

Effectively Dealing with Job Performance Problems



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Program Description

Your Employee Assistance Program is:

COUNSELING--Consisting of **assessment** (getting to the root of the problem, rather than the leaves, which show up at work); **short term counseling** (looking at and trying out various problem solving options); **referral** (on-going long term help, such as treatment, support groups, classes, etc.). This is true for all individuals coming in, whether a supervisor or an employee.

INDEPENDENT--Your organization has contracted with **DOR** to provide this benefit. We service many organizations like yours in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area, and nationwide. Staff members of **DOR** are not employed by your organization.

CONFIDENTIAL--EAP offices are located off-site. All records kept by the EAP staff are confidential. Information will only be released with the client's express written consent, a life threatening situation or in child abuse cases.

PROFESSIONAL--All EAP counselors are mental health professionals with master's degrees or above.

A COMPANY PAID BENEFIT--The EAP is provided by your organization at no cost to the employee. It provides professional short-term counseling and referral. If a counselor recommends that an employee consult an outside resource, the counselor will assist in interpreting insurance benefits or other non-insurance information.

ACCESSIBLE--The EAP is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A counselor is always just a phone call away.

AVAILABLE TO DEPENDENTS--Since problems experienced by family members can impact an employee's work performance. Spouses, significant others, and dependents are covered and encouraged to use the program.

OBJECTIVE--EAP counselors are available to assist in problem resolution, not to advocate for one side or the other in a job performance situation.

AN EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT TOOL--The EAP is designed to help employees resolve problems that may affect their job performance and to help managers deal with these situations. An employee's use of the program does not result in any special privileges or exemptions from disciplinary action. By the same token, a manager cannot use the EAP as a condition of employment unless there is a written policy.

DIFFERENT FROM YOUR MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS--The EAP assists individuals in the context of the workplace. We form partnerships with management, labor, and employees to assist in return to effective work performance, thereby saving the organization money in areas such as turnover, absenteeism, low productivity, worker compensation claims (for stress and other reasons).

Early Warning Signs

Instructions

1. The checklist below is to be used when you've become concerned about an employee's declining job performance.
2. **This checklist is to be used only as an observational aid for the manager or supervisor.**
3. Where a combination of three (3) or more items appear on a continuous basis, this is a likely indication of a troubled individual.

CURRENT BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS

(check those behaviors that apply).

I. APPEARANCE AND PERSONAL HYGIENE

- Declining personal appearance
- Inappropriate clothing
- Lack of hygiene
- Other

II. ENERGY LEVEL

- Withdrawn
- Sad
- Energy swings, high and low
- Suspiciousness
- Extreme sensitivity
- Nervousness
- Frequent irritability with others
- Preoccupation with illness and death (morbidity)
- Other

III. ACTIONS

- Physically aggressive (or threatening)
- Unduly talkative
- Exaggerated self-importance
- Rigidity-inability to change plans with reasonable ease

- _____ Making incoherent or irrelevant statements on the job
- _____ Over compliance with any routine (making it a ritual)
- _____ Frequent arguing
- _____ Frequent outbursts of crying
- _____ Excessive amount of personal telephone time
- _____ Other

IV. ABSENTEEISM

- _____ Multiple instances of improper reporting of time off
- _____ Excessive sick leave
- _____ Repeated absences following a pattern, (each Monday, etc.)
- _____ Excessive lateness in the morning, or upon returning from lunch
- _____ Peculiar and increasingly improbable excuses for absence
- _____ High absenteeism rate for colds, flu, gastritis
- _____ Frequent use of unscheduled vacation time
- _____ Other

V. "ON THE JOB" ABSENTEEISM

- _____ Continued absence from job in excess of job requirements
- _____ Frequent trips to water fountain or rest room
- _____ Long coffee breaks
- _____ Other

VI. ACCIDENTS

- _____ Physical complaints on the job
- _____ Accidents on the job
- _____ Accidents off the job
- _____ Other

VII. WORK PATTERN & PRODUCTION

- _____ Consistently late for work or appointments
- _____ Current work assignments requires more effort than previously taken
- _____ Work takes more time to produce
- _____ Difficulty in recalling instructions, understanding office procedures, etc.
- _____ Display of disinterest in work
- _____ Increased difficulty in handling complex assignments
- _____ Difficulty in recalling previous mistakes (although these have been brought to the individual's attention)
- _____ General absentmindedness, forgetfulness
- _____ Alternate periods of high and low productivity
- _____ Coming to work in an apparent intoxicated condition

- _____ Missed deadlines
- _____ Mistakes due to poor judgment
- _____ Outside complaints about the employee's work
- _____ Improbable excuses for these poor patterns
- _____ Carelessness
- _____ Other

VIII. RELATIONSHIP WITH COLLEAGUES AND COMMUNITY

- _____ Over-reaction to real or imagined criticism
 - _____ Wide swing in job morale
 - _____ Borrowing money from co-workers
 - _____ Unreasonable resentments against co-workers
 - _____ Repeated and compulsive criticism of the company
 - _____ Persistent request for job transfer
 - _____ Unrealistic expectation for promotion
 - _____ Abrasiveness with others (managers and/or co-workers, customers)
 - _____ Other
- o Continue mentioning the behavior to the employee as you document it.
 - o You may use the behavior checklist as a guide.

