



# THE SUPERVISOR/HR NEWSLETTER

Public Employee Benefits Alliance

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Aug.  
19

## August Online Seminar

### *Effective Budgeting*

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## 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 # 3: How to Become an Effective Coach; A Key to Employee Engagement**

Research shows that employees are more engaged and productive when their supervisor utilizes a collaborative coaching approach during their day-to-day interactions. This practical presentation will review the communication skills necessary to have effective coaching interactions and discuss using a collaborative coaching approach in key situations including assigning work, managing performance, solving problems, etc.

Friday, September 6th, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3743939742850391811>

Monday, September 9th, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

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# Fear of Success

*Experts explain why people sabotage their own careers.*

Success can be so scary.

You work hard to climb that slippery ladder. When you finally get to the top, your longtime colleagues don't like you any more. Your relatives think you're too big for your britches. And your boss is knocking on the door with a question: When are you going to top your last accomplishment?

It isn't the notion of wealth, prestige or power that's so daunting. "It's the fear of the social consequences of success," said Dr. Steven Berglas, psychiatrist and author of *The Success Syndrome: Hitting Bottom When You Reach the Top*.

A highly paid, high-profile executive might fear she'll outgrow her spouse, who isn't making as much money and works in a low-key position. Or a talented individual fears he can never match—or surpass—a career milestone.

"If you're 29 years old and win a Pulitzer Prize, what are you going to do for the rest of your life?" Berglas asked.

But the most common fear shared by people on the brink of prosperity is that they'll lose the camaraderie and affection of others.

The sad truth is most successful people do lose friends, said Dr. Andrew J. Dubrin, a psychologist and management professor at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

And the culprit? Dubrin pointed to the green-eyed monster: "Most people who dislike successful people are simply envious," said Dubrin, author of *Your Own Worst Enemy: How to Overcome Career Self-Sabotage*.

Witness the sniping endured by Ivy League classics professor Erich Segal after he wrote the literary lollipop *Love Story*. "His colleagues stoned him at Yale because he was rich and popular," Dubrin said. "But even though successful people lose some friends, they invariably gain new ones."

Rather than risk such a loss, some rising stars reverse course. You might have noticed telltale signs in talented workers who move around a lot, never seeming to find the right niche.

"There's restlessness, chronic discontent and an inability to maintain consistently high work levels and agreeable on-the-job relationships," said executive coach Joyce K. Reynolds of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Others who are fearful of success seem to stay stuck in jobs—blaming a lack of professional progress on family obligations, poor management or an unfavorable marketplace.

## Successful Strategies

Those factors don't deter people who take on success fearlessly. "They have a superior sense of personal optimism, complete belief in themselves and in their deserving success," Reynolds said. "If they fail, they shift to a new strategy that addresses their end goal."

Barbara Stanny, once a struggling writer, said she learned to overcome her fear of success through a combination of counseling and surrounding herself with positive, prosperous people.

“I had to get past the hurdle that people would think I was crass or unladylike if I made a lot of money— that I’d be rejected, that I wouldn’t be liked,” said Stanny, the Port Townsend, Washington-based author of *Secrets of Six-Figure Women: Surprising Strategies to Up Your Earnings and Change Your Life*.

But her biggest fear was rocking the boat in her marriage. And her relationship with her husband indeed experienced some rough spots as she devoted more energy to her career, leaving her with less time at home.

“Now my husband is my greatest supporter,” she said. “He realizes that we are both benefiting from my success—and that I’m so much happier because my work is gaining recognition, both personally and financially.”

Fear of success frequently takes root long before the sufferer is old enough to hold a job. “A student might not want to be perceived as the smartest kid in the class for fear of criticism,” Dubrin said.

## **Alcoholic Households**

Growing up in an alcoholic family can take its toll as well, said Donnah Canavan, a therapist, professor of psychology at Boston College and co-author of the textbook, *The Success-Fearing Personality*. “People who grow up in alcoholic households may have low self-esteem, unstable self-esteem and they are preoccupied with evaluations by others,” she said.

Those most hurt are children of the same gender as the alcoholic parent, Canavan said. Most often, that’s a son who emulates his father by avoiding responsibility through abusing drugs or failing to hold a job.

Conversely, daughters of alcoholic fathers frequently thrive in their professional lives. “Girls who have alcoholic fathers almost never have fear of success,” she said. “They usually identify with their extremely capable mothers, who worked very hard to keep things together.”

Parents who don’t encourage their children to be independent are far more likely to instill the fear of success in their offspring. “If the parent insists the child take care of him and the family instead of learning to be on his own, the child grows up to think success is selfish—or something for which he’ll eventually be punished,” Canavan said.

Still, unenlightened parenting doesn’t necessarily mean children can’t grow up to be CEOs.

“Many, many creative and successful people come from extremely negative backgrounds,” Dubrin said. “Some people get beaten down, but others have an inner resilience - or learn how to get past obstacles.”

## **The Primary Question**

To remedy fear of success, Dubrin suggests a dose of self-examination. The primary question: What don’t you like about succeeding?

If you don’t want to take a position that requires constant travel and working 15-hour days, he said, you’re probably making a healthy choice rather than suffering from fear of success.

