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3 Toxic Behaviors to Address Now



Regardless of your position in an organization, you have the responsibility to address certain behaviors that are detrimental to the team and organization. Whether, as a manager, you address an employee's misconduct or you correct your own negative actions, here are three behaviors to put an end to immediately:

1. Being rude to newcomers. More tenured employees may feel threatened by an enthusiastic, talented newcomer and choose to be rude, indifferent or overly competitive. They may even withhold information and support because they fear they are being replaced. Ensure that you and others are giving new hires the welcome they deserve. Be friendly, helpful and accommodating.

2. Sabotaging change efforts. Change is difficult for many people; however, some employees go out of their way to complicate changes. They won't provide information, return calls or emails from coworkers, or participate in brainstorming and problem-solving meetings.

While you can be concerned about change, you still have to enforce it and do everything in your power to make it a success. As a manager, if you learn that certain employees are hindering a change, address it immediately and explain the behavior will not be condoned.

3. Making other people's lives difficult. Misery loves company, and some people will abuse coworkers and employees simply because they are discontent in their own lives. They make unreasonable demands, act rudely and put other people down as often as possible. Address such negative behaviors head-on. Be professional and respectful, but point out their actions. If that doesn't help, you may need to go to HR or their boss for mediation. You don't have to accept abuse in the workplace.

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Moving from Manager to Leader

Supervisors and managers become most effective in their roles as they fully develop their leadership skills. Early in their careers, there is a tendency for supervisors to be more functional in their management approach. As they gain leadership skills, supervisors often become more strategic and experience greater degrees of success.

The difference between functional management and strategic leadership

Functional management focuses on shaping today, tries to control the environment, and is tactical in approach. Functional supervisors are often directive in their interactions with employees. Strategic leadership on the other hand focuses on shaping the future, tries to influence the people, and is open to taking risks when appropriate. Strategic leaders are often collaborative in their interactions with employees.

How to become a more strategic leader

First, develop a vision for your team's future. Collaborate with your employees on creating the vision so that you are working together towards common goals. Brainstorm and agree on the steps it will take to get there. Also, an important part of maximizing your team's future success is to focus on employee growth and development. As part of your vision, create a plan for helping each individual employee reach their highest potential.

The next step in becoming a strategic leader is to become less directive in your daily interactions with your employees. Use more of a coaching approach which solicits employee input and ideas. When employees are encouraged to provide input into project planning, problem solving, etc., they typically become more engaged and productive.

Finally, a supervisor can become more strategic in their approach by looking to leverage their efforts and resources whenever possible. For example, when a leader is working on solving a current business problem, they should think about how a potential solution (purchase of new software, etc.) could also be used for other purposes by the team. In addition, a leader can strategically leverage the deployment of staff to a particular task or project in a way that not only meets the need of the situation but also helps in the growth and development of the employees involved.

By:
Greg Brannan
Director of Business Development & Training Consultant
Deer Oaks EAP Services, LLC

Ask Your EAP!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to the EAP for a management consultation.



Q. My employee has been no-call/no-show too many times, so we decided to let him go. He did visit the EAP months ago, but obviously it did not help. I am concerned I should have done more to help change this attendance pattern, but I am not sure what it would have been.

A. Employees who are no-call/no-show may have severe personal problems, have other sources of financial support making the job unimportant, or have extreme ambivalence about the job for some reason. If you offer a second chance, ask your employee about his or her goals for the future with the company. Your referral to the EAP

was an important step. You also stayed focused on performance which is critical. Realize however that you may never discover the explanation for the behavior. It's also important to realize that EAP can offer assessment and resources but it is up to the individual employee to utilize those resources.

Q. Supervisors are supposed to play a role in reducing workplace stress. What areas of workplace stress most affect employees? Knowing what they are would help me consider strategies to at least deal with the most important issues. I know I can't intervene in everything.

A. You are correct. You won't be able to intervene in every issue, but there are broad categories of stress worth knowing about that can help you stay attuned to relationship and workplace dynamics with which interventions could reduce the impact of stress. Stress research usually focuses on 1) conflicts with supervisors, 2) complaints about the work culture and factors associated with it, and 3) dissatisfaction with making too minimal a contribution, not feeling like one belongs, is included, or fits in. This includes a feeling of not being valued for one's contributions to the achievements of the work unit. Keep these categories in mind in conversations with employees and when dealing with normal workplace conflict. They can alert you to take action, and this can reduce turnover if you jump on problems quickly and resolve them. Turn to the EAP to help you, as needed.

Q. How do I practice detachment so when I go home at the end of the day I am able to focus on home life, sleep better, and not be overly concerned about employee issues at work? Is this a learned skill or an ability a few lucky supervisors are born with?

A. Detachment is more of an art than a skill. It comes with practice, and you get better over time by practicing letting go, observing your resistance, and making adjustments to improve your ability. Detachment allows you to become a more accomplished worker and contented, happy family member. There is always more to learn about detachment. You will not succeed all the time. No job that entails interacting with the human condition enjoys complete and utter detachment, because a continuum of problems guarantees new acute experiences will test your ability to let go. Imagine an emergency operating room physician who could not detach from work. Stress and its ultimate effects would incapacitate even the most skilled doctor. Working on detaching will help and guide you toward discovering a more happy personal and professional life.

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