EAP SUPERVISOR ENHANCEMENT
NEWSLETTER

DEER OAKS EAP PRESENTS:
Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series

The Keys to Effectively Managing Employee Performance

Date: May 23, 2022
Time: 1:00-2:00 PM CT   **REGISTER**

WHAT'S INSIDE:

How to Use Your Leadership Style to Better Approach Challenges

Challenges can arise in many forms. Whether your organization is facing adversity through factors such as emerging technologies, the economy, environmental disasters, or competition, the one constant is that roadblocks can appear at any time. What makes a strong leader is not how you avoid challenges, but how you overcome them and emerge stronger.

Not every leader will approach these challenges in the same way. Determine which leadership style might fit you best. Based on the style you most identify with, learn how to improve how you approach future challenges, and how you will emerge as a more confident leader with a stronger team.

Leadership Style 1: The Coach

Is this you? Leaders with a coaching leadership style recognize and understand their team members' individual goals and aspirations, and relate these to their strengths and weaknesses well, providing ample feedback to help their employees grow.

Here's how to use this style to better approach challenges: When you and your team's goals are challenging to achieve and are outside of your comfort zones, recognize and express that challenges are a necessary part of growth. When providing feedback, assure your team of the goal at the finish line. You can also take this time to become coachable yourself and encourage feedback on your approaches to make any useful adjustments.

Leadership Style 2: Visionary Leader

Is this you? Visionary leaders want to move their employees toward shared goals with a clear strategy and a defined bigger picture. They want to push their organization in a new direction, and they want to find out how their employees' individual motivations help to achieve a shared vision.

Here's how to use this style to better approach challenges: Transparency and trust are key to maintaining a strong team as a visionary leader. Communicate your intentions and strategy to your team and help them understand what future challenges you might face. Help them to understand the role that each team member can play in overcoming those challenges as change occurs.

Leadership Style 3: Servant Leader

Is this you? A servant leader has a people-first mindset and strives to ensure that employees are working in harmony. A servant leader focuses less on tasks and goals, and tends to emphasize emotional needs and building a sense of belonging.

Here's how to use this style to better approach challenges: Make sure that your employees have opportunities to build positive relationships within their team, and focus on providing space for them to maintain a work-life balance. In times of crisis, a good practice would be to reinforce good self-care and coping methods to your team so they can more easily recover in a healthy way. If they have a positive attitude toward work and their fellow employees, they will more confidently approach challenges with a positive attitude and assist in advancing your overall goals for your business.

Leadership Style 4: Authoritarian Leader

Is this you? Authoritarian leaders generally have a business-first mindset, where success is dependent on their control over key decisions. They often make decisions on their own or with a small team of experts and they motivate their team through enforced rules and policies. In responding to a crisis, authoritarian leaders can take the pressure of decision-making off their team.

Here's how to use this style to better approach challenges: When practicing how to better approach upcoming challenges, learn to adjust control, encourage communication, and allow for your team to become more active participants in decision-making. This will ensure that the pressure is not strictly on you and that the entire team is more equipped with the skills to approach challenges more confidently.

Conclusion

There are benefits and drawbacks to every style of leadership. Effective and strong leaders should maintain flexibility and should be willing to continue to learn new ways to approach challenges, knowing that it will make for a more resilient and confident team in the long term.

Source: Saunders, J. (n.d.). How to use your leadership style to better approach challenges. Retrieved July 7, 2020, from the Young Leaders of America Initiative (YLAI) website: https://ylai.state.gov

Challenging the Stigma of Mental Health

Mental health awareness is recognized each year during May in the United States and other countries around the world. Organizations team together to bring awareness and support to individuals facing mental health issues. It is estimated that more than 70 percent of individuals globally do not receive mental health treatment for their illnesses. One of the root causes that prevent people from seeking help is the stigma associated with having a mental illness.

