



Q. One of my employees appears unmotivated to go the extra mile, which is unlike her peers. I can't diagnose the problem, but could CONCERN help? There are no job problems, and I do consider her work more than satisfactory.

A. Something about this employee's work style is concerning you despite the satisfactory level of performance she is achieving. True, you don't have a reason to suggest CONCERN or make a supervisor referral, but it doesn't mean that over the next few weeks or months you can't monitor work performance; inquire about her productivity level, satisfaction with the job, and interest in the work. Consider gathering observational data to support your inquiry about her motivation to share with her. This is not a diagnostic inquiry, but good supervision. Many supervisors have a gut-level impression that an employee suffers with some unknown personal problem. They can't and shouldn't use this impression to conduct a diagnostic assessment. However, this does not mean that the supervisor can't do anything with his or her sense of concern. In fact, it would be ill-advised to completely ignore these hunches. When you meet, the employee may share information in your meeting that leads you to suggest CONCERN.

Q. How can supervisors gain a better appreciation for the impact their behaviors have on those under their supervision?

A. The simple answer is: by having a close working relationship with your employees. Part of that relationship involves "checking in" on communication, interaction, and mutual understanding between each other. More broadly, learning about emotional intelligence (EI) is a way to appreciate human interaction and impact. In this context, you're able to monitor your emotions and recognize the emotions of others and label them properly, and use this information to guide your behavior and thinking. Many resources are available to introduce you to EI skill-building. CONCERN can point the way to these resources. Another awareness to appreciate is the "trickle down" effect of supervision. The supervisor-supervisee dynamic is so strong that it can affect family harmony. Supervisor interactions at work have been shown to create conflicts at home, and even lead to domestic violence. This indirect influence is referred to as "social undermining" and has been well-documented.

Q. I know poor communication is the number 1 key complaint in the results of employee surveys that have been administered to respondents at work organizations. What other common problems lead to employee dissatisfaction with organizations?

A. Other problems ranking up there but not as high as communication complaints (which are mostly related to information flow from the top of the organization down) are lack of recognition and praise, lack of training and educational opportunities, lack of flexibility in work schedules, and lack of authority given to employees. Having "more authority" is associated with a human need to want more control of one's work in some fashion or form. The key is avoiding feeling like a cog in a wheel. Target this sensation and you'll be on the right track.

Consider how to improve communication, feedback, and recognition, and offer ways to insert training and educational opportunities into your employees' experiences at work. Stumped when it comes to how to do so? Create a peer advisory or brainstorming group to discuss the issues. You'll be amazed at the ideas that will emerge from such an approach.

Q. I know supervisors who continue to ignore problem employees who should be confronted and referred to CONCERN. Why is CONCERN ignored, despite a supervisor being trained about and oriented to CONCERN, and who should understand how the EAP works and be supportive of it?

A. A supervisor's reluctance to incorporate CONCERN in supervisory practices is often caused by a resistance to change, but this only partly explains the problem given reduced supervisor stress results from using CONCERN. Despite the warning not to do so, some supervisors prefer to be involved in resolving personal problems. This may lead to having after-hours counseling sessions, loaning money, talking to spouses, taking employees on social outings, or even having a drink with the employee at a bar "to talk things over." Most supervisors know this is not their role, but some derive personal satisfaction from getting involved. Unfortunately, chronic performance problems often have serious root causes. Many are beyond the supervisor or even employee's ability to perceive what they are, much less arrange treatment. Supervisors may revisit the same problem for years. Eventually, frustration mounts, leading to a desire to terminate the employee because he or she has been labeled "hopeless."

Q. What is the "Lone Ranger Syndrome" with regard to the supervisor's role in the workplace?

A. The Lone Ranger Syndrome is a construct originally conceptualized by U.S. Department of Human Resources HR specialist Art Purvis in the mid-1970s, when EAPs were in a growth boom. In his work with supervisors, he often observed their reluctance to deal with their own personal problems of depression, anxiety, or life struggles, which were made worse by the isolation in their position.

Although they might refer employees to CONCERN, supervisors often believe they have to tough it out. Hence, the tendency for supervisors to help others while suffering in silence and going it alone led to the coining of the term. The message for supervisors is clear in the Lone Ranger Syndrome: Do not allow the job and its special stress to cause you to neglect your own health and wellness needs.

Remember: CONCERN: EAP teams with Human Resources to provide another resource for managers and supervisors to consult about how to manage issues with individuals, within and between work groups, and across departments. When you call CONCERN: EAP, ask for a Management Consultation or request to speak to a Clinical Manager.

Here are some quotes from HR Managers who recently called on CONCERN for a Management Consultation:

"This was a very difficult time for our employees and being able to provide these services was critical. CONCERN is a great partner!"

"The swift response and excellent support were tremendously appreciated."

"We would like to thank everyone at CONCERN who helped us through this situation. We had no guidance other than from CONCERN and without them we would not have been able to handle the situation. We will always be very grateful for the help CONCERN provided us."

**CONCERN: EAP
800-344-4222
www.concern-eap.com**