

Employees—
Your Most
Valuable
Resource

Frontline Supervisor



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

■ **The faster technology becomes, the higher the expectations become for shorter deadlines and more communication. How do I avoid burnout? Maybe I am the type that can't handle the pressure.**

Burnout is often linked to the work culture where jobs have become more demanding and everyone faces more pressure to respond and dedicate increasing amounts of time and emotional energy to the job. This means you are expending more effort and using more mental resources (focus) to accomplish work goals. Don't fall for the myth that burnout only happens to employees who can't handle job pressure. Some good ideas for fighting burnout—think upstream or 'manage up' - forging a good relationship with your manager, anticipate the possibility of burnout, be mindful of its symptoms. The EAO will counsel you on finding strategies and approaches to help you overcome it

■ **What are the most common complaints about supervisors?**

Common complaints from employees include: micro-management, not listening, being intolerant of different opinions, not following through on promises, giving deadlines that are unrealistic resulting in too much pressure, not having enough time to talk, not giving enough feedback about performance, and he/she is too disorganized. Except for the issue of being too disorganized, the common denominator is communication. Earlier communication, communicating one's concerns to the supervisor, being more receptive in interpersonal communication, and asking for more communication from either party would resolve these complaints. Your role in encouraging, seeking out, expecting, and holding employees and yourself accountable for effective communication can create a more harmonious workplace.

■ **How do I get an employee to do something that is part of the job when he/she does not want or refuses to do it? By the way, termination is not an option. Can the EAO help to motivate this person?**

You are ineffective without credible authority in this situation. Refusal to work is usually enabled by a perceived lack of consequences. So the real problem is lack of leverage or influence in the employment relationship. The proof is that the employee is calling the shots. Your focus for a solution should begin here. Meet with your supervisor and human resource manager. Discuss the situation. You may be surprised at how a discussion among you three may produce a dramatic shift in manner, approach, and resolve in dealing with the insubordination. You can then clarify expecta-

■ **After a traumatic incident, how can supervisors support employees? We are not counselors, but employees look to us for direction.**

tions with the employee. The EAO has a definite role in addressing underlying issues of your employee's behavior, but it is recommended that you first reassert the realistic nature of the employment relationship in unison with your supervisor.

Employees do naturally turn to supervisors during a crisis. Some may rely upon the supervisor as a leader for direction and guidance, some may vent anger toward them (e.g., "Ok, you're in charge, so now what?"), and others may seek a closer relationship, venting feelings and seeking empathy and a stronger bond as the wall of formality and detachment momentarily falls. Some may treat the supervisor like a parent. Recognize that these responses and many more are normal following critical incidents. You should not counsel employees, but be accepting of different reactions. Be alert to more extreme reactions that signal a need for EAO support, and coordinate with the EAO as to how best employ its services with your group. After an incident, employees want information, so keep it flowing. It reduces anxiety dramatically. Finally, ask the EAO about tips for taking care of you.

■ **I hope to be with my employer until retirement, but frankly, I am no longer thrilled with what I do. I am bordering on not wanting to come to work. How can I make my job more meaningful and not allow my attitude to affect employees?**

Everyday we hear about people who are make radical job changes and then regret it. Perhaps some of these ideas might help you or your employees to love the job you have:

- 1) *Look for the challenge in your career.* Don't lose yourself in the everyday monotony of your job. Open your eyes again to what you do and find new ways of approaching it so that it becomes new and exciting. This could mean reinventing yourself so that you approach your usual tasks in a new light.
- 2) *Analyze your day and determine what tasks you enjoy* and which ones you don't. Then find ways to make those unpleasant tasks more enjoyable.
- 3) *Find the value in what you do.* Recognize that everyone plays an important role in their position. Find out what yours is and be proud of what you do.
- 4) *Expand your interest and focus on those around you.* Even if you have made friends, learn more about them or make friends with some of your other colleagues. Being with people you like will make working fun.
- 5) *Clear the air*—sometimes talking to someone may help and it may surprise you to realize that there may be unresolved issues or part of life (hobbies) that you are missing.