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EAP SUPERVISOR ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER



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**DEER OAKS EAP PRESENTS:
Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series**

*The Keys to Effectively
Managing Employee
Performance*

Date: May 23, 2022

Time: 1:00-2:00 PM CT REGISTER

Building a Productive and Collaborative Team

Summary

- Set realistic expectations.
- Gain commitment to the objectives.
- Establish ground rules for your team (team norms).
- Consider team members' ideas as valuable.
- Encourage listening and brainstorming amongst the team.
- Put the ownership on the team members; provide the team with enough freedom and empowerment. Support the team's decision.
- Build trust and reinforce the team's sense of purpose.

Information You Need to Know

A team's success depends on realistic expectations being set from the beginning. Make sure everyone is aware of why the team exists; this includes external partners, as well. However, you should not expect the team to perform outstandingly from the beginning. Team formation takes time, and working with the team to establish ground rules will be extremely beneficial. In establishing ground rules, allow the team members the opportunity to voice their opinion, and you should also provide your thoughts.

As the team journeys from being a group of strangers to becoming a united team with a common goal, you should anticipate the following recognizable stages: forming, storming, norming, and performing. If you foster an environment where the team members feel valued and empowered, you are likely to see a positive outcome. By empowering the team, this helps employees own their work and take responsibility for their results. Provide the team guidance, but allow them the opportunity to make decisions and support their decisions. Do not forget to continue to remind individuals why the team exists, reflect on what the team has accomplished, and recognize them for their efforts.

Source: International Trade Administration (ITA). (n.d.). Building a productive and collaborative team. Retrieved March 9, 2016, from <http://ita.doc.gov/>



Planning in Times of Uncertainty

Even the best of plans are subject to change when the world around you changes. How do you maintain a forward outlook and an organized approach in times of uncertainty and disruption? Here are some thoughts that may help.

Keep your most important priorities in mind.

Step back and consider what's really important to you, whether it's integrity, caring relationships, financial security, your health, or your family's wellbeing. Or, at work, consider your organization's core values and capabilities. When you're faced with change and uncertainty, revisit your plans and goals with those priorities and values in mind. Perhaps some of your plans are less important right now while others are more important than ever. Some plans may need to be modified to fit changing realities.

Focus on what you know and what you can control.

In times of uncertainty and change, there are likely to be gaps in your knowledge and factors that are out of your control. Instead of worrying about what you don't know and the things that are outside your sphere of influence, focus on what you do know and what you can control. You can't affect major shifts in the economy, for example, but you can learn new skills and gain knowledge to make yourself—or your team or organization—valuable in new ways. By focusing on these aspects, you can use your time wisely, stay organized, and maintain optimism and confidence.

Face reality.

It's a human tendency to see what you want or hope rather than what's really happening. Be courageous in seeking information that might challenge your views so that you can prepare for and adapt to changing realities. Life can be hard. Change can be scary. But it won't do you any good to hide from the truth. Leading the way in understanding change can give you strength and protect you from being blindsided.

Consider a range of possible futures.

Nobody knows with any certainty what will happen in the future, and fixing on a single projection can leave you unprepared for other outcomes. Consider the different scenarios of what might happen next month, next year, and in the years after that. Think how each of those outcomes might affect you and your plans. How might people's needs change in each scenario? How might your job or your life at home change? How might you prepare yourself to live, work, and succeed in that future? Think rationally about which of the scenarios are most likely, using the information you have and setting aside your wishes and fears (both of which can distort your thinking).

Shift your planning horizon.

Focus on short-term plans when the long-term future is highly uncertain. Envisioning multiple scenarios can help you see a range of possible futures. What steps can you take now to prepare for several of those scenarios? What short-term plans might help you adapt to both the best-case and worst-case scenarios? Even making lists of what you might need for success in different scenarios can be a helpful step. They can clarify your thinking and give you a head start on taking action as you get more information. Short-term plans and small steps can also give you a sense of control when life feels chaotic, which can give you the strength to keep going.

Get comfortable with uncertainty: Embrace change.

People often speak of a "new normal" when change happens. That attitude can be an obstacle to your success. It's more useful to think of constant change as normal rather than hoping for some imagined future state of stability. The world keeps changing, and the rate of change keeps speeding up. Don't just adapt to change, embrace it. Get comfortable with uncertainty. Adjust your outlook so that you're excited to see what happens next rather than afraid of what might be lost.

Look for the good: Find opportunities in change.