The need to break down stigmas associated with mental health has become more important than ever before. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more employees and organizations have had to adapt to a new way of living, which has severely impacted employees' mental health. Some individuals at this very moment are facing isolation, lack of support, severe anxiety, and depression that comes with the uncertainty of the future, but they are choosing not to seek support. It is estimated that there are 264 million people worldwide who suffer from depression. Statistics indicate that mental health stigmas prevent 40 percent of people with anxiety or depression from seeking support.

Alan King, the CEO of Workplace Options, says there is a responsibility from the corporate level to address the stigma of mental health and to encourage individuals to seek support. "No matter how resilient we feel we have been, no matter how resilient we feel everyone around us has been, the entire planet has been through trauma for a very long time, and there is no way that we aren't touched by what we've experienced," says King, "whether that just comes in how our daily lives and daily routines have changed and what we decide to keep or don't keep from that, or the people we've lost or what we have missed in that period of time."

There is no doubt that there has been psychological trauma experienced by many due to the challenges the world has faced in recent times, which makes breaking down misconceptions about mental illness of even greater importance. Individuals who experience mental health issues may find it challenging and may be hesitant to share their experiences due to some of the stereotypes that exist around the topic, which leads individuals to feel shame, guilt, fear, or embarrassment. There are many dangerous misconceptions around mental illness that perpetuate stereotypes:

- Mental illness is not a real illness.
- Mental illness is just an excuse for inadequate behavior.
- Individuals who experience mental illnesses are weak and can't handle stress.
- Individuals with mental illnesses are violent.

The reality for individuals who battle with mental health problems is far from what the misconceptions indicate. With so many deeply ingrained stereotypes, it becomes even more difficult for individuals who experience mental illness to speak up, as the fear of being judged and categorized by others brings even deeper feelings of insecurity. Employees may feel apprehensive about sharing their challenges and seeking support. Some individuals may be under immense pressure to express oneself in a positive light even when silently struggling with anxiety or depression. The implications of stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health in the workplace keeps people who need care away from getting the support they need, which leads to severe effects on an individual's overall wellbeing, productivity, level of engagement, and satisfaction with their work. Overcoming the stigmas of mental health is beneficial for everyone, because when an individual attempts to confront their fears of being judged by others, it can be used as motivation and inspiration for others to come forward and seek support.

The first place to begin the conversation about mental health and breaking down stigmas starts with the leaders of an organization. King says there is a responsibility from the corporate level to address the stigma of mental health in the workplace. "I think it falls squarely on the shoulders of the leadership team in the sense that we have a fiscal responsibility to our organizations and to maintain the health and wellbeing of our business," says King. "Health and wellbeing of your employees not only is a moral requirement, it's also an extraordinarily practical requirement that impacts the productivity of your workplace. It impacts the overall engagement that comes from your employees, and ultimately, it impacts whether an organization's able to be successful in the long term or not."

Effective leaders in an organization are not afraid to come forward, discuss adversities they may be going through, and check in with coworkers. King recounts a personal story he experienced in the workplace of a coworker who needed support but hid it from those he worked with closely. "In a million years I would never have thought that there would be anything impacting this person, but their performance was starting to be impacted negatively. They were starting to react in different ways and become less reliable than they were before," says King. He went on to explain that simply asking the person about their family led to that individual opening up and discussing the challenges they were facing. "It was really just by chance, when we were having coffee one day, when I just asked a question about 'how's your family?' Just an innocuous question and everything came out, and what we were able to do is actually listen. In that moment I could listen, and then I could make a connection to support and services that could change things entirely around for this individual."

Checking in with coworkers in the workplace in dire times is a reflection of the progress people are making in the battle against the stigma of mental health. In order to battle these stigmas, misconceptions, and all other forms of discrimination associated with mental health, everyone must start the conversation around the issue.

"I think the first is you simply talk. You simply start the conversation," explains King. "My experience in general is that all the things that people don't like to talk about are really the things that they should be talking about, and the one way to start the conversation is to recognize your responsibility to begin it. So, I think one of the ways, particularly with mental health, that leaders and others can diminish the stigma is by actually raising it and calling it out for what it is. Encourage others to share their stories, because it's the stories that we can connect with. The terms and words and the stereotypes of others are just that. The story is what we live and live every day, and that's what

makes the most fundamental difference."

