should begin here. Is it fair that you should have to manipulate or sweet-talk your employee into doing the job? Meet with your supervisor and next-level manager. Discuss the situation. You may be surprised at how a discussion among you three produces a dramatic shift in manner, approach, and resolve in dealing with the insubordination. You can then clarify the organization's expectations (not just yours) with the employee. The EAP has a definite role in addressing underlying issues of your employee's behavior, but it is recommended that you first re-assert the realistic nature of the employment relationship in unison with your superiors.

Q. After a traumatic incident, what can supervisors do to play a helpful role in supporting employees? We aren't counselors, but employees look to us for direction and strength, so we can't be unmindful of our role.

A. Employees do naturally turn to supervisors during a crisis. Some may rely upon the supervisor as a leader for direction and guidance, some may vent anger toward them (e.g., "OK, you're in charge, so now what?"), and others may seek a closer relationship, venting feelings and seeking empathy and a stronger bond as the wall of formality and detachment momentarily falls. Some may treat the supervisor like a parent. Recognize that these and many more are normal responses following critical incidents. You should not counsel employees, but be accepting of different reactions. Be alert to more extreme reactions that signal a need for EAP support, and coordinate with the EAP how to best employ its services with your group. Plain visibility and presence have their own healing effect, so "be" with employees as much as possible. After an incident, employees want information, so keep it flowing. It reduces anxiety dramatically. Finally, ask the EAP about tips for taking care of you.

Q. What are the most common complaints about bosses?

A. Common complaints from employees about supervisors include being micromanaged, not listening to me, not being tolerant of a different opinion, not following through on promises, giving deadlines that are unrealistic and that put too much pressure on me, not having enough time to talk to me, not giving me enough feedback about my performance, and he/she is too disorganized. Except for one issue, the denominator among these complaints is communication. Only "being disorganized" stands alone. Earlier communication, expressing one's concerns to the supervisor, being more receptive in interpersonal communication, and asking for more ongoing exchange of ideas from either party would resolve these complaints. Are you able to see how your role in encouraging, seeking out, expecting, and holding employees and yourself accountable for effective communication can create a more harmonious workplace?

Information contained in this newsletter is for general information purposes only and is not intended to be specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. Some of it might not apply to your particular company policies and available programs. This information is proprietary and intended only for eligible EAP members. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.