

April 2014
Page 1



Pair Up to Foster More Learning



Groups collaborate more effectively when individuals learn from each other. Give them a chance to pair up—so that they share their expertise—and you'll build a stronger team.

One way to foster such collaboration is through “learning pairs” in which two employees work together to develop new skills.

Example: A technician shares his know-how with a salesperson who shares her mastery of social media. Both benefit as a result.

By encouraging two employees to learn from each other, you create an inexpensive training tool. Staffers start to view their peers as in-house experts and supportive coaches.

To set the stage for successful learning pairs, have a manager host a meeting with the two employees. It's important to gauge the commitment of each member of the pair. Ideally, they should both want to learn from the other person as well as provide training.

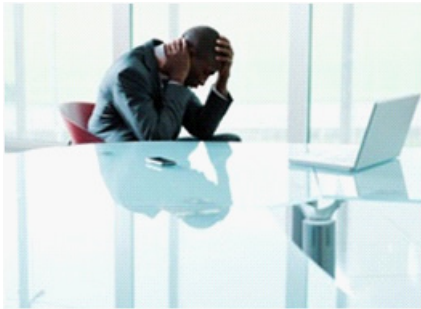
The manager should explain the program's goals and expectations. It helps to establish checkpoints to track the pair's development and exchange feedback to refine the process of mutual learning.

The pairs should meet every week for the first month or two. Once they gel, they can convene every other week. At the close of each session, each employee should write questions they expect to answer before the next meeting or list new procedures or work habits that they will practice.

The manager may also want to define when the pairing will end based on the level of insight or knowledge that both employees take away. You'll want all participants to agree on a transparent way to measure their newly acquired skills.

Source: <http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/37660/pair-up-to-foster-more-learning>

The Importance of Stress Management



The Impact of Employee Stress

Stress has been called the “health epidemic of the 21st century” by the World Health Organization and is estimated to cost organizations across the United States up to \$300 billion a year. One recent survey reported that nearly half of all workers suffer from moderate to severe stress while on the job.

High levels of employee stress can increase an organization’s health care costs. Physicians suggest that stress is the cause of illness in more than 70 percent of all visits to a family doctor. In addition, stress accounts for 30 percent of all disability claims.

Stress also hurts productivity. Studies show that stress undermines employee decision-making, planning, and motivation. In addition, high levels of stress can be a causal factor in conflict between coworkers. Finally, a significant amount of employees report missing work days due to the stress in their lives.

A Focus on Stress Management Can Produce Significant Results

Through a focused stress management initiative that can be delivered in partnership with an EAP program, an organization can begin to mitigate the negative impact that stress is having on their workforce and enhance employee well-being and performance on the job.

A stress management initiative may include the following components:

- An executive presentation to educate the organization’s leaders on the damaging effects that high levels of stress and change are having on their workforce;
- A presentation for supervisors and managers to give them a greater awareness of how stress and pressure is impacting their team;
- A series of seminars or webinars to educate and empower employees to better manage their stress, keep their lives in balance, and increase coping skills & resilience;
- Ongoing promotion of the EAP services available to employees and their family members who are dealing with stress.

A focus on stress management can go a long way towards improving employee wellness, reducing the absenteeism and healthcare costs associated with stress-related illness, and improving overall organizational productivity.

By:
Greg Brannan
Director of Business Development & Training Consultant
Deer Oaks EAP Services, LLC

Ask Your EAP!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to the EAP for a management consultation.

Q. How do I deal with an employee we hired very recently who does not appear to be a good culture fit for our organization? Performance is good, but issues with communication exist, and like-mindedness with the rest of our employees is lacking.

A. Culture fit is viewed as important and can reduce conflicts and enhance productivity. It also helps reduce turnover. Unhappy employees tend to leave, so your goal should be to avoid that outcome. Don't dismiss culture fit as completely irrelevant to the job performance requirements, but you must describe specifically what you mean so that documentation can work—you can describe what you want and evaluate improvement later. Discuss the circumstances with the EAP and determine an approach to help your employee better assimilate to the work culture. Consider team issues, interpersonal communication, isolation, argumentative behavior, attitude issues, avoiding of associates, personal disposition, and buy-in to the organization's mission. Be aware that your employee may have personal problems and these could manifest as issues of culture fit.

Q. I don't like reprimanding employees or telling them what they have done wrong. How can supervisors have an easier time with these tense meetings?

A. There is an old saying in customer service: "A complaint is a gift." This idea sees negative feedback or criticism as an opportunity to improve and grow. This same model applies to correcting employees. View a corrective interview as a gift that will benefit your employee's career. Consider the term "corrective interview" over "reprimand." It is more closely aligned with this model of supervision. See these meetings as opportunities to benefit employees. You will feel less punitive and more like a coach or leader. Be aware that employees who are your star performers may require more corrective interviews because they practice initiative and take more risks. Their higher productivity may come with more mistakes if they naively cross boundaries, unwittingly step on the wrong toes, or simply rub people the wrong way. It's part of the growth curve. A corrective interview is an opportunity to develop talent. See these meetings from this viewpoint and they will be easier to conduct, and more beneficial to your organization.

Q. The worst part about supervision for me is self-doubt. I am sure other supervisors experience the same problem and suffer in silence too. After all, you can't let people know you're doubting your ability to do the job. How can supervisors better manage this worry?

A. You've cited one of the reasons for the cliché "It's lonely at the top." There is hardly a supervisor or leader who has not wondered, no matter how briefly, whether he or she will cut it, succeed, or make significant contributions. Intervention with this sort of anxiety is mostly about maintaining perspective. You've succeeded in becoming a manager, and naturally that comes with pressure to perform. Take steps to get support. You will find confidential support at the EAP and quickly find reassurance, resources, and strategies to help you improve your skills and reduce negative self-talk. If needed, you can find one-shot, inexpensive, and short courses online that perfectly match the supervision concern you feel needs addressing.

Copyright ©2014 by The Frontline Supervisor

Information contained in this newsletter is for general information purposes only and is not intended to be specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. Some of it might not apply to your particular company policies and available programs. This information is proprietary and intended only for eligible EAP members. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.