

# THE *Front-line Supervisor*

Presented by *dor and associates, inc.*

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

October 2001

## CASE 1.

➤ **Q. The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) covers employees with qualifying physical and mental impairments. Is it true that employees are also covered if the employer mistakenly regards them as having such impairments, even if they really don't?**

A. If you regard your employee as having such an impairment, even if mistaken, he or she could still be protected under the law if you took an action based upon that misperception and it was later determined to be discriminatory. With regard to a common supervision misstep, this makes it important not to label or seek to determine underlying psychological diagnoses — most of which are covered under the act — to explain employees' performance problems. Instead, focus on performance, ability to accomplish essential job functions and referral to the EAP when standards are not met. Never make statements to others about what you think or imagine are your employee's personal problems. Actions you take later could be examined to determine whether they discriminated against your employee. The ADA would apply if your action were determined to be based upon a covered impairment you thought existed rather than the merits of performance alone. If you have concerns, or think you may have concerns, it will be important to discuss the issue with your attorney.

## CASE 2.

➤ **Q. Our work division is plagued by rumors. It's been this way for years. What makes rumors worse among some organizations than others? What can managers do to reduce their occurrence?**

A. Rumors are unsubstantiated information of uncertain origin spread usually by word of mouth. Frequent rumors give you a clue that there is a need to improve communication within the workplace or tackle problems that affect morale. Problems in communication and moral usually feed the development of rumors. Communication flows more slowly and accurately downward through management levels, but more rapidly and inaccurately in a horizontal direction, i.e. amongst co-workers and peers. Very large groups of employees with the same pay grade, rank, or status who report to one leader or management team (a flat organization structure) may experience more problems with rumors. Communicate with employees in a flat organization more frequently, particularly at stressful times, and you will intervene in the rumor mill more effectively. Increase morale by identifying needs of employees, finding ways for them to control and influence their work, and applying policies and work rules fairly and consistently

**dor and associates, inc.**

Employee Assistance Services

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

Information contained in *The Frontline Supervisor* is for general information purposes only and is not intended to specific guidance for any particular supervisor concern. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with **dor and associates, inc.** © Copyright 2001 by *The*

*Frontline Supervisor*