QUANTUM
Frontline Supervisor

■ **My employee says she is thinking about quitting because she can't get along with her coworker. Should I send her (or them) to the EAP, or should I first try to resolve his problem myself? I am a little nervous about doing this right the first time. I don't want to lose her.**

Managers should first attempt to resolve conflicts between employees. Here's one approach: Ask this employee to share the history of the conflict with you, how it began, and what prompted her to come to you now. Ask what steps she has taken to resolve the conflict and why she believes they have not worked. Ask your employee about how she would like to proceed with a resolution, but anticipate making a decision to meet with both employees and play a leading role. This is important because for some employees, remaining in conflict is easier than the compromises necessary to resolve them. If you lose control of this process, change becomes optional. In this sense, employee conflicts are not solely personal problems, because they can always potentially affect the bottom line. Managers must shepherd them to a resolution. If a resolution does not appear forthcoming, involve the EAP to save time and to address hidden agendas or other unspoken issues underlying the conflict that may require ensuring confidentiality in order to properly address it.

■ **How can the EAP help me as a supervisor in developing and improving my relationships with employees.**

The success of the supervisory role is largely dependent on the effectiveness of relationships that you have with employees. An effective relationship allows you to play an influential role in maximizing the job satisfaction and productivity of your workers. There is more to achieving these goals than most supervisors realize. Quantum EAP has resources and counseling skills, and they understand relationship dynamics that can help. Developing and enhancing emotional intelligence is the path to success, and EAPs can consult with you on ways to improve relationships and enhance them in specific ways--determining how to motivate employees, utilize their talents better, help them feel rewarded, and listen to and understand their needs. You want employees to be honest with you, open up, share their workplace struggles and their ideas, and tell you how they can best be utilized. All of this depends on your ability to be your authentic self, open up, exercise patience, and demonstrate vulnerability. These are relationship skills that Quantum expertise can help you attain and develop.

■ **I am a new supervisor. What are the top complaints of employees**

A national Harris Poll was conducted that asked employees this question. Read about it in the Harvard Business Review online at hbr.org (search bar "top complaints"). These complaints, starting with the most

about supervisors? I plan to avoid all of them.

frequently cited, are not recognizing employee achievements, not giving clear directions, not having time to meet with employees, refusing to talk to subordinates, taking credit for others' ideas, not offering constructive criticism, not knowing employees' names, refusing to talk to people on the phone or in person, and not asking about employees' lives outside work. Keeping this list in mind, conducting a self-assessment, and working to champion all of them will produce more engaged and happier employees, reduce turnover, and play a role in helping your bottom line. The EAP can help you be a stronger performer in any of these areas where you think you fall short.

■**Other than spending a lot of time online, what are the workplace signs of an employee with an Internet addiction?**

Internet addiction is not yet recognized as a psychiatric disorder, but those who struggle with it often suffer other forms of compulsive behaviors related to Internet use, like online gambling and gaming. You may not witness compulsive use of the Internet with an employee you supervise, but you can often see and measure consequences. These serve as the basis of the supervisor's referral of the employee to the EAP. You should anticipate an irregular cycle of improvement and a return to unsatisfactory performance as you begin to confront these problems. Compulsive use of the Internet is an insidious addiction that consumes time, which is a finite resource. This means other tasks and responsibilities must be left undone due to procrastination, purposely ignored, rescheduled, accomplished less frequently, or completely eliminated from the compulsive user's mental to-do list. These things could include assignments, organizing an office, paying bills, filing, emptying the trash, or even personal hygiene. Note that you may never associate these problems with Internet addiction, but you can still manage a problem employee who exhibits them.

■ **Documenting employees who participate in subtle abuse or bullying behaviors is sometimes difficult because one can't describe what's being witnessed, like tone of voice, for example. In the end, it just sounds like one's opinion!**

You are correct. Tone of voice is difficult to describe in documentation without being subjective, which may lead to its being dismissed by management as opinion. The way around this problem is to document reactions by the victim or others to the tone of voice. These effects are visible and therefore describable and measurable. Now you have something less refutable, not based on opinion. Several of these documented situations constitute a preponderance of evidence that supports the thrust of your documentation, which makes it useful for administrative purposes.

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