

# Your EAP | Here4TN! for leaders

MARCH 2014

**PARTNERS  
FOR HEALTH**  
EMPLOYEE  
ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM

## Have a Strategy for Balancing Workloads

When a team's workload becomes out of balance, the strain can be evident. Fatigue, frustration, stress, and a decline in work quality can result. Over the long term, stress can impact overall health, such as high blood pressure, headaches, depression, eating problems, sleep loss, and more.

For leaders, it's important to closely observe the flow of work in relation to existing deadlines. And when one or more individuals on the team appear to be struggling to reach their objectives, some course correction is necessary. Implement a strategy for guiding the team toward a better-balanced workload.

- **Involve the team in devising a solution.** Hold team meetings to discuss goals, deadlines, team assignments, obstacles and contingency plans. Encourage your staff to brainstorm for ways to accomplish the work objectives.
- **Reinforce group accountability.** If certain individuals seem to be handling a disproportionately small share of the workload, remind the team that each person is equally responsible for helping the team reach its objectives.
- **Respond with a change in plans.** Be open to making improvements in process and changes in work assignments. Possible steps could include reallocating tasks among team members or changing the sequence of individual project subtasks. You could request additional resources or utilize other coworkers to temporarily support the team.
- **Recognize outstanding contributions.** When team members go above and beyond in meeting a challenging objective, be sure to recognize their efforts. Express your gratitude and promote their achievements throughout the organization.
- **Remind the team about balancing work goals and their personal lives.** Despite the presence of challenging deadlines, it's important to help your team maintain their health and wellness. Encourage them to keep stress in check by getting enough rest, maintaining a healthy diet, exercising, and practicing stress management techniques.

Regularly reassess your team's goals, and stay focused on team priorities. Are you unsure of the right path? Call **1.855.Here4TN** (1.855.437.3486) to speak with a workplace support professional for confidential help with challenging workplace issues.

[www.Here4TN.com](http://www.Here4TN.com) | **1.855.Here4TN** (1.855.437.3486)

## *Communicate to Keep Stress in Check*

When you're a leader, your responsibilities can be stressful. If stress is affecting your work and/or family life, it's important to reach out to others for consultation and assistance.

A confidential chat with one of your peers or your supervisor can provide you with valuable perspective. Also, talking to a trusted friend or family member can give you a fresh viewpoint.

Remember that your ParTNers EAP is in place to provide you with confidential, expert management consultation. Access your program at **1.855.Here4TN** (1.855.437.3486) or online at [www.Here4TN.com](http://www.Here4TN.com).



# Improving Communication with Employees

When there is a lack of good communication in the workplace between managers and team members, productivity can be adversely affected. When team members don't feel "in the loop" and on board with the broader group's objectives, any number of unwelcome scenarios can occur: misunderstandings, frustration, detachment, deteriorating performance, and even employee turnover.



Fortunately there are a number of concrete steps you can take to help ensure that you and your team are on the same page and working toward common goals:

- **Convene team meetings.** It can be tempting to rely heavily on emails and texts for team communication. However, it's important to also set up time to meet "live" with your team if possible.
- **Strive for clarity.** In your written and in-person communication with employees, keep things as clear and concise as possible.
- **Keep team members engaged.** Team members stay more on track and on task if you regularly fill them in on the big picture of what's happening in the organization. Share your perspective on key developments, and ask for (and value) their input on the issues.
- **Offer a variety of channels for employee feedback.** Team members want to know that you value and incorporate their ideas. Make sure your team knows there are multiple ways they can provide feedback. Such tools can include anonymous surveys, regular staff meetings, your "open door" policy, and an online suggestion box.
- **Be personal and approachable.** Strive to maintain informal, supportive dialogue between yourself and your team members each day. Then when the team faces a difficult situation, you'll be more comfortable addressing it.
- **Improve your active listening skills.** Give each of your team members a chance to contribute ideas. Set your own views aside and pay full attention to your employees' points of view. Repeat what individuals have said and ask if your summary is correct. This validates their feelings and opinions.
- **Make sure to act on employee input.** Keep your team members comfortable in sharing their ideas with you by acting on their suggestions or explaining why you cannot.

## When You See a Decline in Performance

Working with an employee who has performance problems can be difficult and challenging. The following tips can help you more effectively handle an uncomfortable situation.

- Address negative changes in work performance.
- Keep your focus on the employee's responsibilities and performance.
- Take coworkers' feedback seriously and note them in your records.
- Learn to document performance problems in a clear, specific manner.
- Confront employees on inappropriate language and discuss consequences if it continues.
- Develop a written plan requiring the employee to improve his or her performance by a specific date. Keep lines of communication open with Human Resources.
- Learn to recognize the signs of drug and alcohol use, and confront them.
- Refer employees to ParTNers EAP for help with problems impacting their work performance.

Join us on March 26 from 1 to 2 p.m. central time for a webinar about common workplace issues. We will discuss absenteeism, performance decline, aberrant behavior and more. To register, [click here](#) or go to [www.Here4TN.com](http://www.Here4TN.com) and look for the information and registration link in the 'Check This Out' box.

