



THE SUPERVISOR/HR NEWSLETTER

Public Employee Benefits Alliance

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Aug.
2020

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Deer Oaks 2020 Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series *Employee Engagement*

Advanced Communication Skills that Improve Employee Motivation
February 3rd, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/794103984746779139>

Successful Approaches to Difficult Employee Conversations
May 4th, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/444956266369821443>

Maintaining Effective Communication Channels
August 3rd, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5196350630268998915>

Advanced Coaching Skills for Leaders
November 2nd, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8703449675246617347>

The Importance of Emotional Intelligence for Supervisors

The ability to manage our emotions at work is an important skill for every employee. Unmanaged emotions can lead to overreactions, poor judgment, and unprofessional behavior in the workplace. This skill is particularly important for supervisors and managers who are responsible for objective decision-making and modeling professional behavior for their teams.

Characteristics of Emotional Intelligence

Managers and supervisors with significant levels of emotional intelligence typically share common characteristics such as emotional self-awareness (the ability to know what you're feeling), the ability to rationally respond to strong emotions (the ability to think before reacting, etc.), and a tendency to use emotion for self-motivation (i.e., use fear of failure to take positive action to improve the situation).

Those with Well-Developed Emotional Skills are more Likely to be Effective Managers

A study done by Dale Carnegie Training revealed that a "caring" manager is one of the key elements of employee engagement. Supervisors and managers with well-developed emotional skills are better able to show that they care for their employees. This produces a more engaged and productive team. Leaders who manage their emotions well also tend to make better decisions in the heat of battle. They have the ability to remain more objective in difficult situations, even when they're feeling powerful emotions like frustration, fear, or anger.

Supervisors and managers with well-developed emotional skills will also have the ability to recognize and be sensitive to the emotions of others, allowing them to tactfully and skillfully interact with an employee who is angry, upset, or frustrated.

How to Enhance Your Emotional Intelligence

Below are several strategies you can use to enhance your emotional intelligence skills:

- **Stay aware of what you are feeling throughout the day** – When you are aware that you're feeling a strong emotion, you can manage the emotion instead of having it manage you, which can lead to overreacting, poor decision-making, etc.
- **Think before you speak** – In stressful or challenging situations, everyone experiences the fight or flight response, which includes the release of adrenaline and often the experience of strong emotions. In these situations, it's important for leaders to take a step back and think rationally so that they don't overreact emotionally.
- **Have compassion for your employees** – The world is a stressful place, and our employees need managers and supervisors who care about them and are committed to their success.

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

How Managers Can Support Organizational Recovery

As the world returns to work following the pandemic stay-at-home orders, managers are key to a company's success in resumption of something like normal operations. It can seem overwhelming, but you've got this!

In some ways, this is standard managerial fare: Your company has created an organizational recovery plan, and it's your job to explain and implement it within your team. Your team will look you to for support and clear information. What is different is the level of intensity that will be required of you. The stress experienced during and after a disruptive event often increases people's need for reassurance, repetition of information, and calm. Here are some ways you can facilitate a successful return to the workplace:

