

# THE *Front-line Supervisor*

Presented by **DOR**

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

September 2005

## **CASE 1 Should I shut the open door?**

➤ **Q. I have an open-door policy as a manager, but a couple of supervisors I oversee have demonstrated their anger with me for allowing employees to end-run to me. How do I manage an open door policy so it is a productive process for the work unit?**

**A.** Open door policies can be effective for identifying issues affecting the workplace, improving morale and taking advantage of the desire employees have to let "the top" know what's going on. However an open-door policy should exist along with a trusting relationship with your immediate supervisors and department heads by discussing with them your philosophy about open-door policies. Do you reduce conflict by asking supervisors to keep you abreast of important issues so you don't first learn about them from an employee coming to see you? Do you assure managers that you will not use the open-door policy to undermine them? Have you explained to supervisors what types of things you will keep confidential that are shared by employees? And, most importantly, do you encourage employees who come to you to communicate first with their immediate supervisor about their concerns before coming to you? Perhaps a phone call or consultation with the employee assistance program can help you resolve this situation.

## **CASE 2 Preventing a melt-down**

➤ **Q. What can supervisors do to help ensure that corrective interviews with employees will not become emotional, confrontational and ineffective?**

**A.** Although nothing guarantees a corrective interview will occur without problems, there are things you can do to make problems less likely. Always demonstrate respect for your employee with language and tone and choose an appropriate meeting place. Focus your discussion on the performance issues, not the personality or character of your employee. Check your emotions to prevent using language designed to elicit guilt or shame that can provoke contentious behavior. Help your employee see correcting his or her performance as a goal you share together. Example: "Susan, how can we work together to get your weekly auditing reports to me on time?" Approaching your employee in this manner keeps the focus on performance but does not preclude a more firm and assertive intervention later, if needed. For help scripting your conversation, call DOR for a supervisory consultation.

DOR

Employee Assistance Program  
1-800-367-3271 \* (612) 332-4805  
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