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Supervisor Newsletter

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The topic of employees not wanting to come to work, lacking engagement, and feeling unexcited about their employer has been in management literature for a while. I think we're all aware of it. Has anything new emerged recently that can help employees become more engaged?

Much research has been conducted on employee engagement. The Gallup Organization has invested heavily in it, with recent findings showing that when employees strongly agree that they trust organizational leadership, they are nearly four times more likely to be engaged. Whatever you do to build trust increases the likelihood of having engaged employees. Start with these goals: Stay visible and communicate your vision, work-unit goals, what's changing, and why. Communication reduces uncertainty, which fuels rumors and negativity. Show employees you care by being empathetic and available. Praise their efforts. You may care deeply, but if they aren't feeling it, it's not happening. Never let employees wonder what they should be doing or how their job fits into the larger picture. Trust them to do the job they were hired to do; trust helps prevent micromanaging. Look for ways to elevate their skills and education so they don't feel stuck or unable to envision a future. And be engaged yourself. If you're struggling, turn to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for support.

We had an employee who tested positive for marijuana and was referred to treatment years ago. Recently, he came up positive for a random drug screen. He says it was because of passive inhalation of marijuana smoke, and he sounds very convincing. What is this issue or concern all about?

Passive inhalation of marijuana smoke is a common explanation employees offer when confronted with a positive drug test. It is technically possible for someone to inadvertently inhale marijuana smoke, but modern laboratory testing makes this explanation highly unlikely. Drug tests are designed with established cutoff levels, so a result is not reported as positive unless the concentration of THC (the psychoactive component in marijuana) exceeds a well-validated threshold. Simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time and inadvertently being subjected to pot smoke will not meet the cut-off levels. This is more likely an attempt to deflect responsibility or avoid the consequences.

Is it appropriate for me to provide a group presentation on time management and productivity and, within this presentation, discuss personal habits and their negative effects?

Yes, it is appropriate to deliver a group presentation on time management and productivity that includes discussion of personal habits and their negative effects. You may enrich your presentation with the EAP's participation or its service as a consultant to help you consider content. This type of content is considered general educational guidance, not counseling or individualized advice. You are explaining widely accepted concepts—such as how procrastination, disorganization, or lack of planning can undermine performance—and presenting them in a way that helps employees understand how these things affect productivity. Even discussions about human

behavior and basic psychology remain within the realm of common workplace education. You are not diagnosing, treating, or advising on personal mental health concerns; instead, you are addressing universal patterns that affect work performance.

■ If I make a formal referral of an employee to the EAP, would it be helpful for the EAP to have a copy of the employee's performance improvement plan prior to a meeting?

Although your documentation typically will suffice for helping ensure the success of an assessment of an employee referred to the EAP for job performance problems, a performance improvement plan can further help the employee assistance professional conduct a more thorough assessment. The performance improvement plan can help the EAP understand the work-related context and challenges the employee is facing. The EAP can assess which services or resources are most appropriate to support your work unit's objectives. The performance improvement plan also serves as an item for both discussion and better examination of more nuanced struggles the employee faces. Performance improvement plans typically will help the employee assistance professional see the employee's historical path of performance decline and failed attempts to make corrections, which give clues to underlying problems the employee faces that may not be readily apparent.

■ Why is domestic violence that takes place entirely away from the workplace regarded as a risk for the employer and fellow workers?

It may initially seem that domestic violence and workplace violence have no correlation, but there are numerous documented incidents demonstrating that domestic violence is a risk for the employer and coworkers. The aggressor may decide to come to the workplace because there is certainty that the victim will be present and easy to locate. With desperation—often associated with violence—a loss of boundaries can occur, leading the aggressor to view the workplace as a stage for confrontation. If this happens, confrontation with others is inevitable, and this increases the potential for actual harm to anyone who happens to be in the way or nearby. The aggressor simply does not care about consequences when experiencing rage. Most organizations consider domestic violence a legitimate workplace safety issue, and many also educate and train supervisors to recognize warning signs, coordinate with Human Resources, and follow a protocol to reduce risk.

NOTES

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