

THE *Front-line Supervisor*

Presented by **DOR**

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

September 2007

CASE 1 Promoting Positive Attitudes

➤ **Q. There is much pessimism in the news regarding how employees feel about their jobs and their employers. Even I feel it. I am only one supervisor, but what can I do to promote a positive attitude at work?**

A. Although increasing work and economic stress, along with loss of loyalty to the employer, is often reported, the news is not all bad. Research shows that a majority of employees do feel engaged in their work, although more so in smaller companies. This sentiment may result from feeling that they have more control over their work. So, the more you can help employees feel a sense of control or ownership over their work, the better off they will be. Many companies wonder what managers or supervisor can do to improve their workers' attitudes. Less frequently asked is what they can *stop* doing. A Harris Interactive poll in late 2004 showed that only 63 percent of supervisors and managers cared about the fate of their employer. Unless a supervisor cares about the employer, it will be difficult to influence morale in subordinates. Examine your speech and determine whether you periodically demonstrate an unhelpful attitude that contributes to the problem you are trying to solve. If you are exhibiting a continuous, negative attitude, you should head for the EAP; they can help you.

CASE 2 How do they know I'm Listening?

➤ **Q There is obviously more to listening than being available and attentive to what employees say. I received a poor rating on my annual evaluation from the company. What are the key issues supervisors miss with regard to listening to their employees?**

A. A key measure of success in how well you listen to your employees is how they feel about you, and themselves, once you have finished meeting with them. Consider the common behaviors of managers who gain the trust of employees who come in search of a listener. When listening, do you show that you welcome the employee? Do you offer a smile or demonstrate a thankful attitude that your employee has come to call? Do you avoid interruptions and splitting your listening time with other tasks? Do you actively listen to employees? (Some supervisors listen to employees like a radio – hearing, nodding, but never looking up at them as they busy themselves with other tasks.). Do you validate the legitimacy of your employee's viewpoint, even if you disagree with it? Do employees leave a meeting with you feeling important and valued? To become a good listener, see this responsibility as an essential function alongside things such as budgeting or strategic planning. Doing so will produce happier employees and great returns.

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