

Employees—  
Your Most  
Valuable  
Resource

# Frontline Supervisor



■ **My employee says she is thinking about quitting because she can't get along with her coworker. Should I send her (or them) to the EAO, or should I first try to resolve this problem myself? I am a little nervous about doing this right the first time. I don't want to lose her.**

**Managers should first** attempt to resolve conflicts between employees.

Here's one approach: Ask this employee to share the history of the conflict with you, how it began, and what prompted her to come to you now. Ask what steps she has taken to resolve the conflict and why she believes they have not worked. Ask your employee about how she would like to proceed with a resolution, but anticipate making a decision to meet with both employees and play a leading role. It is also important to meet with the other person to gain their perspective. This is important because for some employees, remaining in conflict is easier than the compromises necessary to resolve them. If you lose control of this process, change becomes optional. In this sense, employee conflicts are not solely personal problems, because they can potentially affect productivity and morale. Managers must guide them to a resolution. If a resolution does not appear forthcoming, contact the EAO for consultation and additional options.

■ **How can the EAO help me as a supervisor in developing and improving my relationships with employees?**

**The success of the** supervisory role is largely dependent on the effectiveness of relationships that you have with employees. An effective relationship allows you to play an influential role in maximizing the job satisfaction and productivity of your workers. There is more to achieving these goals than most supervisors realize. The EAO has resources and can provide coaching on workplace dynamics. The EAO can consult with you on ways to improve relationships by determining how to engage employees, utilize their talents, enhance recognition, and understand their needs. You want employees to be honest with you, open up, share their workplace struggles and ideas, and tell you how they can best be utilized. All of this depends on your ability to be your authentic self, listen, exercise patience, and demonstrate leadership. These are relationship skills that the EAO can help you develop.

■ **I am a new supervisor. What are the top complaints of employees about supervisors? I plan to avoid all of them.**

**A national 2015** Harris Poll was conducted that asked employees this question. Read about it in the Harvard Business Review online at [hbr.org](http://hbr.org) by searching "top complaints". These complaints, starting with the most frequently cited, are not recognizing employee achievements, not giving clear direction, not having time to meet with employees, refusing to talk

to subordinates, taking credit for others' ideas, not offering constructive criticism, not knowing employees' names, refusing to talk to people on the phone or in person, and not asking about employees' lives outside of work. Keeping this list in mind, conducting a self-assessment, and working to mitigate all of them will produce more engaged and happier employees. The EAO can help you be a stronger performer in any of these areas where you think you could improve.

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■ **Other than spending a lot of time online, what are the workplace signs of an employee with an Internet addiction?**

**Internet addiction** is not yet recognized as a psychiatric disorder, but those who struggle with it often suffer other forms of compulsive behaviors related to Internet use, like online gambling and gaming. You may not witness compulsive use of the Internet with an employee you supervise, but you can often see and measure consequences. These serve as the basis of the supervisor's referral of the employee to the EAO. Compulsive use of the Internet is an insidious addiction that consumes time, which is a finite resource. This means other tasks and responsibilities may be left undone, ignored, rescheduled, accomplished less frequently, or completely eliminated from the compulsive user's mental to-do list due to procrastination. These things could include assignments, organizing an office, paying bills, filing, emptying the trash, or even personal hygiene. Note that you may never associate these problems with Internet addiction, but you can still manage a problem employee who exhibits them.

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■ **What are some of the award-winning characteristics of outstanding workplaces that include the role of the supervisor?**

**Every year**, trade organizations and journals announce winners of contests for outstanding workplaces. These winners and semifinalists are often cited for having effective work cultures that produce high morale and productivity. Many factors of their work culture link directly to supervisor behavior. These include: helping employees reduce bureaucratic roadblocks to their personal achievement; encouraging open dialogue and the debate of ideas; finding ways to help employees increase their knowledge; helping employees stay abreast of the latest trends in their fields; offering flexible work arrangements; fostering open communication; giving predictable feedback with multiple follow-up points prior to evaluations; fostering interdepartmental teamwork and understanding; mentoring; involving employees in a continual discussion about their future potential within the organization; encouraging employee input about the future direction of the organization; and offering formal training to improve effective group and team relationships.

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