



THE SUPERVISOR/HR NEWSLETTER



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MAY
19

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Employee Engagement

A series of practical educational programs designed to help supervisors and managers to build more engaged and productive work teams. This series is available to all supervisors, managers, and other interested employees and does not count toward your organization’s training hour bank.

Webinar # 2: How to Effectively Onboard and Engage Your Employees

Creating high-quality onboarding experiences for new employees is a key to building an engaged work team. This practical presentation will discuss several strategies for effectively onboarding, engaging, and retaining your employees.

Friday, June 7th 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7622657225343204099>

Monday, June 10th 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/9080421627285853187>

Improving Shift Work Through the Organization

There are few laws or regulations governing work hours or work scheduling in the United States. The federal government has placed a 10-hour limit on the length of time a long-haul trucker can drive each day. There also are federal regulations governing flight time and rest time for commercial airline pilots. Various state laws establish rules for overtime pay and child labor. Other than these regulations, the law does little to guide design of a work schedule to reduce stress fatigue. Nevertheless, research has suggested that work schedules can be improved. Older, poorly designed work schedules might even be dangerous, because new technologies can change both the physical and mental demands placed on a worker. A well-designed work schedule can improve health and safety, worker satisfaction, and productivity. Therefore, a good work schedule is an advantage for both the organization and the worker.

Changing a schedule is not easily done and must be handled carefully. Designing a work schedule has a large and immediate impact on all workers. All people on the job must abide by the work hours, or they will lose their jobs. Also, working hours affect how people arrange the rest of their lives. So any time a work schedule is changed, many aspects of job life and home life must be considered. It is recommended that any work schedule change should first be temporary and evaluated carefully. The benefits of the change must outweigh the possible negative aspects. If it really is a change for the better, then it can be established on a permanent basis. Because such a change is complex, it is a good idea to consult ergonomics, or human factors, specialists for help in work schedule design and evaluation.

Shown below are some possibilities that the organization could consider to improve a shift work schedule. Given the limited amount of knowledge and research at this time, these should be considered as suggestions and not as strict guidelines or regulations. Remember, all aspects of job and home life must be considered when changing a work schedule. Some suggestions may be useful in a particular work situation, and some may not.

Consider alternatives to permanent (fixed or non rotating) night shift: Most workers never really get used to night shift, because they go back to a daytime schedule on their days off. Also, some workers on fixed night shifts lose contact with management and the rest of the workers in the organization. They may end up feeling too isolated or somehow “different” from the rest of the workers. This could make communication difficult. If possible, consider a rotating night shift schedule, but take measures to ease the burdens often experienced in the typical weekly shift rotation. Some suggestions for making rotation less taxing are given below. We realize, however, that permanent night shift sometimes is the only choice, such as in a nighttime security guard job.

Keep consecutive night shifts to a minimum: Some researchers suggest that only 2 to 4 nights in a row should be worked before a couple of days off. This keeps circadian rhythms from being overly disturbed and limits sleep loss.

Avoid quick shift changes: A break of only 7 to 10 hours should be avoided before rotating to a new shift, such as going from morning to night shift on the same day of the week. With so quick a change, it is difficult to get much rest before going back to work. On return to work after a quick change, most people are very tired and sleepy. At the end of a night shift, at least 24 hours are recommended before rotating to another shift. Some researchers even suggest that 48 hours should be the minimum between shifts.

Plan some free weekends: If a 7-days-per-week schedule is required, allow one or two full weekends off each month. Loss of contact with friends and family is a major problem for shift workers. Weekends are the best time to meet family and friends who are on a day schedule.

Avoid several days of work followed by 4- to 7-day “mini-vacations”: Working several days in a row followed by several days off can be very fatiguing. For example, some schedules require 10 to 14 days of work followed by 5 to 7 days off. Frequent “mini-vacations” are well liked by some workers, especially younger ones. However, older workers find it difficult to recover during the mini-vacations before they return to another long spell of work. Poor recovery from fatigue can produce accidents and damage health. A long work spell should be used only when there is no other choice, such as when long travel distances are required to do the work (e.g., mining or oil exploration).

Keep long work shifts and overtime to a minimum: Extra work hours add to fatigue. They also allow less rest time per day. If 12-hour shifts are used, two or three 12-hour shifts in a row should be the maximum. Two in a row is probably best for night shift. One or two days off should follow these night shifts.

Consider different lengths for shifts: Try adjusting shift length to the workload. Heavy physical or mental work or monotonous, boring work is especially difficult at night. Maybe night shifts could be shorter. If possible, move heavy work to shorter shifts and lighter work to longer shifts.

Examine start-end times: Flexible start-end times, or “flextime,” can be useful for those with child care needs or a long commute time. Consider moving shift start-end times away from rush hour. Morning shifts should not start too early (5:00 to 6:00 a.m.), because night sleep often is cut short before an early shift.

Keep the schedule regular and predictable: Workers should know their schedule well ahead of time, so they can plan their rest, child care, and contact with family and friends. Studies of train accidents showed that very irregular schedules contributed to the accidents by producing sleep loss and fatigue.

