



THE SUPERVISOR/HR NEWSLETTER

THE
TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY
SYSTEM

HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

APR
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April Online Seminar

Understanding Resilience

Delve into techniques for becoming more resilient, and understand that the first step is acknowledging one's own feelings.

Available on-demand
starting April 16th at
www.deeroakseap.com

Helpline: 888-993-7650
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Deer Oaks 2019 Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series *Employee Engagement*

A series of practical educational programs designed to help supervisors and managers to build more engaged and productive work teams. This series is available to all supervisors, managers, and other interested employees and does not count toward your organization's training hour bank.

Webinar # 2: How to Effectively Onboard and Engage Your Employees

Creating high-quality onboarding experiences for new employees is a key to building an engaged work team. This practical presentation will discuss several strategies for effectively onboarding, engaging, and retaining your employees.

Friday, June 7th 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7622657225343204099>

Monday, June 10th 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/9080421627285853187>

Practicing Mindful Communication

Mindful communication happens when you are truly present in the moment. It involves entering a conversation with curiosity, kindness, and compassion. You listen to your conversational partner with an open, non-judgmental heart. You speak with intention, emotional intelligence, and honesty, and without harsh language or gossip driven speech.

Challenges of Mindful Communication

Here are just a few things that make mindful communication difficult:

- Coming to a conversation with a predetermined outcome in mind
- Hearing what you expect to hear rather than what is actually being said
- Having difficulty expressing emotions
- Lacking attention skills
- Wanting to get your own thoughts or position expressed first, instead of listening to the other person
- Getting caught up in gossip and disruptive conversations
- Forgetting to be compassionate toward the other person
- Being preoccupied with internal chatter
- Having the tendency to want to fix other people's problems instead of just listening

Practice this.

First, understand why you want to improve your communication. Is the reason authentic and real, or a guise to make you “look better”? Mindful communication has the potential to bring harmony into relationships if it's genuine. At work, mindful communication can help you think on your feet, seek out information in a collaborative manner, help you resolve conflict in ways that help all parties be heard, and encourage transparency about processes. All of these things will improve relationships and enhance productivity.

Second, limit distractions whenever possible—turn away from your computer, turn toward the speaker, turn off the television, put your book down, and so on. Set an intention to listen attentively to someone at work and at home without interrupting, asking questions, agreeing, or otherwise inserting any speech. Attempt to ONLY listen for the first 3–5 minutes of the conversation before providing feedback or asking questions. Notice what happens inside you when you just listen, and notice how the other person responds.

Finally, practice pausing before you speak. Take one deep full breath, and consider what is about to come out of your mouth before you say anything. Ask before giving someone your advice. Remember, people really just want to be heard, and not everyone is looking for answers. Always bring your empathy to every conversation.

Source: Workplace Options AWARE & Schuette, B. (Ed.). (2019). Practicing mindful communication. London: Author.

Five Things Smart Managers Know About Building Teams

Few managers know how to build truly functional teams. Here are five tactics to perfect the skill.

In order for your company to prosper, you must figure out how to build a team that works well together. That can be a difficult task. After all, creating a team means bringing together people with different skill sets and varied personalities to work toward a common goal—a complex undertaking.

When looking at the tactics smart managers implement, there are five common threads to how they approach team building:

1. Play to individual strengths.

You need to understand what each individual member's strengths are, and put each person in a place to shine. It is very rare that an employee can improve upon a deficiency, especially if that deficiency is a part of the person's nature. If a team member isn't good at details, he or she will never be good at details. You need to decide if such employees do the rest of their job well; if so, partner them with someone else who can help shore up their deficiency.

For example, if you hired an account manager who was excellent with customers—especially the more difficult customers—but was not good at details, you might partner that person with another team member who can give one final review of the documents produced before they are sent out.

2. Encourage transparency.

Teams are a lot like families, and you need to let them work things out on their own. When things start to go awry, bring together those who aren't getting along and make them work through their concerns. Don't let them put you in the middle of a he said/she said situation. Your primary job is to help team members understand each other better.

This approach will feel uncomfortable, but if they learn that your go-to strategy is to bring them together to work it out, they will start trying that on their own and will involve you only when absolutely necessary.

