

JUNE

WORKPLACE
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Frontline Supervisor

EMPLOYEES - YOUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE

TOPICS COVERED THIS MONTH:

- Text messaging as a workplace communication tool
- Preventing performance issues
- Managing quarrelsome behavior
- How will I know if my employee relapses after treatment?
- Bullying Behavior Policy

Q: I view myself as a tolerant person, but I admit that I am not comfortable with text messaging as a workplace communication tool. In my view, this is a faddish thing for weekend socializing. Is this my problem, or do I need to “get with the times”?

Text messaging is getting more attention in business literature as “Generation Y” workers who are comfortable with instant messaging (IM) enter the workplace and find more seasoned workers less familiar with the technology. Being open to change is valuable, and not every new convention requires you to adapt to it. Although learning to text message may have some useful business applications, it is appropriate to expect employees skilled in the technique to rely upon your organization’s conventional communication methods if those work better for your people. The call to understand, adapt, change, and get with the times are big stressors for managers and employees alike, but some things remain steady

business practice. One of them is the need for effective relationships and good communication that will produce results for the bottom line. This is an argument for everyone, old and young alike, to be good communicators. The good news is that young people today are an upbeat, empowered, ambitious, and eager-to-learn group of folks who value honesty, so you can anticipate their cooperation.



Q: One of my employees is resigning from the company. I am glad because this person has been slow moving and under-performing for a long time. I blame myself because I adapted to the performance issues as they grew worse, rather than intervene. How can I prevent this happening in the future?

Many supervisors and managers interpret corrective action as conflict and some go to great lengths to avoid it. Employees need regular feedback –including recognition of a job well-done– to perform well and to make corrections before bad habits become entrenched. Hard workers may become resentful when others get away with poor performance, and may reduce their own efforts, so the willingness and the ability to give feedback impacts your entire group’s productivity.

Giving useful feedback is a skill that can be learned, and with practice it will become easier. Begin by

considering your purpose. Frame the problem in terms of specific behaviors and explain the consequences of those behaviors. Get input from the employee on ways to remedy and establish a time frame for improvement. Follow up with recognition or another conversation on the need for improvement, possibly coupled with corrective action. Learn your organization’s policy on corrective action, and consult with your boss, HR and Workplace Solutions on difficult problems.



Did You Know?

Supervisors, managers, HR professionals can contact Workplace Solutions® for consultation on difficult workplace situations.

Call 800.327.5071 today!

“Disciplinary action will demonstrate that you are serious about the need for change and establish accountability.”



Q: My employee isn't insubordinate when I make a request, but there are always complaints, resistance to details, problems with timing, and criticism about my communication. After all this, the employee delivers superior performance. How can I manage this?

Although your employee is great with a task, you are not describing superior performance. Quarrelsome behavior interferes with orderly work flow and is therefore serious. Most organizations capitalize on the use of teams and work groups, and the people skills, including healthy communication skills, are essential. This employee can negatively impact the morale, and therefore the productivity of the entire work group.

In addition to requiring that the arguments and criticism stop, establish new rules to permit orderly discussion of work issues. The requirement that

concerns be put in writing, for example, or shared only after you are finished speaking, may impose an intervention that produces its own cure. Refer to Workplace Solutions to assist with communication skills. Follow up with feedback—either thanks for the improvement or continuation of coaching and discipline. The most important part of your strategy is looking at your contribution to its perpetuation and wanting change badly enough to follow through. Consider contacting Workplace Solutions for a management consultation.

Q: My employee went to treatment for a drug addiction problem. I'm glad the employee is in treatment, but if this person relapses, who will know it first—the EAP or me? Will the relapse appear as a performance issue or with physical symptoms that demonstrate drug use?

Recovering alcoholics and addicts do sometimes relapse. Many learn from the experience and get right back on their program. If the relapse continues, it may show itself at work via attendance, performance and/or behavior problems. In that case, you would discipline according to policy and refer to the EAP. Depending on your policy or if your employee is on a last-chance agreement because of misconduct related to alcohol or drug use in the past, the relapse may

mean termination according to the requirements of the agreement. Many addicts say the loss of a job helped them hit bottom and begin recovery. Some organizations that terminate in this situation will allow the employee to re-apply after a specified amount of time. Consult with your HR professional and Workplace Solutions to determine a course of action for specific cases.

Q: Our organization has developed a policy on bullying behavior. Can you provide an outline for a private corrective interview with an employee who has this problem and what steps to take?

Some bullies also intimidate their managers, so if you need assistance, consider a management consult with EAP and have an HR professional or other manager present at the corrective meeting with the employee. Documented complaints and your observations should be the basis for your meeting. Explain what's prompted the meeting and describe the effect on morale and productivity. Tell the employee that others dread interaction with him/her. Do not joke or make light of the situation. Doing so will undermine your outcome and perpetuate the problem behavior. State that the intimidation cannot

continue. A bully may want to discuss others' personalities and motives. Avoid this discussion, but do ask what your employee thinks about his or her behavior. Be patient and listen, but focus on how the employee can improve. Disciplinary action will demonstrate that you are serious about the need for change and establish accountability. Make a referral to Workplace Solutions and schedule a specific date and time for a follow-up meeting. Directly state to your employee that retaliation toward coworkers in response to this meeting is bullying behavior too—it is absolutely not to occur.

FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR