

EFFECTIVELY CONFRONTING A TROUBLED EMPLOYEE

Facing an employee to discuss performance concerns is one of the most demanding and important responsibilities of a supervisor. You probably have encountered employees with a pattern of deteriorating job performance and/or uncharacteristic behavior. Sometimes these employees do not respond to supervisory intervention. Supervisors may feel apprehensive about confronting a troubled employee. Some are uncomfortable with the emotional response that may result; others may have difficulty being objective due to the many problems this employee may have caused.

You can comfortably and effectively confront troubled employees. Focusing on job performance problems, with specific examples, is the key. Here are some helpful suggestions:

1. **Be consistent.** Don't tolerate more from one employee than another because you feel sorry for the employee or because you are uncomfortable talking to them.
2. **Avoid labeling or diagnosing.** Do not speculate on the reasons for the performance problem; deal only with the job-related problems.
3. **Be prepared.** The employee will probably respond with excuses or hostility. Have your facts documented.
4. **Don't moralize or judge.** Saying what "should" or "should not" be done creates hostility. It is more constructive to emphasize what you expect.
5. **Be firm.** Hold fast to your contention that the employee is responsible to improve job performance. Get a commitment from the employee and monitor it.
6. **Never ask "why" an employee does this or that.** "Why" serves as an excuse.
7. **Don't make idle disciplinary threats.** Follow through with your company's disciplinary process.
8. **Address only documented facts.** Be specific about the unacceptable behavior.
9. **Don't be afraid to intervene or get involved.** It is your responsibility to intervene when employee performance declines.
10. **Contact Workplace Solutions for assistance.** Our professional staff is available to consult with about an employee's decline in work performance and how you could best intervene. We can also help you decide whether a formal referral to the EAP is appropriate.

SUPERVISORS' COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Can I make an employee go to the EAP?

A: In most cases, no. Seeing an EAP counselor is best kept separate from the disciplinary process. Whether the employee follow through and sees the EAP or not, keep monitoring work performance. The EAP is not meant to shield workers from disciplinary actions.

Q: Since the EAP is confidential, how will I know if my employee followed through?

A: In the event of a supervisory referral, we request that the employee sign a release form permitting us to let the referring supervisor know that the employee is following recommendations. All information regarding the employee's personal concern will remain confidential.

Q: How do I reach the EAP?

A: A professional counselor is available 24/7 by calling 800-327-5071. Information and resources are also available at the click of a mouse at www.wseap.com. Do not hesitate to contact Workplace Solutions for consultation or to facilitate a formal referral.