



QUANTUM

Frontline Supervisor

■ **News reports have frequently mentioned “The Great Resignation” over the past year, referring to how many employees quit their jobs and why. What can supervisors or managers do to help curb the loss of good workers?**

Research studies showed that when the crisis subsided enough for employees to return to work, millions had moved on. What followed was a worker shortage that allowed employees to compete for greater benefits, including attractive remote jobs. A desire to not return to the original job also played a role in adding to a labor shortage. Suddenly, “employers needed employees more than employees needed employers.” One study concludes that factors that can exacerbate the loss of workers are a “toxic” company culture, low salary, poor management, lack of healthy work-life boundaries, and not allowing remote work. Are you able to influence change with any of these issues? Some are not related to pay but soft skills and relationship management. It is here that the EAP has expertise. Read below what the Gallup research organization discovered about the supervisor’s role. Strive for a positive and engaging relationship with workers. Most will think twice before giving it up, even for additional pay in another job.

■ **Periodically, my employee has crying bouts but says it’s a way to manage stress. Should supervisors be more aware of depression’s symptoms, not so they can diagnose someone, but so they do not dismiss serious behaviors just because they do not cause performance issues?**

To be completely unaware of the signs and symptoms of depression or any health problem that could lead to behavioral signs and symptoms in the workplace would not be a good thing, so it is appropriate to help supervisors be generally aware of observable signs or symptoms common among troubled employees with health or mental health conditions. This could lead to more supervisor-prompted self-referrals influenced by concern for the employee. This is a key reason for educating supervisors about the signs and symptoms of substance abuse. No matter what the health concern underlying the performance issues, the overriding principle that should be kept in mind is that focusing on the performance issues of quality of work, conduct, and attendance is more likely to lead to referrals of employees to the EAP, where treatable health and mental health problems can be identified. The recovery from these problems is what will lead to improved performance, reduced turnover, and a healthier workforce.

■ **I interviewed an employee for one of our new positions, but he looks like he might be an alcoholic or have a history of alco-**

Your human resources advisor is your go-to professional for concerns about interviewing, the hiring process, and laws like the ADA and how they may apply in certain situations. The ADA treats actively drinking employees with substance use disorders and those who have been treated for addictive diseases differently. Decisions you make based upon your perception of

alcoholism. I know the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies in this situation, but is the EAP the right resource concerning understanding its provisions and restrictions?

their recovery or non-recovery status can also have legal implications. Sometimes, managers are educated and trained to understand employment laws, but if you are not applying them or recalling them regularly, it is easy to get confused. So, even if in doubt, reach out to human resources. Later, after someone has been hired, should you become concerned about behaviors, signs, and symptoms, or wonder how you should document performance, your EAP is available.

■ **There is debate about which employees are more stressed, those on-site or those who work remotely. What does the research say?**

The Gallup organization examined employee stress during the pandemic. They discovered that remote workers generally experience more stress than on-site workers. Although there are clear benefits to working from home, like avoiding the need to commute, remote workers often manage their personal lives and domestic issues in tandem with expectations by employers to deliver high levels of work performance, both in quality and quantity. The research found that remote workers may be more engaged, meaning they appear to demonstrate more enthusiasm, eagerness to perform, and desire to do a good job. This increased engagement may help others support their position and see its positive benefits. Supervisors should be watchful for signs of stress in remote workers who may tend to minimize or mask them, thereby risking burnout.

■ **What is the #1 way to motivate an employee?**

Thousands of resources have been authored on motivating employees, but the one thing that appears to dominate most lists is “personally thanking employees for good performance.” Sound simple? It is for some, but not all. A critical part of the strategy is communicating gratitude with sincerity. Humans easily detect non-sincerity, so one must get this part right. Start by examining your own personal reaction to something the employee has done well. Feel the gratitude. Appreciate its impact. Visualize the benefits. Then use this energy and awareness to communicate appreciation. Praise put in writing will “10X” your positive impact on the employee. Some managers offer praise naturally. It’s a critical soft skill for supervisors to know, but it will feel awkward without sincerity accompanying it. Can the EAP help you be a more genuine and authentic praise giver? Yes.

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