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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**

Managing for Motivation & Engagement

In your leadership role, you play an important part in creating a positive work environment, one that inspires and motivates employees to contribute with energy and creativity. Research shows that employees work best when they are supported and feel trusted to do their best work, that they are most engaged when they believe that their work is important and their contributions are recognized.

Suggestions for Cultivating Employee Engagement

Lead by example. Don't just describe the performance and behavior you expect from your team—demonstrate it. Make work fun by using humor and having fun yourself. Make courageous, principled decisions. Be a model for healthy work-life balance. Show the importance of meeting customer needs, what it means to produce high-quality work, and how a resilient person deals with obstacles and setbacks.

Find out what motivates the people who report to you. Ask what is important to them at work and in their personal lives. Learn what's hard about their jobs and what gives them the most satisfaction.

Show that you care about your employees. Get to know them. Listen to and act on their ideas and suggestions. Be present when you meet with them, and give them your full attention.

Recognize your team members' priorities outside of work. Make them aware of the many ways in which the employee support program can be helpful.

Get people working on what's important. Set employees' goals to align with your organization's priorities, and take the time to explain how each person's work contributes to the larger mission. Step back with your team periodically to look for any low-value work they may be doing out of habit, and either eliminate it or find a more efficient way to get it done. As work is completed, remind people of its value to the organization.

Be generous with praise and recognition. Notice good work with praise and recognition, from a simple "thank you" to more tangible rewards. Shine a light on progress and accomplishments at team meetings. Mark milestones, even minor ones, with small celebrations. Be generous in giving credit to others. Encourage upper management to recognize the accomplishments of people on your team.

Treat employees with respect. Make it clear that you listen to all ideas and support the airing of different opinions. Create an environment where employees value different viewpoints, where it is safe to try new approaches and learn from mistakes. When something goes wrong, focus on solutions, not on blame. Be fair, honest, and open with people, and expect the people on your team to be the same with each other and with you.

Practice open and responsive communication. Give timely updates about work progress and organizational changes. Respond to questions and requests from your employees promptly. Be honest in your communication. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so, and make an effort to find out. Give regular feedback to your employees, and ask for feedback from them.

Encourage problem-solving and innovation. Resist the temptation to solve all of the team's problems. Empower team members to look for new opportunities and suggest new ideas. Encourage team members to identify inefficient work practices that are causing frustration and to think of different ways that work might get done. Have them step back periodically and think about what your customers value and how you might address their needs with new solutions. Experiment with new ways of working together to encourage greater flexibility and creativity.

Foster a sense of ownership and control. Encourage your employees to focus on what they can control and get them to "own" those things.

Be an accessible and supportive coach. Make time to share your skills and experience with your employees. Help them learn new skills and different ways of dealing with challenges in their work. Share your knowledge of the organization’s operations and direction so team members have a better sense of how their work fits in.

Help employees learn from each other. Encourage coaching and mentoring among team members. Pair experienced and less experienced team members on projects as a way to promote learning. Make it clear that you expect employees to help each other and work together to tackle new problems.

Make the most of meetings. Meetings can be a great way to share information and tackle problems as a group. They can also be a huge waste of time. When planning a meeting, be clear about its purpose and who needs to attend. (If it is just to share information and no discussion is needed, would an email summary work as well?) Prepare an agenda, and send it out well ahead of time. Manage the meeting to the allotted time, keeping discussion on track, and soliciting the thoughts of all attendees. Designate a note-taker so all points are captured. At the end of the meeting, summarize decisions, next steps, and any follow-up actions.

Source: Morgan, H. (Revised 2021, November). Managing for motivation and engagement (C. Meeker & B. Schuette, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.



How to be an Inclusive Manager

Most people recognize the importance of diversity at work and the benefits it can bring to an organization and its people. However, diversity is only half of the story. The other half is inclusion: building a work environment in which people feel valued for who they are, bring their whole selves to work, and contribute fully. In an inclusive work environment, people with different backgrounds, religious beliefs, sexual orientations, skin colors, and other differences feel like they belong.

How can you, as a manager, help to create a more inclusive work environment? It’s a process that involves self-awareness, learning, listening, and an openness to new ways of working. The payoff can be a more engaged team with better ideas and greater productivity, and a more satisfying work experience for everyone.

Start with yourself.

The journey to becoming a more inclusive manager starts with you:

Be humble. You’re probably used to being recognized and rewarded for being smart, being right, and making quick decisions. However, to manage for inclusion, you need to cultivate your humility rather than your ego, your openness to new perspectives rather than your power. Accept that you aren’t the expert and that you aren’t always right—that you’re a learner on this journey and that others have something to teach you. Shift your approach from “solving” the problem of exclusion to “exploring and working on” greater inclusion.