But if you're stepping back because you fear challenge or disapproval, Dubrin recommends developing a thicker skin. "Read biographies of successful people," he said. "Recognize that reaching important goals transcends criticism."

One way to make the prospect of career accomplishments less frightening is to think of each event as 15 minutes of fame rather than career-altering benchmarks.

"A psychologist who's invited to appear on the Oprah [Winfrey] show might put himself under tremendous pressure, thinking this is his chance to become the next Dr. Phil," Berglas said, referring to TV psychologist Dr. Phil McGraw.

"Or he could look at it more realistically, as an opportunity to be on TV and sell a few books."

*Source: Smith, E. (Reviewed 2018). Fear of success. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.*

## Recognize, Reward, and Reinforce the Right Behavior

It was Mark Twain who once said; "I can live for two months on a good compliment." Money may attract people to the front door, but something else has to keep them from going out the back. Many times employees say they are quitting because of a better paying job elsewhere. However, statistics show that the number one reason people quit their jobs is a lack of recognition and praise.

Peer recognition is not just a nice thing to do, but a critical element in the management toolkit. People have a basic human need to feel appreciated and recognition programs help meet that need.

The second aspect of this science is management must create consequences for the behavior important for business success. A "behavior" could be showing up for work on time, having perfect attendance or going over and beyond the call of duty for customers or any other important behavior. A workplace is one that develops systems and processes to reward, recognize and sustain those important behaviors.

Peer recognition is an example of a reward and recognition tool. It is one of the easiest and most effective programs to initiate. Peer recognition is where the employees have the power to reward each other for doing a good job. Peer recognition works because employees themselves know whom works hard and deserves recognition. Managers can't be everywhere all the time; therefore, the employees are in the best position to catch people doing the right things. Also, workers usually value each other's influence more than their supervisor's—peer pressure.

I was working with a client where we developed a peer recognition program called "My Shining Star!" Workers have access to an unlimited supply of "My Shining Star!" forms to hand-write a little note about the good job their co-workers did. On the back of the form, the store lists the behaviors they want to recognize including: demonstrates friendly, caring service; shows flexibility; demonstrates teamwork; helps to save money, etc.

When the employee writes up their coworker, the forms go to the main office where they post these forms on a central bulletin board for all employees to see. For added recognition, the store formally recognizes the employee who received the highest number of forms at the end of each month. That person receives a special gift from the store manager. Then all the forms given out during the month are placed into a basket and names are randomly drawn for additional prizes. The forms are read aloud and recognition given to both the awardee, as well as the person submitting the form.

To reinforce what I said earlier, reward and recognition is not just something "nice" to do. The goal is to create a work environment that attracts, keeps and motivates them to stay with you and not leave for your competition. This requires true leadership and a new management philosophy.

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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. Everyone seems to know that money is not the best long-term motivator of employee productivity in the workplace. What is?*

A. It is usually the case that factors reinforce each other or compound their influence to motivate workers. In other words, no single motivational factor alone is likely to work in isolation very long. Research consistently points to having a good manager, feeling like one is making a difference, doing something good for others, and personal growth opportunities as strong influencers, but the factor that is consistently highest is peer motivation or influence. Having a positive workplace with opportunities that incorporate peer influence in shaping motivation can yield good results in maximizing performance. But be cautious; allowing this motivational factor to become part of your work culture without considering all the other important factors that influence motivation will yield poor returns.

*Q. Is it helpful for supervisors to discuss their personal problems with subordinates as a way of appearing more “human” and building rapport? The idea seems sound because showing oneself to be vulnerable allows employees to feel more at ease, right?*

A. Management and supervisory skill development authors have debated the merits of supervisors sharing personal information with subordinates, and in particular, information related to personal problems or shortcomings. Employees may feel more at ease with such supervisors, but research does not show this translates to increased productivity. In fact, participating in this type of relationship can undermine the employment dynamic, which naturally includes a healthy sense of urgency to focus on one’s essential job functions with due regard to the manager to whom one is accountable. When supervisors have personal problems, the best source of support and focused help is, of course, the EAP. Build rapport with employees by identifying needs, developing their talents, and helping them find meaning in their jobs. [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com) [keywords search: “self-disclosing weaknesses”]

*Q. I am a new supervisor. I have never had training, and I can tell that this new position will be me learning everything the hard way. I bought a few books and I found some courses online, but what will be the most likely mistakes I will make? If I know what they are, perhaps I will make fewer.*

A. Most managers learn by doing and by the mistakes they make. But there are important things to remember: 1) Keep employees informed, let them know what the intentions are for the work unit, and do what you say you are going to do; 2) Keep information flowing. Workplace communication is the number one complaint of employees and managers alike. You can’t overstate its importance; 3) Put more time into knowing and engaging with your employees than remaining busy in your office; 4) Use your expertise to solve group problems, not to show how much you know. Develop your employees as the experts; 5) Don’t seek acceptance by becoming friends with employees but by having effective workplace relationships; 6) Learn the art of feedback and timely praise and how to make it meaningful, and create change with it; and 7) Consult with mentors on any of the above, and use the EAP when the going gets tough.

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