

Employees—
Your Most
Valuable
Resource

Frontline Supervisor



Employee Assistance Office (EAO) – 608-263-2987 – www.eao.wisc.edu

■ **How do I deal with an employee we hired very recently who does not appear to be a good culture fit for our organization? Performance is good, but getting along with colleagues and communication seem to be lacking.**

Culture fit is viewed as important and can reduce conflicts and enhance productivity. It also helps reduce turnover. Unhappy employees tend to leave, so your goal should be to avoid that outcome. Don't dismiss culture fit as irrelevant to the job performance requirements. Be specific in your description of what changes in behavior are expected. Discuss the circumstances with the EAO to help your employee adapt to the work culture. Consider team issues, interpersonal communication, isolation, argumentative behavior, attitude issues, avoiding of associates, and personal disposition. Be aware that your employee may have personal problems and these could manifest as issues of culture fit.

■ **How should supervisors view or understand diversity in the workplace and use it as a resource to support the organization's mission?**

Understand the business case for diversity in the workplace beyond being simply the right thing to do. Diversity brings many benefits to the employer, including valued outcomes such as creativity, the generation of new ideas, discovery of solutions, and the ability to market to a diverse world economy. Diversity facilitates healthy challenge of the status quo that naturally comes from those who have different social backgrounds. Keep inclusion in mind and you will maximize the usefulness of this phenomenon in supervision. Everyone wants to feel included, but you should view "inclusiveness" as the energy source or the mechanism that excites employees about making contributions to the organization. Welcome diversity and it will become a positive force to support your organization's mission.

■ **I don't like reprimanding employees or telling them what they have done wrong. How can supervisors have an easier time with these tense meetings?**

There is an old saying in customer service: "A complaint is a gift." This idea sees negative feedback or criticism as an opportunity to improve and grow. This same model applies to correcting employees. View a corrective interview as a gift that will benefit your employee's career. Consider the term "corrective interview" over "reprimand." It is more closely aligned with this model of supervision. See these meetings as opportunities to benefit employees. You will feel less punitive and more like a coach or leader. Be aware that employees who are your star performers may require more corrective interviews because they practice initiative and take more risks. Their higher productivity may come with more mistakes if they naively cross boundaries, unwittingly step on the wrong toes, or simply rub people the wrong way. It's part of the growth curve. A correc-

tive interview is an opportunity to develop talent. See these meetings from this viewpoint and they will be easier to conduct, and more beneficial to your organization.

■ **The worst part about supervision for me is self-doubt. I am sure other supervisors experience the same problem and suffer in silence too. After all, you can't let people know you're doubting your ability to do the job. How can supervisors better manage this worry?**

You've cited one of the reasons for the cliché "It's lonely at the top." There is hardly a supervisor or leader who has not wondered, no matter how briefly, whether he or she will cut it, succeed, or make significant contributions. Intervention with this sort of anxiety is mostly about maintaining perspective. You've succeeded in becoming a manager, and naturally that comes with pressure to perform. Take steps to get support. You will find confidential support at the EAO and quickly find reassurance, resources, and strategies to help you improve your skills and reduce negative self-talk. If needed, you can find short courses online that perfectly match the supervision concern you feel needs addressing.

■ **Next week I have to dismiss an employee who is currently an EAO client. I am very apprehensive about it. Can I use the EAO to talk about my feelings and process my concerns? If I become a client, will this put the EAO in a difficult position?**

The EAO is available to you, as it is to any employee to discuss your concerns about the anticipated event. Your meeting is confidential, and the EAO's focus will be on helping you with your concerns and apprehension about the event. If you go the EAO to obtain help for yourself, the EA professional will focus on you. EA professionals are adept at detaching from the emotional concerns of other cases in the organization—many of which might be linked—so they can focus on the employee in front of them. This is a skill and an art that makes the employee assistance profession truly unique.