

Some Recent Questions to the EAP:

Q. How can I support employees who remain after downsizing? Many relationships were lost, and grief and anger exist. Will this situation eventually right itself? Perhaps I should make myself scarce because I represent management, the target of their anger.

A. Do not make yourself scarce. You have the ability to influence employee attitudes and improve morale by what you say and do. If employees are angry and upset, you will ratchet up their feelings of resentment by avoiding them. Healing will take time, but remember that you and your employees want the same thing—a happier workplace. With that in mind, get closer to your employees by accepting in the short run their view of themselves as survivors. As a manager, you take center stage after downsizing, and employees are waiting and watching to see if you demonstrate compassion and understanding. This is crucial to their recovery. Employees can then move to the next stage of adaptation and acceptance of change. Never declare that employees should “get over it.” Discuss with the EAP how to encourage activities that rebuild the feeling of commitment workers have toward the organization.

Q. I feel insecure about my position. I don't seem to be able to get my point across to upper management and gain their acceptance for my ideas. Can the EAP help me?

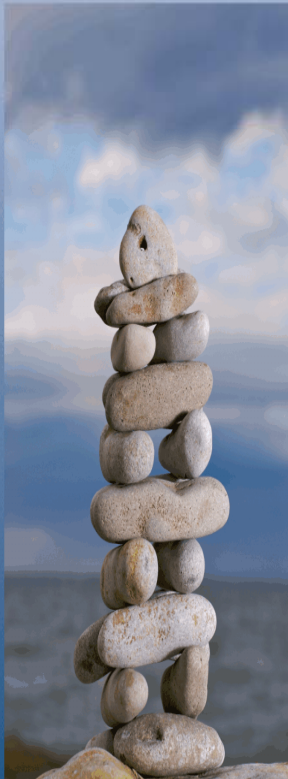
A. Many supervisors struggle with uncertainty about relationships with management. EAPs can help because they observe best practices in communication and are sensitive to the nuances of work culture. They provide tips, techniques, guidance, and “know-how” to help supervisors improve their effectiveness. So give the EAP a try. You may discuss many topics like how to analyze issues from upper management's perspective or how to use empathy to deepen your understanding of the boss's outlook. In the process, you will be formulating strategies and approaches that will help you win greater acceptance of your ideas.

Q. I gave a copy of my documentation (a list of issues) to my employee and made a referral to the EAP. The employee became upset when I said the list had already been faxed confidentially to the EAP. Could I have handled this differently?

ur EAP policy and the steps your organization wants you to follow when making a referral. Obviously the employee was taken aback, but sending your documentation

empowering people

to make positive change



to support the rationale for the referral is consistent and customary with the EAP process. Even so, you want employees to feel motivated to participate in the EAP, so sending the information after your meeting, even though you don't need permission, is probably a better way to go. Remember, an EAP without information from the supervisor relies solely upon what the employee-client reports. Let the EAP know about this reaction because it will help the EAP to set the employee at ease at the first appointment.

Q. Can you describe in simple terms how to meet and confront an employee with performance problems so the interview is effective?

A. Meet with your employee in private about the issue or concern. Describe what happened from your perspective. Never become agitated or aggressive with your employee. Ask the employee for his or her account or explanation of the behavior, action, or performance shortcoming. Inform the employee about the negative effects of the performance issue on productivity and on the workplace. Ask the employee if there is anything else that explains the continuation of performance problems. Provide feedback or make a statement regarding what is commendable about the employee's performance. (This piece is often overlooked by supervisors, but can motivate employees to improve performance.) Describe what you want done differently, what must change, and when those changes must occur. Let the employee know the ultimate outcome if performance does not change or improve. Remind the employee about the EAP or incorporate a supervisor referral as appropriate.

NOTES:

Information contained in Workplace Trends & Strategies is for general information purposes only and is not intended to be specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with your EAP (800) 828-6025.
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