Acknowledge your blind spots. Recognize that your life experience and your views aren't shared by everyone around you. Understand that you have biases in your thinking and reactions to other people, even if you aren't conscious of them. These can affect your actions and decisions and how you relate to people. Accept that your experience of the workplace may be very different from that of someone who doesn't look, speak, or act like you—even from someone who may seem very much like you on the surface.

Learn. Strengthen your understanding of people who are different from you. Learn about different cultures, the history of privilege and discrimination, the many forms of bias, and the wide range of life experiences. How? By reading, watching movies, listening to informative audio, attending training sessions and workshops, and having conversations to understand other perspectives.

Connect in more inclusive ways.

Listen and ask questions. Don't assume that you know how the people around you think and feel. Ask questions to draw out their honest thoughts and reactions. Then listen to what they say. Make an effort to spend more time listening than speaking in these conversations. Encourage people you work with to share stories about their life experiences and to explain what's important to them. Ask what you could do better as a manager, and what others could do, to make work feel more inclusive. Consider anonymous ways to get this feedback, too.

Connect at a human level. Get to know the people you work with—at a personal level, not just for the work they do. Learn what motivates them, what their goals and aspirations are, what their lives are like outside of work, and more. Do this respectfully, without pushing the bounds of privacy. Encourage this human connection between team members, too, by making time for it in meetings and through structured, team-building activities.

Seek out new perspectives and ideas. Expand your circle of connections at work to include people who are different from you. That includes people with different areas of expertise, of course, but also people who are different in other ways, such as by race, ethnicity, gender, country of origin, educational background, and sexual orientation. Ask to sit in on meetings of employee resource groups (ERGs)—affinity groups for employees—to gain a better understanding of their goals and activities.

Be a mentor (or a mentee). Look beyond the people who share a similar background and demographic to you to find someone different who might benefit from your mentorship—someone who may not see a likeness of themselves in the organization's leadership. Explore the idea of reverse mentorship, too: a learning partnership where you are the mentee, and a younger and less experienced employee shares their insights and ideas.

Build an environment of trust and respect.

Show that you value people for who they are. Demonstrate, in the way you interact with people and manage your team, that you respect and appreciate every person, with all of their individuality. Encourage people to be their authentic selves at work, not to hide their true selves to fit in with narrow cultural norms. Make it clear that you expect everyone you manage to behave in this same welcoming way, without snubs or negative judgments based on differences.

Make trust your opening position. Instead of making employees earn your trust, begin by trusting them. Learn their strengths and capabilities by trusting them with stretch assignments. Give people a chance to try new tasks and learn new skills. If they fall short, talk it through to find out what went wrong and what you might change—clearer guidance from you, for example, or more training from coworkers—to help them succeed on the next try or a different assignment.

Provide support and coaching. A sink-or-swim approach is a recipe for exclusion. When someone is struggling, give additional support. You might do that by assigning a peer mentor, providing more one-on-one coaching, or by looking at how the team might work more collaboratively. Think “coaching” before thinking “performance problem.”

Be generous with praise and appreciation. Pay attention to who gets recognized for their good work and who tends to be overlooked. Be intentional in offering praise and appreciation more broadly, not just to the people who are most visible to you.

Motivate in inclusive ways. Encourage collaboration while pushing people to be the best they can be. Set high expectations so that people stretch themselves and feel proud of their accomplishments, but do it in a way that balances collaboration and competition. Build a team on which people help and learn from each other, generate ideas together, and make the most of different individual strengths for the good of the team and the organization.



Make sure people feel safe. When a person feels like an outlier in a group, it can feel dangerous to speak up and offer views that might conflict with the majority opinion or the group's accepted truth. Make a point of drawing out the thoughts of people who may be holding back, and show your appreciation for their courage in speaking up. Make it clear that you value the open expression of varying ideas and perspectives. Watch for signs of negative reactions from others in the group, and make it clear that while discussion and productive disagreement are encouraged, negative judgments, incivility, and suppression of opposing views are not.

Take action where it matters most.

Pay special attention to the parts of your job where inclusivity makes the biggest difference:

Meetings—Demonstrate respect and inclusion in meetings by:

- Distributing an agenda in advance, so people can prepare their thoughts;
- Managing meetings for productive discussion, which requires listening, not just talking, and a conscious effort to avoid interrupting;
- Pausing and asking for other opinions, to give people who have been quiet a chance to speak

Hiring—Examine your organization's and your own recruiting, screening, interviewing, and onboarding practices to improve your ability to bring the best talent onto your team and broaden its diversity. Focus on "culture add" rather than "culture fit."

Work assignments and promotions—Challenge your natural inclinations as you consider whom to choose for new opportunities in the form of work assignments and promotions. Consider whether unconscious bias might be blinding you to the potential of some members of your team.

