

Employees—  
Your Most  
Valuable  
Resource

# Frontline Supervisor



Employee Assistance Office (EAO) – 608-263-2987 – [www.eao.wisc.edu](http://www.eao.wisc.edu)

■ **I got angry at an employee with poor performance, and I'm sure I was pretty intimidating. How could I keep my emotions under wraps in the future? Do I need anger management counseling?**

**To reduce the risk** of becoming angry in an employee review session; take time to plan this meeting and decide what the focus will be. This will help you create the proper mind-set. The lack of structure may cause an emotional reaction because there is little control over the process. This feeling is made worse if the employee is defensive, provocative or shows indifference. Avoid feeling pressured by time constraints. This adds to your anxiety. A constructive tone, and a calm, professional demeanor flows from proper planning. However, if a pattern of anger reveals itself in such meetings, contact the EAO.

■ **I have held off in dealing with some under-performing employees over the years. These employees have often been 'long-timers' with non-productive work habits. I have backed off because other employees have picked up the slack. How does this impact our group?**

**It is stressful** to confront employees and deal with poor performance, especially longtime employees who may suddenly question why after so many years are you now "picking" on them. However, not doing so will create larger problems. This sends a nonverbal message to other employees that your expectations are not very high. Outstanding employees who perform well with little supervision may succumb to a nonverbal message that you will accept mediocrity, and may not perform at peak level. Your best employees may have high standards or may work for anticipated future rewards, but they naturally respond to the standards and expectations that the organization sets. You determine this productivity dynamic by allowing employees to "just get by". Expect the best from all your employees, and avoid a work unit characterized by malaise and morale problems. Consult with the EAO and HR to help you plan an effective approach.

■ **It is difficult to initiate conversations that an employee will find alarming and disappointing - like dismissals, transfers, moving an office, reduction in hours, or other**

**Recognizing the problem** of procrastination indicates you're halfway to solving it. Procrastination is the number one roadblock and compounding issue that makes any difficult conversation more stressful and is the best predictor of an undesirable reaction. Many times difficult conversations are delayed due to waiting for the perfect time. It is useful to prepare talking points and is helpful to your em-

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**issues. My problem is procrastination. How do I act sooner?**

employees if you are well informed with answers to their questions. This will reduce your anxiety the most. If you feel overwhelmed by the prospect of the meeting, make an appointment with the EAO to process your concerns. You'll feel more confident, and be better prepared to help your employees, regardless of their reactions.

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■ **I am a new boss and would like my employees to consider me a good one. How can I act to inspire and motivate them to believe in me and follow me as a leader?**

**Genuine passion** for your work inspires others. This level of enthusiasm is infectious, creates engaged employees, and contributes to a positive work unit. This is what employees want. They want to be excited, and they want leadership demonstrated. Commit yourself to your role and aim high. Seek input from outside resources, mentors, and personal sources of inspiration so that you can pass this energy on to your employees. This is crucial. If you remain a manager who is open-minded, eager to learn, and excited to share that energy with others, you will have a positive influence on your team.

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■ **Sexual harassment has been around for many years and most employers have policies in place to point out its illegality and consequences to the perpetrator. Is there any new information about this unacceptable behavior?**

**Just when it seemed** employers were handling this issue in a more effective manner, along came technology - and with it new risks. Prevention training is important, but supervisors should also play an active role and intervene where appropriate to curtail behaviors that could constitute sexual harassment. There simply is no substitute for this role. New risks are posed by instant messaging, blog posts, Facebook, Snapchat, emails, text messaging, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media sites. These tools allow instant ir retrievable communication, which naturally increases the risk of sexual harassment in daily communications. However, education may be helping, according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the total number of claims filed for sexual harassment has decreased each year since 2010.