



COUNSELORS & CONSULTANTS

ERC

FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

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I referred my employee to the EAP. He had a great experience, but last week told everyone in the lunchroom about it. He did not mention that he was referred by me. I kept silent to maintain confidentiality. It was awkward. Some saw my silence as disapproving. Any thoughts?

You did the right thing by not involving yourself in the public conversation about his EAP participation. Doing so may have turned the discussion toward you and that it was a supervisory referral. The positive testimonial offered by your employee will not be diminished by your lack of commenting on the program. Although you did not publicly praise the worker for his participation, you can still encourage EAP attendance at any time through a memo to all staff. Doing so periodically is advised, including that it is free and confidential. EAPs rely upon word-of-mouth promotion to help build awareness and confidence in the quality of its services. So, this employee's testimonial served as a positive endorsement of the EAP and that is a good thing.

What is the most important consideration to keep in mind when meeting with an employee to give critical work performance feedback? My goal is for the employee to own the need for change and be cooperative, appreciative, and motivated through the change process.

The way you speak to employees when confronting them about their performance plays a big role in facilitating cooperation and correcting their problems. Speaking down to the employee will elicit one type of negative response. Speaking "up" to the employee will elicit another. The more effective approach to any problem is to build it as though both you and the employee have a stake in its resolution. By doing so, you are recognizing it is a problem you mutually desire to change. This does not mean you as a supervisor will resolve it for the employee. It is still the employee's responsibility to correct noncompliant performance. However, this "mutual desire approach" aids cooperation, motivation, and focus. And it decreases defensiveness. This approach does not minimize the importance or severity of the problem. Share with employees that the EAP is a resource to help them find the strategies for change. If it is a formal supervisory referral, requesting the employee sign a release of information form with the EAP is a way to facilitate appropriate communication between all parties involved.

My employee shows up late to work, and I am about to write a corrective letter as a first-level warning. What negative effects of tardiness can I insert into this documentation? And how are supervisors impacted if they ignore tardiness?

Effects of tardiness include resentment from coworkers, which can result in conflicts. This in turn affects productivity. Morale also suffers. Being chronically late has ripple effects for almost any part of the organization's operation, including customer service. Chronic tardiness is the type of problem that frustrated employees often end-run to the next level of management to lodge a complaint. You want to avoid management coming to you, and instead be proactive with this problem. Failure to do so will earn you a reputation for playing favorites, being unfair, and being a pushover. If employees believe you do not care about tardiness, they may begin to ignore other rules and standards of excellence and be less concerned about their productivity.