DOCUMENTATION DATA

Manager/Supervisor _____

Employee _____

DATE	BEHAVIOR/INCIDENT	INITIALS	DATE

Supervisor's Evaluation Form

(Please complete and return to the EAP counselor before the appointment)

(612) 332-4805 * 1-800-367-3271 * Fax: (612) 342-2422

DATE: _____

COMPANY/ORGANIZATION: _____

EMPLOYEE'S NAME: _____ JOB TITLE: _____

HR/SUPERVISOR'S NAME (Name for information to be released to): _____

HR/SUPERVISOR'S PHONE NUMBER: () _____ FAX: () _____

EMPLOYEE MUST CALL IN BY: _____ (If a counselor has not confirmed employee's attendance, this indicates one of two things: 1) Employee did not attend or 2) Employee did not sign release of information.)

1. How would you rate the employee's overall job performance:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> outstanding | <input type="checkbox"/> below average |
| <input type="checkbox"/> above average | <input type="checkbox"/> unsatisfactory |
| <input type="checkbox"/> adequate | |

2. This employee's work has been unsatisfactory in the following areas:

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> attendance | <input type="checkbox"/> mood swings | <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tardiness | <input type="checkbox"/> irritability | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sick leaves | <input type="checkbox"/> safety violations | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mistakes, carelessness | <input type="checkbox"/> reduced quantity | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> forgetful | <input type="checkbox"/> reduced quality | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> inconsistent judgment | <input type="checkbox"/> deadlines missed | |

3. Specific job performance you want addressed:

4. Have you suggested using the EAP to this employee in the past?

Yes No If yes: Date: _____ Reason: _____

5. Action taken to date concerning this employee's performance (written documentation including: warnings, dates, issues and reasons).

6. Specific documented expectations for improvement, date for review, and deadline for expected change.

7. Consequences if job performance does not change:

DEFENSE STRATEGIES

When you meet with an individual, you can expect him/her to be threatened and use various defenses to protect himself/herself. Below are listed and described some of these defenses and recommended counter-moves. You will also be able to add to this list from your own experiences.

DEFENSE	DESCRIPTION	COUNTER-MOVE
Excuses & Sympathy	Individual will have a good reason for everything that happens. “You’d have the same troubles I do if you had a wife/husband like mine.”	“Your problems at home sound difficult. My concern in today’s discussion involves your performance, and my data here says you are not doing your job. I want to tell you about our Associate/Employee Assistance Program.”
Apology & Promise	“I’m really sorry. You know that! I’ll never do it that way again.”	“I appreciate your apology; and what you did still can’t happen again. I’m going to make a note in your employment record and if it happens again (state consequence).”
Switching	“I know about that, but look what a good job I’ve done on that Ajax job!”	“You did do well on Ajax, and I expect good work on all jobs. You have had more problem jobs than successful ones lately. Look at the record.”
Anger	“Darn it! One mistake and the roof falls in - after 15 years of killing myself for this place.”	“I see that you’re angry, and I still expect you to listen to me. Getting angry won’t help us. I’m concerned about your performance, and I’m not talking about one mistake. Look at the record.”
Tears & Helplessness	“I don’t know what to do. I’ll never get out of this mess. (crying.)”	“I appreciate your sadness. I want you to know that I want to help, which is why I set up this meeting. You have been a valuable part of our organization. Now let’s look at your job performance and see what you can do.”
Self-Pity	“I knew this would happen. I’ve never been able to do anything right.”	“I wouldn’t be taking this time to talk with you if I didn’t have faith in you. So let’s move on to talk about what can be done to help. You know, our Associate/Employee Assistance Program could be just right...”
Innocence & Blaming	“It’s not my fault. Joe let me down. I don’t get any help at all around here.”	“The record indicates something different, and we need to start looking at your part in what is happening. Let’s see how we can get things worked out.”

TAKING EARLY ACTION

You supervise Joe, an assembly line worker at a mid-size factory that manufactures optical instruments. Joe is always early for work, and never takes a break. He is the type of employee who consistently shows enthusiasm for his job and concern for his colleagues. During his last shift, you discovered that he had been “text messaging” with his cell phone while he was on the line. To your knowledge, this has not affected his productivity. However, “texting” while working is a clear violation of company policy.

Take a few minutes to think about how you would take positive communication steps to address the situation. What would you say to Joe?

What challenges do you face as addressing this issue?

What can help overcome these challenges?

PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION

Please refer to the exercise on documentation featuring Mary and Dell. Choose a person to be the supervisor, the employee and the observer.

Mary, the bank teller, has not shown any signs of improvement. As Dell, the supervisor, you are now preparing for a formal discussion to address the persistent problems that you have documented.

As the **supervisor**, please have a meeting with the employee. Use your documentation to address what is going on; and what you expect in terms of improvement. Also address the consequences the employee may face, if improvement does not occur.

As the **employee**, you have the option of being defensive.

As the **supervisor**, refer to Defense Strategies for suggestions on using “countermoves.”

As the **observer**, record what seemed to be effective!

DOCUMENTATION

Mary is a bank teller at a local bank. She has successfully completed 15 years of service and has always been a stellar employee. Over the past several weeks, her supervisor, Dell has noted some disturbing new changes in the way Mary works. Dell has noticed that Mary has been increasingly “snippy” with colleagues and customers. Dell has also noticed that Mary does not seem to be as productive as usual. Dell wants to talk to Mary about this, and has started to informally document some of the changes that are occurring.

Please look at Dell’s examples below, and give suggestions around how his documentation can be more behaviorally based:

10/05: I noticed Mary had a really bad attitude. She was really irritable with her colleagues. Seems like she has anger issues.

10/07: Mary was not working independently, and this is expected of her, given her position.

10/09: She didn’t appear very organized.

10/09: She did not dress appropriately

10/11: Good day! She was really professional!

PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

What is one thing you learned today that you can **continue** to do to strengthen your ability to work through job performance problems?

Start doing?

Stop doing?

FORMAL PROCESS SUPERVISOR'S ROLE

