



EAP SUPERVISOR ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER

April 2023



DEER OAKS PRESENTS

Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series

*Advanced Communication Skills that
Improve Employee Motivation*

When: April 10th at 1:00 PM CST

REGISTER

Table of Contents

Practicing Mindful
Communication • P. 2

Performance Management
• P. 3

Ask Your EAP! • P. 5

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, nonjudgmental 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.). (Reviewed 2022). Practicing mindful communication. London: Author.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance Management Competencies: Setting Goals

Supervisors need to communicate organizational goals and how they link to individual and work group performance in order to energize their employees to accomplish desired results. While developing performance plans, supervisors and employees can talk about how employee accomplishments support organizational goals. By aligning employee performance with organizational goals, supervisors direct their employees' efforts toward maximizing accomplishments and supporting the agency's strategic plans.

Once the supervisor and employees make these connections, they can agree upon more specific, individual goals and can analyze individual responsibilities. Without the employee's agreement to perform at a certain level, it is very difficult to meet or exceed established goals.

Steps for Setting Goals

In their book, *Goal Setting: A Motivational Technique That Works*, Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham propose seven steps for effectively setting individual goals:¹

- *Specify tasks and results.* Clearly describe tasks to be accomplished that produce fully successful results.
- *Set targets or standards.* Setting goals that are difficult but possible to achieve produces higher levels of performance than no goals or vague goals.
- *Determine the measures.* Using clear measures (quality, quantity, cost, timeliness, and frequency of completion) at all levels is necessary for successful performance management.
- *Outline time frames.* To maximize the benefits of goal setting, specify expected time frames for achieving goals.
- *Prioritize goals.* It is helpful to rank or prioritize goals so employees are aware of their relative importance.
- *Rate goal performance.* Employees need to know about the process of appraising elements and assigning a summary performance rating.



- *Coordinate efforts for goal achievement.* If goal attainment requires a group effort, make certain to plan and measure each individual's contribution.

Goals have a directive effect on an individual's thoughts and actions. A goal focuses a person's attention on goal-related factors. It also regulates a person's energy expenditure. Setting hard goals increases an individual's persistence and thus transfers effort into commitment and motivation. This ultimately leads to increased performance, especially if the goals are set at a high level and are accepted by employees.

Additional Advice

According to Lynn Summers and Elizabeth Hampson in their article published by Performaworks, "Setting and Attaining Goals: How to ACT BEST," supervisors need to be skillful at setting goals successfully. In addition to the steps listed above, these authors say that supervisors should be able to do the following:

- Break apart organizational goals into manageable pieces, and delegate them
- Use multiple criteria to evaluate successful goal achievement using client satisfaction, quality, and value added, as well as cost and quantity
- Visibly track and update goals to maintain or increase employees' energy and drive
- Gain top management's support to overcome barriers, clarify goals, and free up resources

Goal setting can have far-reaching consequences for the organization and its employees. Research reports that productivity increased an average of 39 percent in organizations that practice systematic goal setting. Of those organizations, productivity actually increased by 57 percent when goal setting was supported by top management. In contrast, productivity increased only 6 percent in organizations with little top management support.³

References

1. Locke, E.A., & Latham, G.P. (1984). *Goal setting: A motivational technique that works!* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
2. Summers, L., & Hampson, E. (n.d.). *Setting and attaining goals: How to ACT BEST*. Raleigh, NC: Performaworks.
3. Grote, D. (2002). Performance planning (p. 37). In *The performance appraisal question and answer book: A survival guide for managers*. New York: Amacom, American Management Association.

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). (n.d.). Performance management: Performance management cycle. Retrieved December 6, 2019, from <https://www.opm.gov>

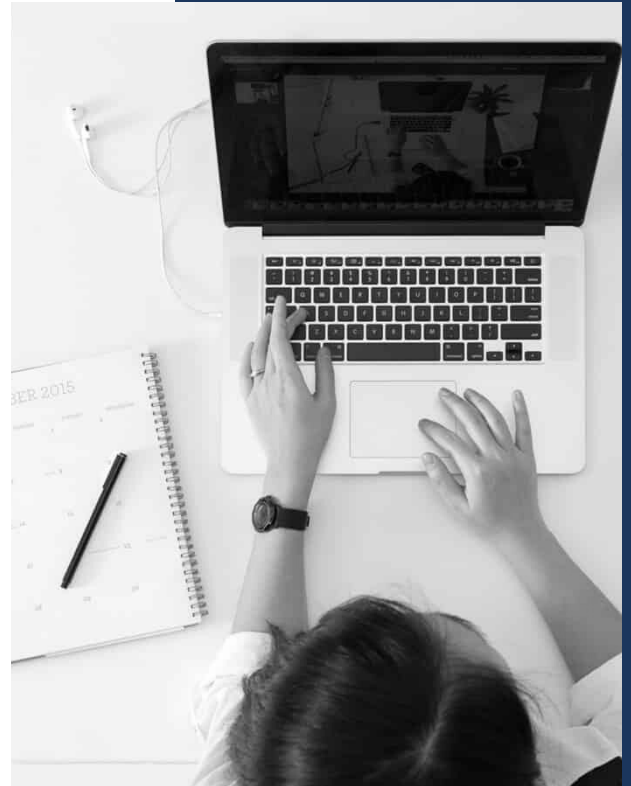
ASK YOUR EAP!

Q. I promised a couple of my employees that I would address the bad attitude of one of our office staff. I am procrastinating because I am not sure how to go about it. Is there a recommended approach?

A. Have a private meeting and explain the problem with examples of the behavior you have witnessed. (Note, if this is your first meeting, mention the EAP as a resource, but later make a formal referral if needed.) Instances you've witnessed are better than hearsay, because employees with attitude problems are well versed at denying second-hand reports of their transgressions. Clearly communicate what is expected in terms of attitude and behavior. Don't omit what the future may hold in the behavior is not corrected. (This means disciplinary measures.) A key part of your intervention should be giving feedback. Do so regularly, be specific, and mention the positive changes, but also any continuation of the attitude problem. Another aspect of this intervention is asking the employee to come to you with any issues or concerns about the job, work environment, or even other employees. The goal here is to deal with issues as a manager and eliminate the likelihood of the employee aggressing against fellow workers.

Q. I need to confront my employee about a performance issue. What are the most common mistakes supervisors make that tend to not only undermine effectiveness of confrontations, but make them more stressful?

A. Inadequate planning and not having suitable documentation prepared for a meeting with the employee are perhaps the key issues that make confrontations difficult and stressful. However, there are less obvious issues associated with corrective interviews that can undermine their effectiveness. They get less mentioned in supervisor training. One of them is not doing them quickly enough after an incident of concern happens. The dislike of confronting employees can lead to postponement or procrastination, and risk that they will not happen at all. This of course would allow a problem to grow worse. If delayed meetings do occur, they can be awkward because details are not fresh in the mind of participants and cooperation may be lessened. An employee may also have more time to prepare mentally for a defensive position.



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.