

THE CONTINUUM **EDGE**

INFORMATION FOR LEADERS

Q: I want to be objective when evaluating employees. But I'll admit that a likable personality sometimes inhibits my ability to be more critical in performance evaluations. How do I avoid this bias?

A: To be more objective, especially when you have a favorable opinion of your employee's personality, there are certain measures you can take to ensure fairness. Assuming you have a well-worked performance evaluation process, consider the following to help put your personal feelings aside.

Be sure you are keeping accurate accounts of achievements and concerns regarding the performance of all the employees you manage. Therefore, when evaluation time arrives, it will be easier to recall performance over the past year accurately. Being non-specific when giving criticism won't help. It's essential to quantify performance, for example, saying, *"In August this past year, there were three instances when team members complained that you missed deadlines."* Admittedly, this takes effort if you are a busy supervisor. Also, it sounds simple, but being aware of this bias can be its own check to help ensure the evaluation demonstrates accuracy. And be sure to not overlook constructive criticism of work performance during the year because of your bias. It can make evaluations more difficult if only praise is heard by your employees outside of the performance evaluation process.

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All my employees are supposed to be at work at 8 a.m. but one is consistently 20 minutes late, despite my harping on him. Should I give a 10-minute window or stick to the 8 a.m. time as non-negotiable?

A: The answer depends on company culture, impact on the team, and disruption caused by not being punctual. There are dozens of reasons employees may not make it to work on time, and sometimes they combine with compounding effect. Some employees may be late because they are simply unmotivated and unengaged. Others may be clinically depressed with childcare issues while also impeded by traffic congestion. A more direct answer to your question is to stick to the 8 a.m. time, making it non-negotiable, because it helps support consistency and fairness.



For example: A grace period will be noticed by co-workers, potentially leading to complaints or requests for similar allowances.



Q: My employee went to the hospital over the weekend. He phoned to say he had admitted himself for addiction treatment. I was impressed by his honesty and determination. Should I contact the EAP or assume the hospital will manage care and do a great job?



A: Experience shows that employees who exit addiction treatment programs can improve their chances of successful recovery when they receive support from the organization's EAP. What's more, hospitals appreciate the EAP's involvement because the additional communication and follow-up support improve post-treatment participation in recovery programs, which decreases chances of relapse. Continuum EAP can't contact your employee directly, so you should encourage the employee to make the call to receive additional support. **Note that this is not a substitute for hospital post-discharge care planning.**

Continuum will have the employee sign releases so they can communicate appropriate information with the treatment program. They will also encourage and support family involvement. Not all hospital treatment programs maintain rigorous follow-up critical to recovery, so the EAP assessment interviews can fill this gap. These interviews sometimes identify early warning signs of potential relapse — subtle behaviors or statements that may not be as easily recognized by the hospital program.



I read that employees aged 30-39 experience the highest levels of stress. Why is this the case? What can I do as a supervisor to help?



A: Employees aged 30-39 have historically faced the most stress dealing with financial pressures, such as mortgages, student loan debt, and family expenses. This is not new, but inflationary pressures have added to this stress with the cost of living far beyond what their parents experienced 35-40 years ago (e.g., a dozen eggs were 85-90 cents in 1985, but today average \$6.30). Regarding burnout, 82% of the workforce is currently at risk for this occupational hazard, according to Forbes. The best thing that you can do is provide a safe space to talk with your employee about stress if you believe you are spotting symptoms. A simple conversation may have a significant uplifting impact, but consider workload, flexible work hours, encouraging time off, delegating, and examining whether skills or a shortage of skills adds to the stress crisis. Source: Forbes.com (Find by searching "82% workforce at risk.")