Supportive Relationships

Leaders Set the Tone

Managers and supervisors play a vital role in initiating and maintaining social support in the workplace. They must preserve an atmosphere of courtesy and respect, yet foster an environment where co-workers can get to know one another. This helps to strengthen relationships and increase morale and productivity.

Here are a few tips to increase social interaction among employees:

*Have in-person staff meetings as often as possible.* It is always beneficial when you can meet in person. Body language and facial expression is more than 50 percent of communication. A person can get a better sense of who you are, and vice versa, when communication is face to face.

*Start team meetings with icebreakers.* Begin each meeting with a game or activity, such as completing a task without speaking or identifying T.V. theme songs. These activities allow co-workers to interact in a fun way, and to learn things about one another that they otherwise would not know.

*Make some team assignments so people can interact during projects.* Employees need to know that work is a team effort. When people come together bringing their ideas and expertise, the result is always greater than what one employee can think up independently. The old saying that two heads are better than one is still true today.

*Have employees bring an issue or problem to the group, so that everyone can solve it together.* Creating a forum for employees to discuss work-related issues and concerns is a way for co-workers to see how others can help them.

During the second quarter of 2012, we are focusing on Supportive Relationships. To support you in becoming the best leader you can be, the ParTNers EAP recently introduced these new tools.

- ParTNers EAP Overview Video—Learn more about the EAP resources available to leaders in this new video.
- “Leader’s Guide to ParTNers EAP, A Support Tool for Supervisors and Managers”—This handbook includes helpful information on many topics, including: troubled employees and warning signs of a potential problem, holding a constructive confrontation, transitioning employees back to work, critical incident stress management services, and more.

You can find these new items at www.Here4TN.com in the Tools for Managers and Supervisors box. Check them out soon.

**We’d like to hear from you!**

You can support your fellow leaders by sharing your story. Tell us how you solved a management problem, or how the ParTNers EAP helped you meet a challenge. Send a note to John Allen at Employee.Assistance@tn.gov.

Go Online Today! Visit www.Here4TN.com and enter the site to access the Managers section for more tips and tools.

www.Here4TN.com | 1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486)
You’re a New Manager. Now What?

If you’re being promoted to a job you have worked hard to get, the success can sometimes be bittersweet. You may have trouble with or even have twinges of guilt toward co-workers who also applied for your job. If you have moved to management, you may feel like a fish out of water. You don’t feel “equal” to your old bosses but don’t really fit in with the co-workers in your old job. You may even be supervising your former co-workers, which has its own challenges.

Here are some suggestions for making the transition to your new position easier:

• Try to learn as much about your new job as possible. Write down names and titles and learn them. Remember, there’s the formal organizational chart but there’s also the informal one. With time you can identify the powerful people in the organization. Select mentors and role models.

• Hold back your strong opinions of what you think is wrong with the way things are run. Avoid putting others on the defensive. Just sit back and be an observer. There will be plenty of time to make helpful observations when people know you better and trust your opinion.

• In any new job, you can expect to feel some lack of confidence in the beginning. You have many things to learn. You will temporarily need to put in more time and energy at work to increase your confidence. Try to make your personal life less demanding until you’re established in your new position.

• By breaking your job into smaller tasks and setting short-range and long-range goals for yourself, you won’t feel so overwhelmed. Seek help from co-workers to learn the tricks of the trade.

• If you have received a promotion, time will show that you deserved it. Former co-workers will eventually accept the change, even though they may not like it. Your relationships with them may be changed forever, and that may be a loss you’ll have to face. But by focusing on the challenge in the new job and making new friends, you can thrive in your new role.

Motivating Employees

An employee who feels appreciated will continue to perform well. Here are ways to motivate employees and enhance productivity:

RESPONSIBILITY
Allow the employee to handle a task from start to finish. Following a project through all stages of development will give a sense of accomplishment. Be sure the employee has all the tools needed to complete the task.

FREEDOM
Give the employee the freedom to decide how a project will get done. By providing the employee with a goal but no restrictions on how the goal is reached, he or she will feel ownership over the project. The employee may make a few mistakes along the way. This is a normal part of the learning process. Be available to answer questions and help the employee recognize mistakes as learning opportunities.

VARIETY
Doing the same task repeatedly or using the same skills every day can get dull. Assigning different types of projects to different employees can help relieve monotony. It also provides the opportunity to cross-train employees and build a stronger team.

CHALLENGES
Assign projects that will help the employee grow. When a person has to stretch his or her mind and think differently, a project takes on a new dimension. It not only challenges the person, but also helps increase self-confidence.
Build Relationships that Weather Change

If you’re like most managers, you are at the office for eight or more hours a day. You spend about as much time with your co-workers as you do with your own family. But do you know them? Here are some easy ways that good “change managers” can get to know their team members:

• Make a point of getting together with the employees with whom you interact the least.

• When you assign a new project to an individual, schedule a specific time to review his or her progress and answer any questions. Act as a mentor or team member, not a clock-watcher.

• Drop in on your employees from time to time. When you don’t, your rare visits will seem unnatural and generate anxiety. Visiting often takes away potential tension and allows you to have open and friendly communication with your team members.

• Spend more time with employees during stressful times such as major projects or cost reduction efforts. Avoid pessimism and stress the positives of the situation.

• Enter and exit your facility through a variety of entrances so that you get the chance to interact with people you wouldn’t otherwise see.

Take the time to foster good working relationships with your team members. By offering them friendly support, it will be much easier for them to deal with and accept any changes that are happening in the workplace.

And remember, the ParTNers EAP Workplace Support Team is here to help 24/7. As part of the EAP, you have special access to Workplace Support (WPS) consultants who can assist you with group issues as well as individual performance problems. Contact your Workplace Support consultant today at 1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486) or log on to www.Here4TN.com.