THE SUPERVISOR/HR NEWSLETTER

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Date/Time: April 5, 2021, 1:00-2:00 PM CT REGISTER NOW

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How to Help Your Staff Cope with Change and Uncertainty
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Date/Time: May 10, 2021 1:00-2:00 PM CT REGISTER NOW

Helpline: 866-327-2400
Web: www.deeroakseap.com
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Leaders: Managing Your Energy Levels

Leaders need to be proactive when it comes to managing their energy levels.

Unless you work for a company with unlimited time, talent, and money, most likely as a manager you have had practice allocating resources. You know that you can't give 100 percent of your budget to the first project to come your way and still expect to meet other objectives as well. So instead, you make judgment calls based on the importance of the tasks and the resources at your disposal.

As managers allocate their resources for projects, there is one critical component that often gets overlooked—the manager's own energy level. In the same way that departments do not have unlimited resources, managers do not have unlimited amounts of energy at their disposal. Even those managers who dig deep to find the additional internal resources to push through a difficult stage need to understand that they are not reaching into a never-ending well. At some point, if managers are not proactive in replenishing their energy in healthy ways, the well will run dry.

Why is managing energy so important for leaders?
Maintaining sufficient energy levels supports a manager's ability to problem-solve, listen, think critically, and exercise patience. These are all key components of leadership. Energy fatigue, on the other hand, can lead to irritability, pessimism, apathy, absentmindedness, and difficulty concentrating. These traits are detrimental in a leader and can lead to high turnover and costly missteps. If managers are going to lead well, they must learn how to monitor and self-regulate their energy levels for optimal performance.

What are the three types of energy?
The three types of energy that managers should monitor are physical energy, mental energy, and emotional energy:

- ***Physical energy*** activates the body's movements and actions. The amount of physical energy is dictated by one's health, diet, and physical activity.
- ***Mental energy*** activates the brain to perform cognitive functions. The brain, while only accounting for two percent of the body's mass, demands 20 percent of the body's total energy budget. Mental energy is required for decision-making, analyzing, focus, and problem-solving.
- ***Emotional energy*** is what fuels human emotions. Emotions can be categorized as high energy or low energy. Not only do high-energy, negative emotions affect energy resources, but positive, high-energy emotions, like excitement and elation, do as well.

How can I better manage my energy levels?
The key to managing your energy is identifying your energy gains and drains. Energy gains are those activities that you do for yourself that recharge your batteries. The interesting thing is not everyone shares the same energy gains and drains. For example, socializing may boost your energy level, but completely diminish someone else's.

Examples of potential energy-gaining activities include

- Spending time with a friend
- Working on a hobby
- Being in nature
- Exercising
- Meditating

Energy drains are the opposite of energy gains. It's those activities that require a high amount of mental or emotional energy. Some examples of potential energy-draining activities include

- Dealing with conflict
- A difficult commute
- Working with a specific person
- Completing projects at the last minute
- Responding to other people's emotions

Once you identify those actions that give you an energy boost, it is important that you prioritize some of them as part of your weekly routine. Often, when managers get busy or overwhelmed, they start canceling things they consider low priority. However, activities that restore energy levels should not be considered low priority. For a leader, they are essential.

For the energy-draining activities identified, check to see what resources might be available to assist. For example, if completing a project last-minute drains you, consider working with a job coach on time management. Are there trainings available to help you deal with conflict more effectively? Can any of your energy-draining activities be delegated to someone else?

Sometimes, energy-draining activities are unavoidable. When you know you have an appointment or project coming up that will most likely drain your battery, attempt to schedule it for a time when you typically experience optimal energy. Of course, most crises are not scheduled in advance. When these unexpected energy drains occur, it is important to follow up with energy-restoring activities.

Contact your employee assistance program (EAP) for additional support on learning how to identify your energy levels and to see where you are being short-changed. There are trainings and tools that can help. For example, an "energy audit" aims to teach managers how to self-regulate their energy levels for optimal effectiveness, also referred to as "the zone of helpfulness."

In today's COVID-19 environment, managers play a key role in helping employees navigate change and uncertainty while also advancing business priorities. Therefore, it's critical that they manage their energy levels well in order to meet the changing demands of each day.

Source: Workplace Options. (2020, November 10). Leaders: Managing your energy levels (B. Schuette, Ed.). Raleigh, NC: Author. Retrieved December 10, 2020, from https://www.workplaceoptions.com

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 be 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 to "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.

Source: *Greg Brannan, Director of Business Development & Training, 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 I am a good role model for my employees because I am dedicated to the company, a good listener, a team-builder, and a problem solver. Does this cover the bases or is there more to being a good role model? Is there a checklist for self-evaluation?

A. Being a role model is leading by example. If you adopt this view of your role, it encompasses nearly everything employees can see you do or hear you say. There's no perfection or checklist. Employees reflect on nearly everything you do, and all the implications for them. This is a natural process. If you don't take vacations, employees will be self-conscious taking vacations. Some may even model this behavior. If you come in late, employees notice it. Some may feel more freedom to come in late, too, or not worry so much about it. This dynamic can be applied to hundreds of matters. Regarding your role in leading by example, most behaviors fall under these headings: 1) How you prioritize your work and where you put your focus; 2) your attitude and demeanor, and communication style; 3) taking care of yourself, work-life balance, dress, exercise, use of leave, and work hours; 4) dedication to the employer and loyalty to the organization; 5) How you treat and interact with others, vulnerability and openness, and how you show appreciation.

Q. My employee works overtime almost every day. This is an outstanding worker with high productivity. However, I think help from the EAP is needed because the work effort is too obsessive. This isn't your typical employee with personal problems and poor performance. It's the opposite. How do I proceed?

A. It's indisputable that employees who work too much are not performing at their best, nor in the best interest of the organization. Although their productivity may be high, their well-being is in jeopardy, and this does not bode well for the organization's most valuable resource, which is employees. For the same reason, one would not abuse a piece of machinery to get more productivity out of it, thereby shortening its lifespan and potential. Your employee's performance is not outstanding in the true sense of this term, so do not label it as such. Instead, define what you mean by appropriate work on the job and how an employee can earn the top rating. Then expect it. Overworked employees cost too much in burnout, teamwork deterioration, and decline in effective relationships on the job. Something has to fall short, and it is likely found among these factors. Counsel your employee to make the changes, and refer the employee to the EAP based on his or her inability to follow through. There is something going on that explains the overwork. The EAP will discover what it is, and help the employee resolve it.

Q. I encouraged my employee to visit the EAP, strictly as a self-referral because of job problems and some personal problems. Can I ask him or her to sign a release so I can hear back from the EA professional to confirm things are getting "handled properly"?

A. If you have concerns about your employee's performance and must have communication to feel assured about follow through in obtaining some sort of help, don't push for a "self-referral" and a signed release. Instead, make a formal referral. The benefit of a formal referral is it helps you manage a troubled worker in his or her performance improvement.

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