Performance management—Think about whether you apply the same performance standards to everyone you manage, or whether you favor certain people because you are more comfortable with them. Pay attention, too, to the behavior of team members toward each other as you manage performance. Take immediate action when you notice behavior that is disrespectful and that undermines your efforts to build an inclusive environment.

Be an advocate for inclusion.

Help strengthen your organization by being an advocate for inclusion:

- Connect with others in your organization who are advocates for diversity and inclusion to find out how you might support their efforts.
- As you learn, make mistakes, strengthen your understanding of what it takes to be an inclusive manager, and observe successes in your journey to build a more inclusive work environment, share your experiences and thoughts with other managers and your organization's leaders.
- Work with your organization's human resources (HR) department to consider different approaches to the hiring process—including recruitment, screening, interviewing, and onboarding—to bring in a more diverse group of talented employees.

For More Information

Brown, J. (2019). *How to be an inclusive leader: Your role in creating cultures of belonging where everyone can thrive*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

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Gibbons, S. (2019, August 27). How to encourage inclusivity on your team. *Forbes*. Retrieved June 30, 2021, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/serenitygibbons/2019/08/27/how-to-encourage-inclusivity-on-your-team>

Source: Morgan, H. (2021, June 18). *How to be an inclusive manager* (C. Meeker & B. Schuette, Eds.). 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. The EAP gave a presentation on stress, and a few employees who attended the presentation openly stated that they planned to go visit the EAP. It was a great presentation, but I was surprised at the number of stressed workers. Should I be concerned? Should I ask the EAP how I can help?

A. Interest in participating in the EAP following a stress management presentation is not necessarily because of work strain as it is typically viewed. A multitude of other personal problems that your employees may initially only label as stress in public with their peers who also attended the presentation could be the reason. Saying that one is getting help for stress is less stigmatizing than admitting one is suffering with depression, couples problems, addiction, a teenager with an eating disorder, etc. Stress management training, while helpful to employees in offering insight and techniques in managing stress, has a tremendous benefit in also helping promote the EAP. It demystifies the program and encourages employees to take the next step and feel safe in using the program to resolve personal problems. There are many ways supervisors can help alleviate stress, of course. The EAP can consult with you and offer tips on what might be helpful based on the nature and circumstances of your workgroup.

Q. If a tragedy occurs in the workplace and employees are emotionally affected, what signs and symptoms should I look for later (following any counseling and “psychological first-aid” employees receive) so I can be supportive and encourage self-referral to the EAP?

A. An acute stress response is normal during and immediately following a tragic and frightening event at work. The best intervention after any initial support given to employees is education about the signs and symptoms that could later constitute post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Signs and symptoms of PTSD may not be easily noticed by you. They may include disturbing thoughts, feelings, or dreams related to the event; mental or physical distress in response to trauma-related cues; efforts to avoid trauma-related situations; and an increased fight-

or-flight response, especially to events that are similar to or trigger memories of the tragic event. These symptoms could produce secondary effects that you might observe, including job performance issues, attendance problems, or behavioral struggles on the job. If you observe such effects, you can then discuss your observations (not your diagnostic impressions) and suggest the EAP.

Q. Can I phone the EAP to find out if an employee I suggested attend the program showed? More specifically, if the employee was in fact never seen, can the EAP say so?

A. Most EAPs will state that they can neither confirm nor deny participation in the program, and this answer is the best one to help protect employee clients and the program’s perception of confidentiality among the workforce. Whether or not the employee is an EAP attendee does not interfere with, prevent, or amend any administrative actions you need to take or consider in response to the worker’s performance, because the EAP is not a “safe harbor.” This is consistent with EAP policies. Conceivably, employees could tell you they are participating in the EAP when they are not, but you should still make decisions based on what is observable, measurable, and consistent with employees’ performance.

Q. People criticize my messy desk. It’s quite a joke with the office. I don’t feel that I am bullied, and I haven’t been lectured by management or experienced any adverse actions, but am I a bad manager because my desk is messy and looks completely disorganized?

A. The effects of a disheveled desk on productivity and the work climate are what would concern your management. Either these issues aren’t a problem or your manager has not been willing to confront you about them yet. Being disorganized is a trait commonly observed in ineffectual managers. At the very least, it does not demonstrate good role modeling. Do you forget details, lose things, show up to meeting with missing documents, or miss meetings altogether? If so, a messy desk may be a symptom of a larger problem. Meet with the EAP to discuss the disorganization, which may lead to insights as to causes and what you can do about it. The teasing and reactions you receive from others may bother you more than you are willing to admit. If so, you may find motivation at the EAP to make changes so you can benefit from a more organized workspace.

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