QUANTUM
Frontline Supervisor

I know "presenteeism" refers to employees coming to work sick and being less productive, but it can be difficult to spot related job problems. How do supervisors intervene? Presenteeism is not a new concept, but I have only seen it mentioned in the past ten years or so.

Presenteeism is a relatively new term, but it is essentially a modernized version of what in the past has been referred to as "on the job absenteeism." Although presenteeism is an interesting topic for discussion, attempting to identify who is affected by it is more difficult. It is better to avoid the technical aspects of this syndrome and instead focus on what you can document in your pursuit of helping your employees maximize their productivity and job satisfaction. Presenteeism typically refers to employees being at work while sick, but it also has been used to describe almost any nonproductive activity of employees on the job, no matter what the underlying reason might be. If you stay aware of behaviors that demonstrate an employee is either not performing competently or is without motivation for the tasks they are supposed to perform, presenteeism may exist. Your EAP can consult with you about presenteeism and intervention.

What can supervisors do to improve their ability to spot signs and symptoms of an employee who is impaired on the job because of alcohol or drug use? A checklist is important, but some of symptoms, I think, can be very subtle and easily missed.

Beyond a checklist, the one thing supervisors could do to improve their ability to identify the signs and symptoms of drug or alcohol use on the job is to get to know their employees better. Knowing your employees and having frequent face time with them is your best intervention strategy. This is because over time you will develop an awareness of or "sixth sense" for your employees' appearance, attitude, and demeanor, and how these things change from day to day. An employee with a substance abuse problem will exhibit behaviors that are inconsistent with what the supervisor has grown accustomed to experiencing. So, initiate friendly conversations and make eye contact with employees on a regular basis. You will then be more likely to notice uncharacteristically slurred speech, a glazed facial expression, an unsteady gait, glassy or bloodshot eyes, and dilated pupils. These things can be easy to miss or dismiss if you are not frequently close to your employees.

I am a new manager in my organization and I want to do a good job. I am not *trying* to be liked, but I know leadership is not like it is on a TV show where being a "tough guy"

You're right that being a good leader or manager includes getting the work done, but your success will depend on your ability to develop relationships and trust among those you lead. This can be a tough assignment for some managers. A good supervisor is usually liked by those they supervise, but it is a payoff for first being effective with people. To be effective, meet with individual employees privately and discover what tal-

and intimidating can still leave employees thinking you're a hero.

hopes, and goals they possess. Use this information to develop and challenge them during the year. Praise them for good work and behave the way you want your employees to behave: Come to work on time, be reliable, follow through, fix problems quickly, and be honest about what's going on in the company. Talk to the EAP early on if you experience or sense trouble in relating to employees or feel disconnected from them.

■ **Our team training budget has been cut this year, so are there any strategies or techniques my employees can regularly practice that have an ongoing "team building" effect to keep us cohesive and less prone to conflict with each other?**

Team members with regular habits of communicating in positive ways with each other have fewer conflicts and better group cooperation. Here's a technique that may help your group. Its essential purpose is to help employees practice appreciation and gratitude with each other. See if you can make it a tradition. At the end of meetings, ask whether any team member has positive feedback for any other team member. Model what you are asking. For example, say, "I would like thank Mary for coming in last Thursday to work on the mailing project. I felt relieved of pressure and really appreciative of her for doing that." Members take turns sharing feedback. The exercise may be a bit awkward if these are new behaviors, but because they are inherently positive, group members should catch on. This strategy builds resilience to stress and allows conflicts to be resolved more quickly.

■ **When I correct my employee's performance, I frequently notice body language that appears resistant (e.g., folding of arms, looking up or away, remaining quiet, staring). Can I document this behavior as refusing feedback? It feels like it.**

Start by asking your employee about the meaning of these behaviors. You are having a negative reaction to them as they strike you as insubordinate, so you need to state that these nonverbal behaviors do not work in your communication. You have a right to ask for something different. Ask your employee to appear more cooperative. Your employee may say he or she is not resistant to feedback or having their work corrected, but when behaviors do not support or reinforce this message, it is reasonable to assume differently and document it as such with appropriate detail.

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