

THE *Front-line Supervisor*

Presented by *dor and associates, inc.*

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

June 2002

CASE 1

➤ **Q. My employee blames his poor attendance on problems with a relationship at home. I've been patient, but baffled. I can't see the connection between such a problem and coming in late.**

A. A desire to be supportive and understanding of employees may lead some supervisors to accept almost any apparently sincere reason for performance shortcomings of an otherwise valuable employee. Unfortunately, many employees, in an effort to gain understanding and patience from the supervisor, may not report the true severity of a personal problem. This does not mean that the employee isn't making attempts to resolve the true problem, but solutions may not be within easy reach. Severe behavioral medical problems such as depression or addiction are not "do-it-yourself" situations. It is easy for a supervisor to become entangled in aspects of the personal problem and its anticipated resolution, even during a period of unacceptably substandard performance. However, it is important to separate personal issues from job performance issues. *dor and associates, inc.* suggests that as a part of your efforts to help the employee, you may want to refer your employee to the EAP on the basis of the continuing performance problem. Try to detach yourself from the personal issues and your efforts to comprehend them. Your job is to observe job performance, and take necessary steps to correct substandard performance.

CASE 2

➤ **Q. When verbally correcting employees, are there some techniques that I can use to reduce the natural defensiveness employees feel so that they will focus on improving their performance rather than on how upset they are with my feedback?**

A. You can conduct a corrective interview that will help preserve your working relationship and assist your employee in becoming a better worker. Here are few tips:

- 1) Do not underestimate the power and influence of what you say in a corrective interview. Approach the corrective interview as an opportunity to help, not "zap," your employee.
- 2) Be direct and get to the point quickly. Be clear on the performance issue of concern. Explain its undesirable impact and the changes you expect.
- 3) Check your emotions to help you avoid saying something that will diminish the goal of your meeting. This includes labeling your employee, using parent-like or condescending language, or using language that sounds loud and harsh.
- 4) Validate your employee's worth and contributions to the degree possible. Acknowledge the skills and abilities of your employee that are valued by the organization. This validation will not diminish the importance of the performance concerns; rather, it will empower your employee to change.

If you have concerns about a specific situation, call **dor and associates, inc** for a consultation.

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Employee Assistance Services

(847) 729-3548

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