

THE *Front-line Supervisor*

Presented by **DOR**

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

December 2009

CASE 1 Follow-up for motivation

➤ **Q** When I write a corrective letter, I always include the EAP as a resource. Some employees act on these letters, visit the EAP, and correct performance quickly. Others ignore them. How do I help employees take these memos more seriously?

A. Employees who respond to your non-disciplinary corrective letters and those who don't are motivated by different things. Although most employees rapidly see the need to respond to a supervisor's request for changes or improved performance, other employees need more help to do so. A memorandum will be more effective if it succeeds in keeping its message uppermost in these employees' minds. Do this by including a specific day, date and time for a follow-up meeting. Make it sooner than later. A follow-up date and place capture the imagination better and create a sense of urgency more effectively. To get more leverage with your correspondence, be sure to remind employees about the rewards for success and the negative consequences for not following through. Mentioning the rewards and consequences permits your message to appeal to the motivational factors that employees may experience differently.

CASE 2 Behavior - not diagnosis

➤ **Q.** My employee has wide mood swings ranging from acting happy and energetic to being quiet, isolated, and sad. The problem is that I never can tell "which employee" will show up. Is this bipolar disorder? I am not sure what to document, if anything. Performance appears good.

A. You should request a consultation with DOR, the Employee Assistance Program, to zero in on behaviors and issues which can be measured, articulated and documented. Documenting behavioral issues can be difficult because the negative impact on the work situation is not always readily visible. When supervisors witness behavioral issues that appear overtly psychiatric, the natural response is to search for and understand the mental health diagnosis. You're curious about the diagnosis, but do not document your suspicions about it nor share your opinion regarding it. It is not relevant to your responsibilities and can only make management of the employee issues more complex. Instead, focus on inappropriate behavior, its effect on the work situation, and having DOR guide you in producing effective documentation.



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