

THE *Front-line Supervisor*

Presented by **DOR**

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

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CASE 1 Bullies in the workplace

➤ **Q. Our organization has developed a policy on bullying behavior. Can you provide an outline for a private corrective interview with an employee who has this problem and what steps to take?**

A. Documented complaints and your personal observations should accompany you to your meeting. Start by explaining what has prompted the meeting, and share what has been observed and reported. Describe the effect of the behavior on morale and productivity. If employees feel anxious about an anticipated interaction with the employee, let the employee know it. It could have a big impact in motivating change. Do not joke or make light of issues in this corrective interview. Doing so will undermine your outcome and perpetuate the problem behavior. State that the behavior can't continue. A bully likes to discuss others' personalities and motives. Avoid this discussion, but do ask what your employee thinks about his or her interaction with others. Be patient and listen, but focus on what the employee can do to improve interaction with coworkers. Make an EAP referral and schedule a specific date and time for a follow-up meeting. Retaliation toward coworkers in response to your meeting is bullying behavior too – expect it not to occur.

CASE 2 Put it in writing

➤ **Q. I meet with many employees and frequently correct performance. Unfortunately, I often find myself forgetting the content of many discussions so I can't be definite about what was said, negotiated or agreed to. How can I improve my memory?**

A. You have heard the expression “if it isn't in writing, it doesn't exist.” This is a good philosophy for supervisors to follow and relates to the crucial art of taking “on-the-spot” notes. No matter how good your memory or ability to recall past events, even in exquisite detail, it's no match for the power of contemporaneous notes. These notes frequently win in conflict situations where one person's word is pitted against another's. The notes can serve to prove you right, despite their subjectivity at the time originally written, as to what actually happened or who said what. Develop the habit of routinely keeping notes on disputes, negotiations, corrective actions, and performance matters regarding your employees. Although the importance of documentation is often discussed in supervisory skill courses, the routine use of “on-the-spot” notes is a related skill that supervisors must also come to appreciate.



1-800-367-3271 * (612) 332-4805
www.doreap.com

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