

THE *Front-line Supervisor*

Presented by your EAP dor and associates, inc.

Helping you to manage your company's most valuable resource -- your employees.

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CASE 1. The Uncooperative Performer

➤ **Q. I have an employee who is a great performer, but he is not a good team player. He is argumentative and uncooperative. Is it appropriate to refer him to the EAP for this problem ?**

A. If being a team player is an essential job function, your employee's resistance to teamwork can become a performance issue. If the employee is unable to change their behavior on their own, an EAP referral would be appropriate. It can be tempting to minimize the importance of interpersonal skills with employees who are technical experts or high achievers, but tolerating poor behavior reinforces it. Once established, patterns can be difficult to change. An acute display of such behavior sometimes motivates management to pursue discipline.

In the extreme, uncooperative employees may become bullies or territorial, or willing to challenge not only coworkers, but management itself. Sometimes these employees will threaten to quit, hoping this makes others back off. Realizing that there are long-term negative effects of ignoring this problem can help you act.

CASE 2. Feedback - The Good, The Bad or The Ugly?

➤ **Q. Some supervisors say the best way to improve performance is to praise employees for good work. Others say pointing out poor performance and making standards clear are more important. Which is correct?**

A. A little of both is best. Although important, it is seldom good enough simply to praise employees for good performance in an attempt to reinforce it. Employees with undesirable behaviors or performance must be told what is not desired and what is expected. Although reinforcing positive behaviors instead of pointing out negative behaviors is a sound principle, much more is required in the world of work.

Supervisors who resist pointing out performance problems in favor of praising good performance set themselves up for bigger problems later if problems become so severe that termination actions are required.

Employees who are terminated are often stunned because they have been given the false impression their performance is satisfactory or better, and in such cases, the likelihood they will contest termination increases. This is particularly true of long-term employees whose behavior problems were ignored by many prior supervisors.

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