It is in every organization's vested interest to put more focus on ensuring employee wellbeing in the workplace. A physically and mentally healthy employee is less likely to take frequent leaves of absence and more likely to be engaged with their work, which adds great value to an organization's bottom line. Breaking down stigma surrounding mental health starts with changing people's perceptions towards the illness, which can be done through the following actions:

- Educate yourself about the types of mental illnesses to better understand their impact on an individual.

- Examine your attitude and the attitude of those around you towards individuals battling mental illnesses.

- Speak out and challenge attitudes of stigmas and misconceptions around mental health.

- If you have overcome a mental illness, share your story to inspire others to come forward and express their challenges.

To achieve a healthy workforce, employees need to know that their leadership is committed to acknowledging wellbeing and breaking down the misconceptions about mental health. It all starts with effective leadership at the very top of management and trickles down to the whole team and organization. Leaders must be an example and role models for positive change. Leaders can no longer ignore the role mental health has on productivity in the workplace. They must try to be mindful and empathetic towards employees and promote a positive and safe workplace by empowering others and encouraging coworkers to lift each other up. Checking in with coworkers could make all the difference between someone battling a mental illness in silence and getting the support they need.

References/Sources
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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. I have known my employee for many years and am quite familiar with her personal problems. Does this create an exception in terms of not being given more specific information about the nature of her issues discussed at the EAP?

A. Typically, EAPs share very little information with a signed consent to release confidential information. This protects employees from the possibility of improper and reckless disclosures of confidential information, and in turn helps underscore and ensure the confidential nature of the EAP. Information that the EAP can share with managers, with an employee's signed release, includes acknowledgment of participation, cooperation with EAP recommendations, and accommodations for a manager to consider in supporting the employee's functional capacity and limitations. Historically, managers don't need any additional information to successfully manage their employees' performance. Your employee is free to share information with you directly about treatment or medical recommendations, but it would be improper for the EAP to communicate with you about these things because there is no clinical or performance-management justification. This may be difficult to accept after having played a significant role in supporting your employee up to this point, but you can still do that by being a manager who stays focused on performance.

Q. I do not always provide an accurate rating of my employee's performance. I tend to grade higher than what is deserved. My purpose is to avoid conflict and the souring of the relationship, which I depend on to get work done. What am I risking with this practice?

A. The practice of grading an employee's performance higher than you should is called "rating inflation." It's a well-known phenomenon in management, and often the reason it occurs is that the manager is trying to keep peace with the worker whose performance is problematic. Unfortunately, the short-term gains of rating inflation are usually outweighed by the long-term negatives. For example, getting a higher rating than they deserve will give your employee a false sense of pride in their work, and it can undermine their career growth, lower productivity standards, and prevent your employee from realizing their potential in the current position. Consider meeting with the employee assistance professional to examine this issue more fully. Discuss what contributes to your fear of grading the employee properly. Also discuss communication strategies likely to help you meet your goal to establish a more truthful supervisor-supervisee relationship that will benefit you, the employee, and the organization.

Q. My employee went to the EAP. She is a domestic abuse victim, and there are legal, financial, and child custody issues that she is dealing with. She is off work right now. I want her to take all the time she needs, but how long should I wait? What's fair? What is the EAP's role?

A. It is commendable that you are accommodating the employee's needs, but you will need more details regarding the amount of time she anticipates being away from work. You and your manager, along with your HR advisor, must stay in close communication. Choose someone as lead communicator. Ask the employee what conditions are necessary for her to return to work. Then follow up. A breakdown in communication and a lack of being proactive to keep communication moving along are what cause situations like this to get more complicated. This also adds to management's frustration. Timely communication and clear expectations will help your employee remain engaged, follow through, and complete numerous stressful tasks she likely must handle. Patience is important, but your organization's mission is also important. If you ask the employee to sign a release of information and speak to the EAP, you will feel more assured and less anxious about the employee's status and return to work.