3. Establish ground rules.

Your team needs to know how you like to operate. If you are a solution-oriented manager, for example, you may be fine with talking about problems with a project or an approach, but insist that everyone contribute ideas for resolution. When issues arise, and they will, don't get caught up in whose fault it is, or why it happened. (You may prefer to take time to do that at an established and appropriate time later instead.) One manager is known to say, "Don't bring me a problem without a solution" and, "I don't want to know why we can't do it; I want to focus on how we can."

Other managers prefer to do root-cause analysis immediately, and then move forward from that point with a solution. Everyone's style is different, and it is often based on the type of work you do. The important thing is that your team knows your preferred work style so everyone is thinking toward that same goal.

4. Let them know you have their back.

Your team members must know that as the leader of the team, you have their back and that you are their greatest supporter. A manager's primary job is to remove obstacles that are in the team's way, and to be there to support them when issues arise with a customer or other internal groups. When your team members know they have your unconditional support, they can move forward with confidence.

5. Provide an incentive.

Create a goal that your team can work toward—a day off at the end of the quarter, flexibility in their work schedule, or a bonus. Realize that just as your team members have different skills, they probably respond to different incentives, so rotating through the types of incentives you provide or allowing for flexibility is key to the success of an incentive.

You will often have team members who prefer time off or an experience over money. A bonus program, while nice, doesn't have the same impact as providing an extra day off or a gift certificate to a nice restaurant. It comes back to knowing that everyone's different.

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Source: Holtzclaw, E. (2013, September 12). 5 things smart managers know about building teams. Retrieved March 22, 2016 from <http://www.inc.com/>

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. I have moved up rapidly in my career and fear that I am not prepared for so much responsibility so quickly. I should be, but it does not feel that way. My big worry is being at a meeting and senior management suddenly realizing I am not qualified for this job!

A. Your fears may be normal in the face of a rapid rise in your career. Many people with fears similar to yours have discovered nothing came of them despite the anxiety they often felt. The collection of symptoms you describe is sometimes called “impostor syndrome.” Don’t panic. Talk to the EAP, and allow professionals there to guide you in gaining relief. Be prepared to share more about your concerns, career path, supervisor relationship, and specific fears. Impostor syndrome is an internal sense of fear, not based on reality. The impostor syndrome can be exacerbated by a difficult relationship with the boss or peers, or by a true shortage of skills, but rarely by the inability to perform the job or rapidly learn it.

Q. I am frustrated and angry with my employee for coming to work late. Sometimes, I lose my cool. However, I am not letting the employee get away with it. I encourage coworkers to confront the behavior. A fellow manager said I am an enabler. How so?

A. Enabling exists because you are failing to implement a strategic approach to resolving this problem, and the emotional and personal involvement prevents its implementation. When an employee exhibits unacceptable performance like poor work quality, tardiness, or conduct problems on the job, it is appropriate to confront it. Hopefully, things improve. The correct approach relieves you from the emotional involvement you have experienced. The EAP model allows you to step away from all the emotionality. Instead, you make the assumption that some personal problem or concern outside the employee’s control drives the behavior. A ladder of progressive steps ultimately motivates the employee to get help. Talk to the EAP about these progressive steps. You will most likely be successful in getting your employee to accept help because, when properly implemented, the EAP intervention steps demonstrate to the employee that the organization will not permit an ongoing problem with attendance.

Q. Can an EAP advise our management group on the possible psychological effects of a pending disciplinary action on an employee who is not a client of the EAP?

A. An EAP might discuss a manager’s concern about a pending decision to use disciplinary action, to help him or her gain clarity, offer support in managing stress associated with the decision, or address personal fears. However, the EAP would not render a psychological judgment in general regarding risk of a disciplinary action. Doing so interferes with management processes and violates an ethical boundary of non-interference by EAPs. If the EAP engaged in this process, it could be viewed as authorizing, consenting to, approving, and sanctioning the decision. This would produce a schism within your management group if the EAP, as an expert, trumped others’ opinions. Some managers might agree, while others not. Management would feel forced to accept whatever the EAP recommended. This bind would take a toll on the EAP’s ability to attract employees and managers. A consult with HR, a third-party consultant, or other management advisors should be considered.

Information contained in this newsletter is for general information purposes only and is not intended to be specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. Some of it might not apply to your particular company policies and available programs. This information is proprietary and intended only for eligible EAP members. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.

