

Supervisor/HR Newsletter

Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program

Public Employee Benefits Alliance

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Overcome 'Negative Vibes' among your Staff: 10 Tips



Every HR pro and manager has to deal with a certain amount of pessimistic, hostile or uncooperative behavior at times. It's just part of the workplace. But a negative attitude that starts with just one employee can quickly infect an entire department (or sometimes a whole company) if you don't rein it in quickly. The ugly result: A workplace that's rife with backstabbing, gossiping and rebellious employees. Here are the top 10 tips for confronting employees whose negative behavior has begun to affect coworkers and the company.

1. *Don't get drawn into the employees' negative mindset.* Listen to their points, but don't temper your own realistic optimism.
2. *Avoid getting into an argument.* Negative people thrive on the negative energy of arguments. Point out areas of agreement when possible in order to build rapport. Keep your cool.
3. *Set standards.* Spell out the consequences of negative behavior, such as decreased morale. Base them on behavior, not attitude. For example, you may not be able to change the fact that an employee doesn't like a certain company policy. But you can discipline employees if they don't follow the policy or are insubordinate in gossiping about it.
4. *Ask questions.* Force the employee to be specific about what is creating his or her negative thoughts and actions.
5. *Try role-playing.* Ask the employee to put himself in your shoes and pretend he has been asked to resolve the problem. That way, you will have the employee contribute his ideas for the best possible solutions. Involving the employee may also lead to more positive feelings about the solution or outcome since he or she had a hand in creating it.
6. *Listen carefully.* Use active listening to ensure that you are understanding the employee correctly.

Overcome ‘Negative Vibes’ among your Staff: 10 Tips continued



7. *Don't lower your expectations of the employee.* A negative attitude doesn't necessarily mean a poor performer.
8. *Empower employees.* Stop the “victim” mentality from forming. Allow employees to take responsibility for “good” events, so they can make them happen again, and for the “bad” events, so they have the power to change them in the future.
9. *Solicit feedback.* Always ask for employees' opinions before making major decisions that will affect them. The more you listen to employees, and take an active interest in their concerns, the less likely they will be to complain to each other.

10. *Hire right.* Identify negative people before they are hired. During the interview, listen for feelings that “life isn't fair” in response to questions like: Have you ever felt you've been treated unfairly in the past? What were your chief concerns about management in your previous jobs? and What would you have changed if you were the manager at your last job?

Along with those 10 tips, here are four things you should never do in your effort to stop negativity from wrecking your workplace:

1. Don't shower negativists with a lot of attention. You are only rewarding bad behavior.
2. Don't stop asking them to pitch in and do tasks outside their normal job descriptions. Otherwise, you are also punishing positive (or less vocal) employees.
3. Don't correct them less often in order to avoid dealing with the attitude. Employees can't be expected to change for the better if they are not asked to.
4. Don't allow employees to get bored or complacent. A negative attitude develops easily when there's “nothing to look forward to.”

Source: <http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/36886/overcome-negative-vibes-among-your-staff-10-tips>

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 am a new supervisor and fear responsibility of this job. I have the ability to do it, but how do I get past this anxiety I feel? Can the EAP help? How?

A. Yes, the EAP can help. Phone the EAP to discuss your concerns and work with the employee assistance professional. Fear of anything new is normal, but it appears you are also feeling confident that you have the ability needed to do the job. This will likely help you overcome your concerns. Two things are probably keeping your anxiety high. You haven't worked as a supervisor before, and doing it is important. And you may have visions of disaster that fuel your anxiety. The EAP will help you develop an action plan and a way to help you detach from fear associated with the job. One technique the EAP will teach you is how to stay in the moment and focus on what you have to do rather than skip to the future and imagine negative outcomes. This is called staying in the now. The EAP will also share other cognitive strategies or find other resources to assist you.

Q. How do I keep my best employees motivated? I spend most of my time with those who need help or have troubles of one type or another. Is it unfair to assume that self-motivated high achievers maintain peak performance without much of a supervisor's attention?

A. Although high achieving performers may appear to replenish their motivation continuously, it won't stay that way for long without your playing a key role in fueling their excitement. You may never notice discontentment, but they are likely to leave and work for someone else. You will get little or no warning that they are growing disenchanted with the status quo. Use three strategies consistently. 1) Praise the employee in front of others (not his or her peers necessarily, because that could get old, but others to whom the employee looks up-to such as managers, community notables, thought leaders, etc.). 2) Ask the employee how his or her job is going, and discuss ideas, new approaches, new products, and the "next new thing." 3) Consider what your employee can do that's new and creative, or that has significant impact on the organization. The message you send is how much he or she is valued.

Q. What are the most important skills for developing employees into strong team players? Can the EAP be a resource for me in being more effective with whatever these skills might be?

A. The relationship with employees is your most important "tool" for helping them grow into productive and satisfied workers. Being a good reviewer and evaluator, along with knowing how to provide feedback, are the skills you seek. To do these things well, 1) create an environment where employees expect feedback. 2) Train employees to do self-assessments well so they challenge themselves. 3) Know what you want to measure, and don't keep it a secret. 4) Encourage your employees to come to you early with concerns, and praise them for it with a welcoming attitude. Recognize this is one of the most powerful yet under appreciated dynamics of effective supervision. 5) Think about how you want each of your employees to develop based on his or her temperament and skills. 6) Always plan feedback so it is given effectively and well-received. 7) Use the EAP to help you develop and enhance your relational skills in any of the above.

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.