The concept of positive reframing involves shifting your outlook. If you find yourself worrying about the negative aspects of change, step back and look at things from a different angle. What are the positives in the situation? What new opportunities might the change open for you? What could you change in yourself, your team, or your organization to take advantage of those opportunities?

Be positive: Celebrate progress.

Some changes can feel chaotic and overwhelming, and your responses can feel small and insignificant. Remember that major progress starts with small steps, and great things can be accomplished with a combination of flexibility and persistence. Take time to look back at what you've accomplished. Celebrate the progress you're making. Remind the people around you of their progress in dealing with new challenges, too. Your positive attitude can be infectious, boosting confidence and building momentum as you work toward new goals together.

Know and grow yourself.

Keep your strengths in mind as you adapt to changing realities—your skills, knowledge, character, and resilience. Think of situations in the past where you've had to adapt, learn, and grow. Have confidence in yourself that you can do that again, that you can grow in new ways, learn new skills, and mature even more in managing your emotions and working effectively with others.

Source: Morgan, H. (2020, November). Planning in times of uncertainty (C. Gregg-Meeker, Ed.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.

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. Is it appropriate for a supervisor to raise mental health issues with employees, such as pointing out that an employee “looks stressed out”? This might prompt employees to consider using the EAP.

A. Although it is not uncommon for a manager to use phrases such as “you look a little stressed out,” those might be misinterpreted by your employee. So, why not consider a different question with a business purpose, such as “you appear rushed and are fumbling with your work. Is there something I can do to help? Is everything all right?” This can lead the employee to mention something personal, in which case you can respond by recommending the EAP as a resource. Mental health in the workplace has received much attention in business news recently. This does not mean that supervisors should probe mental health issues or become diagnosticians. Continue to focus on performance issues that don’t resolve. You will ultimately refer employees with personal problems earlier and more often.

Q. My employee made a group of coworkers aware of communication problems she was having with her husband. One employee gave her the name and phone of a marriage counselor. I was a little uncomfortable with this process. Should I have discouraged this exchange and recommended the EAP instead?

A. It is not unusual for employees to recommend resources to each other for dealing with problems, but the EAP would have been a better recommendation. EAPs don’t do marital counseling per se because this is treatment/therapy, but they do start with an assessment that is free and unbiased. The goal of this assessment is to determine precisely the nature of the problem the employee is experiencing. Imagine the broad spectrum of issues that might exist in any situation like this one. Is this simply about communication problems or something more? Financial problems, drug and alcohol issues or other addictions, sexual issues, depression, or even an extramarital affair might be characterized in a group setting as “communication problems.” Indeed, most therapists discover deeper and more maladaptive concerns within a couple once therapy begins. Go ahead and recommend the EAP, even now. It is possible that she did not follow through with her friend’s recommendation. Share with her the nature of what a free and professional

assessment can accomplish.

Q. What are the costs of misconduct in the workplace, and what are the dominant behaviors constituting misconduct?

A. There are many areas of misconduct, but the three that drive costs are discrimination, sexual harassment, and bullying. A recent study by Vault found that the cost of workplace misconduct nationally is about \$20.2 billion per year. When an employee leaves an organization because of these behaviors, the cost to hire a new worker averages \$4126. And that is a low average, because this cost estimator from the Society of Human Resource Management is several years old and does not include many indirect costs. The latest report on misconduct in the workplace can be found at <https://vaultplatform.com/the-trust-gap/> (a short form appears before you can download the 16-page document). Among the findings, of women who have experienced sexual harassment, only one in five reports it despite today’s education, policies, and legal remedies. Fear of retaliation and impact on one’s career still drive the hesitancy to report victimization.

Q. I have always struggled with being assertive. As a new supervisor, I can imagine some problems this might cause. Are there any problems outside my awareness that I should be careful to avoid?

A. Supervisors who struggle with assertiveness often fear saying no. Rather than state unequivocally to their employees that something won’t happen or can’t happen, and risk disappointment or anger, they may give the impression that there is hope or that they will “look into it.” Whether it is about a pay raise or some other question, they give employees the expectation of an affirmative outcome. For the supervisor, the goal at the time is avoiding anger or conflict with workers. Their strategy is to “wait and see” with a middle-of-the-road approach. Later, when the thing hoped for does not materialize, anger and accusations of broken promises occur. Trust is lost among staff. Unassertive supervisors often know they are setting themselves up for these conflicts, but the need to avoid conflict in the moment overrides their better judgment at the time. If you struggle with this level of assertiveness, contact the EAP.

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