- **Prioritize safety.** Implement the health and safety practices your organization has created, and ensure your staff is aware and complying with these new conditions. Allow some flexibility with your employees initially as they become accustomed to these new working conditions. Also, follow the recommended safety and health regulations given by your local and national governments.
- **Assess business continuity practices as appropriate within your role.** Analyze the needs of your staff, as well as how to keep your organization functional. Take this time to reassess projects and goals and see how you can adapt them while working with your organization's new guidelines. Do shifts need to be staggered? Will the office operate at half capacity, with the other half telecommuting? These are a few examples of questions to ask during this process.
- **Communicate.** Being transparent with your employees is critical. If the new working conditions will impact how you conduct business, this is the time to communicate that. Whether your employees may have a rotating schedule, or if permissible wait times for clients have been changed, these are matters to be clear about with your staff. Setting clear expectations about changes in how the organization will operate and how long these changes might last, will go a long way towards reassuring employees and building their confidence in the plan.
- **Be patient.** Some employees may have a difficult time adapting to change. Also, new strategies, activities, and other changes may lead to mistakes. Now is a time to be understanding, provide support, and perhaps, keep an even closer eye on quality assurance.
- **Facilitate safe social interactions.** Your organization will have set guidelines for observing the six-foot rule and other social distancing guidelines while in the workplace. Be sure your employees follow these guidelines. And, think about facilitating safe, fun social interactions in the workplace. Try to include staff who are working remotely as well. Positive social interactions at work can reduce stress, strengthen the social glue of teams, and increase productivity.
- **Build resilience and boost morale.** When executing your organization's practices, remember to use this time to build resilience and boost morale among your staff. Create a forum with open discussions about mental health at work and allow your staff to introduce any ideas they may have. Be aware that anxiety and depression are normal responses to the pandemic. To avoid a decrease in productivity that may be associated with these factors, familiarize yourself with your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and other benefits available to support you and your employees' mental health.
- **Monitor the impact of new practices and collect feedback.** Monitor how your team is adjusting to the new work practices, so that you are aware of how the new practices are being observed. Have your team provide feedback on these changes and take note so you can present this feedback to your organization, if needed. Also, be aware of the impact the new practices have on yourself too. If you need support or assistance with how you manage in the new conditions (virtual or in-person), take care of yourself and ask for help.

Source: Franco, F. & Gregg-Meeker, C. (2020, May 11). *How managers can support organizational recovery* (A. Gaddis, Ed.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.

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. Should I worry about increased substance abuse among employees returning to work after a long absence due to our state's stay-at-home order? Perhaps those with addiction or abuse issues might have used more heavily (or relapsed) without a job to worry about, right?

A. Addicts in effective recovery programs do not relapse simply because they are not at work for an extended period of time. Indeed, recovering persons who value their sobriety may take measures to reinforce their recovery programs during a stressful time. Your drug-free workplace policies and procedures are adequate to manage employees who may have increased their drug use or relapsed during this period. Being more aware of drug and alcohol abuse or increasing your vigilance has never been proven an effective way of spotting substance abusers. The steps you should therefore take include focusing on attendance, quality of work, availability, conduct, attitude, quantity of work, and other measurable elements of job performance. There simply is no better way to identify troubled workers, including those with substance abuse problems, aside from behaviors that would substantiate reasonable suspicion of being under the influence.

Q. There are so many changes and transitions regarding how we may need to do our work differently in terms of remote work, distancing, and the way we conduct meetings. How can I use the EAP to help with these changes?

A. The EAP can offer you and your coworkers several options for examining the dramatic changes and new workplace realities that you and most companies are experiencing right now. One service involves individual assessment, problem solving, and referral if needed to examine specific work challenges you personally face. Other services include facilitating group meetings to discuss and examine new and effective work practices for managing stress, facilitating communication, offering ideas and tips on performance management, resolving conflicts, and helping work teams stay on top of problems and issues that might interfere with or undermine productivity and job satisfaction. What makes the EAP a unique resource is confidentiality provisions that allow it to collectively understand better than any other resource how the employer and employees are responding and adapting to the new workplace. The EAP is therefore the ideal consultant to help the workforce maximize its productivity.

Q. I have an employee who, after time off, is thinking about a career change. How can the EAP assist with this?

A. Presumably, you do not wish to lose this valuable worker. The EAP is a voluntary resource, of course, but it does not mean you can't encourage this employee to visit the EAP and discuss his or her decision. It's confidential, it's free, and it might yield information that helps the worker avoid overlooking easily resolved issues that could lead to retention, improved job satisfaction, and obvious cost savings to the employer. Although the EAP may not be able to disclose the true reasons for an employee's departure, organizational issues affecting the departing worker could apply to other employees who are at risk of leaving. With permission, these larger issues might be shared with the organization, and this could hasten the implementation of new policies or administrative considerations to resolve them. This would positively affect the bottom line.

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