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We have conducted sexual harassment prevention training for employees and supervisors. I know a channel for bringing complaints forward is also crucial. Can you discuss precautionary tips for the supervisors who could receive such complaints?

Although education is an important prevention measure, another important piece of the “prevention/intervention strategy” is the reinforcement of your complaint procedure. Your organization wants to know when employees are being discriminated against, being harassed, or being bullied on the job. It is a good practice to periodically remind employees about the complaint procedure. If you are a supervisor, be careful not to minimize, rationalize or ignore complaints brought to your attention. No matter how it is couched, treat a complaint as a serious matter that needs to be explored. Anything less may cause you to overlook victimization. Do not treat harassment complaints as “personality conflicts” in need of some sort of coaching or mediation. Actions like these can place organizations at high risk.

How do I coach an employee with a negative attitude? Until now, I have ignored or avoided this employee. Should I continue this approach and coach others to do the same, or intervene? If I intervene, what steps can I use before finally referring to the EAP?

Negativity is an attitude issue that falls within the definition of job performance. Just like other job performance issues, an employee that demonstrates negativity should not be ignored. Meet with your employee and discuss the problem. Share examples so there is no dispute over what you observe and how it has impacted others. Negative attitudes can stem from many causes. Some are benign like a cynical sense of humor. Others are more serious, like major complaints about the organization. Since negativity has a contagious influence, consider referring the employee to the EAP rather than risk morale problems from developing within the organization.

Is there a way to not just motivate employees to do their job but also have them really go to the next level and become excited and proactive about their role and the company’s mission?

Some employees are self-motivated and enjoy feeling energized. They’ve learned the value of engaging the organization, understanding their role and its importance, and seeing all the possibilities before them. Other employees must be inspired. Your ability to inspire this latter group is a critical skillset. To inspire employees, spend time with them and demonstrate your own enthusiasm so they can model their own behavior after it. Help them get clear about their role and your performance expectations. Then help them understand the company’s strategic plan, their role in it, and the value of their work product or services. Always let employees have some input into what they would like to accomplish, then set goals, evaluate, and give feedback toward that end throughout the year.