Examine rest breaks: Sometimes the standard lunch and coffee breaks are not enough to recover from fatigue. For example, card dealers in gambling casinos get a 10- to 15-minute break every hour, because their jobs require so much concentration. If their concentration is low, it is easier for a player to cheat at cards, and the casino will lose money. In jobs requiring repetitive physical work, brief rest breaks each hour seem to be best for recovery from muscle fatigue.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Improving shiftwork through the organization. In Plain language about shiftwork (section 4). Retrieved October 15, 2016 from <http://www.cdc.gov/>

The Importance of Emotional Intelligence for Supervisors

The ability to manage our emotions at work is an important skill for every employee. Unmanaged emotions can lead to overreactions, poor judgment, and unprofessional behavioral in the workplace. This skill is particularly important for supervisors and managers, who are responsible for objective decision-making and modeling professional behavior for their teams.

Characteristics of Emotional Intelligence

Managers and supervisors with significant levels of emotional intelligence typically share common characteristics such as emotional self-awareness (the ability to know what you're feeling), the ability to rationally respond to strong emotions (the ability to think before reacting, etc.), and a tendency to use emotion for self-motivation (i.e., use fear of failure to take positive action to improve the situation).

Those with Well-Developed Emotional Skills are more Likely to be Effective Managers

A study done by Dale Carnegie Training revealed that a "caring" manager is one of the key elements of employee engagement. Supervisors and managers with well-developed emotional skills are better able to show that they care for their employees, which will lead to having a more engaged and productive team.

Leaders who manage their emotions well also tend to make better decisions in the heat of battle. They have the ability to remain more objective in difficult situations, even when they're feeling powerful emotions like frustration, fear, or anger.

Supervisors and managers with well-developed emotional skills will also have the ability to recognize and be sensitive to the emotions of others, allowing them to tactfully and skillfully interact with an employee who is angry, upset, etc.

How to Enhance Your Emotional Intelligence

Below are several strategies you can use to enhance your emotional intelligence skills:

- **Stay aware of what you're feeling throughout the day** – When you are aware that you're feeling a strong emotion, you can manage the emotion instead of having it manage you, which can lead to overreacting, making poor decisions, etc.
- **Think before you speak** – In stressful or challenging situations, everyone experiences the fight or flight response, which includes the release of adrenaline and often the experience of strong emotions. In these situations, it's important for leaders to take a step back and think rationally so that they don't overreact emotionally.
- **Have compassion for your employees** – The world is a stressful place, and our employees need managers and supervisors who care about them and are committed to their success.

Source: Greg Brannan, Director of Business Development & Training, Deer Oaks EAP Services

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. I want to do everything I can to help my employees perform well. What is the most important task to accomplish in order to make this possible?

A. Form good working relationships. Supervisors can learn many different skills and tactics, but few will be effective without positive relationships. Understand the concept of “essential attitudes” for a supervisor. Essential attitudes for success exist in every profession, whether you are a teacher, scientist, minister, pilot, or supervisor. Here’s one: Assume your employees are doing the best job they can from their point of view. This attitude will affect the way you speak, act, nurture, and support them. It might even help you remember to use the EAP more often as a resource to improve performance. Another: Spell out for employees what they need to do in order to succeed and then give them the ability to do it. Imagine how these essential attitudes influence a positive relationship, and how lacking they are with many managers. Can you think of more essential attitudes critical to relationship success?

Q. What do supervisors and managers need to know about the “Generation Z”? I have been hearing more about them recently.

A. You will hear a lot more about Generation Z as these employees enter the workforce. Gen Z are those born between approximately 1995-96 and 2010-14. (Sociologists disagree on the dates.) This is the group following the millennials. Generation Z is more influenced by concepts like “finding my true purpose” and “making an impact.” They want to be independent and are highly attracted to learning new things. They are confident and respond positively to companies that are engaged in resolving social problems. They are entrepreneurial, realistic, hungry for experiences and want to see the world. Gen Z employees want to be experts and may accept challenges more readily than prior generations. When writing the essential functions of job descriptions, consider the above values and employee traits to help you maximize productivity and employee job satisfaction. Gen Z employees are less put off by the idea of getting counseling and more likely to use supports like an EAP to improve their lives. Learn more from the book “Meet Generation Z” (2017).

Q. Why can’t employees monitor themselves and use peer influence to ensure a respectful workplace? It seems as though supervisors or managers must still take the lead and play a large role in supporting a positive workplace and discouraging disrespect.

A. Employees are certainly capable of exerting peer pressure on fellow workers and helping maintain a respectful workplace, but they need your help. When management (supervisors) don’t act or step in when witnessing bad behavior, this is tantamount to excusing it. This then undermines employee peer pressure dynamics and group influence. Managers represent “punitive authority” within the employment setting. This doesn’t mean punishment. Instead, this means the ability or potential of the employer to impose penalties for fault, offence, or violation of rules. All employment settings possess this natural dynamic. When undermined, employees toss self-discipline to the wind and experience far less urgency to respond to positive peer pressure.

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