



EAP SUPERVISOR ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER

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DEER OAKS PRESENTS

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BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE TEAM ENVIRONMENT

Teams are expected to produce results, but performance is hindered when team members don't work together well. A collaborative team environment is essential for the team's success. To create a collaborative environment, team members must do the following:

- Have a common purpose and goals
- Trust each other
- Clarify roles
- Communicate openly and effectively
- Appreciate diversity
- Balance the team's focus

Have a common purpose and goals.

A team is defined as 'a group of people working together toward a common goal'. Without a goal, there is no team. Ideas for creating a common goal include these:

- Create and/or review the team's charter.
- Discuss why the team exists.
- Allow each team member to express commitment.
- Create mottoes, symbols, awards, or posters that portray the team as one unit.
- Use the common purpose to prioritize team actions.

Trust each other.

Team members must trust each other if they're to work together successfully. Ideas for creating trust among team members include these:

- Be honest.
- Work to eliminate conflicts of interests.
- Avoid talking behind each other's backs.
- Trust teammates (you must trust them before they'll trust you).
- Give team members the benefit of the doubt.

Clarify roles.

Knowing everyone's role and being familiar with the responsibility of those roles creates efficiency and flexibility. Ideas for clarifying roles on the team include the following:

- Review team members' roles frequently.
- Relate team member expectations to the team's overall purpose.
- Clarify responsibilities when action planning.
- Learn what others do on the team.
- Figure out ways to help each other.



Communicate openly and effectively.

Miscommunication can create hard feelings and undermine the success of the team. Ideas for improving communication include the following:

- Err on the side of overcommunicating.
- Seek to understand all angles.
- Take responsibility for being heard and understood.
- Work to clear up misunderstandings quickly and accurately.
- Reinforce and recognize team member efforts.

Appreciate diversity.

Team members come from all walks of life, with different backgrounds and perspectives. Ideas for taking advantage of team diversity include the following:

- Remember that reasonable people can and do differ from each other.
- Try to learn as much as you can from others.
- Evaluate a new idea based on its merits.
- Avoid remarks that draw negative attention to a person's unique characteristics.
- Don't ignore the differences among team members.

Balance the team's focus.

Finally, team members need to recognize that they should measure and monitor the products and services the team provides as well as the team's internal group dynamics and relationships. (Sometimes team members get so involved in the process of becoming a team, they forget the reason they were made a team in the first place, or vice versa.) Ideas for creating that balance include these:

- Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of team meetings.
- Hold team celebrations for achieving results.
- Praise individual effort.
- Design individual performance goals that emphasize both results and teamwork.
- Assign certain team members to monitor task needs and others to monitor relationship needs.

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). (Reviewed 2018 [Ed.]). Building a collaborative team environment (B. Schuette, Ed.). Retrieved October 18, 2018, from <https://www.opm.gov/>

PRACTICING MINDFUL COMMUNICATION

Mindful communication happens when you are truly present in the moment. It involves entering a conversation with curiosity, kindness, and compassion. You listen to your conversational partner with an open, nonjudgmental heart. You speak with intention, emotional intelligence, and honesty, and without harsh language or gossip-driven speech.

Challenges of Mindful Communication

Here are just a few things that make mindful communication difficult:

- Coming to a conversation with a predetermined outcome
- Hearing what you expect to hear rather than what is actually being said
- Having difficulty expressing emotions
- Lacking attention skills
- Wanting to get your own thoughts or position expressed first, instead of listening to the other person
- Getting caught up in gossip and disruptive conversations
- Forgetting to be compassionate toward the other person
- Being preoccupied with internal chatter
- Having the tendency to want to fix other people's problems instead of just listening

Practice this.

First, understand why you want to improve your communication. Is the reason authentic and real, or a guise to make you "look better"? Mindful communication has the potential to bring



harmony into relationships if it's genuine. At work, mindful communication can help you think on your feet, seek out information in a collaborative manner, help you resolve conflict, and encourage transparency about processes. All of these things will improve relationships and enhance productivity.

Second, limit distractions whenever possible—turn away from your computer, turn toward the speaker, turn off the television, put your book down, and so on. Set an intention to listen attentively to someone at work and at home without interrupting, asking questions, agreeing, or otherwise inserting any speech. Attempt to ONLY listen for the first 3–5 minutes of the conversation before providing feedback or asking questions. Notice what happens inside you when you just listen, and notice how the other person responds.

Finally, pause before you speak. Take a deep breath, and consider what you are about to say. Ask before giving someone your advice. Remember, people really just want to be heard, and not everyone is looking for answers. Always bring your empathy to every conversation.

Source: Workplace Options AWARE & Schuette, B. (Ed.). (Reviewed 2022). Practicing mindful communication. London: Author.

ASK YOUR EAP!

Q. What can a supervisor do if employees are demonstrating anxiety and have too much discussion about war news and terrorism? I am growing concerned that it might interfere with productivity, but I can't just tell everyone to stop wasting time on world news. There needs to be a balance.

A. Productivity is paramount, but you're right: telling everyone to get back to work would be counterproductive. Still, boundaries are important. The organization's needs can't be subordinate to the news. Acknowledge the concern and be supportive. Ensure employees know that the EAP can help them with anxiety. Remind them of boundaries by encouraging discussions during breaks or after hours. It's timely to offer stress reduction skills training as a wellness activity, as well as team-building exercises. See how the EAP can help. Almost universally, people experiencing anxiety and worry do better when they have a routine, so simply encourage employees to maintain their daily routines. Even with these suggestions, however, keep an eye on productivity. Don't micromanage but focus on outcomes and results. Lastly, your behavior, as always, sets the tone, so demonstrate a calm and composed demeanor. You will be surprised how quickly it is adopted by staff.

Q. My employee is smart, learns quickly, and has many accomplishments. He is not very assertive, however. Consequently, he doesn't stand out, and I think it has hurt his promotion chances. He has great performance, but I want him to be more assertive. I know the EAP can help, but what should be my approach?

A. A self-referral encouraged by you would likely help the employee, but if the most effective means of maximizing your employee's potential to the benefit of the organization is to have him be more assertive, then a stronger insistence on considering help would arguably be appropriate. Many supervisors mistakenly link a formal referral to the EAP with employee troubles, resistance, and the potential for dismissal or other adverse action, but this is not true. A formal referral can be a positive and exciting step for the employee and the organization. In this instance, the EAP would help the employee practice clear and concise communication in meetings and presentations to help him articulate his ideas and contributions more effectively. As a complement, the EAP would help the employee also ask for feedback from peers and superiors on his performance. These two steps alone could provide valuable insights for improvement and demonstrate a commitment to personal growth, making him a more ideal candidate for promotion.



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