

# Your EAP | Here4TN! for leaders

MAY 2014

**PARTNERS  
FOR HEALTH**  
EMPLOYEE  
ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM

## Getting Communication Back on Track

A team performs at its best when everyone's on the same page, working toward agreed-upon goals and communicating openly in both good times and bad. Sometimes, however, communication can go a bit sour. Here are some tips on repairing the flow of communication:

- **Promote an open forum for ideas.** Let your employees know that you value their opinions and input. Maintain an open-door policy so that team members know they come to you with their concerns at any time. Avoid being critical when someone has a brainstorm and encourage team members to freely share their ideas.
- **Be clear about expectations.** Make sure team members have clear job descriptions and evaluation criteria so they know what is expected of them. Remind team members about how their goals fit into the larger goals of the organization. In team meetings, review the goals for the year and provide status reports on the team's progress.
- **Provide individual encouragement.** If an individual team member seems to have become isolated or disengaged, reach out and provide positive support. Solicit his or her ideas in meetings, set up a one-on-one meeting and restate your understanding of his or her views to show that you value their input.
- **Repair a conflict.** If a personality conflict or disagreement has damaged your relations with a team member, step back and seek a solution. Make a mental note of that person's positive abilities, contributions, traits and personal interests. Approach him or her and strike up an informal dialogue on topics that are likely to resonate with the person. By taking the first step—as a leader—you can pave the way toward improved interactions on other topics.
- **Keep things positive.** Encourage a supportive and complementary environment among team members. Discourage gossip and negative talk about any individual. When necessary, remind everyone that we are on the same team.
- **Recognize accomplishments.** Whenever a team member performs exceptionally or otherwise goes the extra mile to contribute, be sure to praise the individual throughout the department and beyond.

## Confronting Employee Challenges

Being in a leadership role is always a challenge, particularly when employees have issues that are impeding team productivity. Sometimes you need to step into an uncomfortable situation and take corrective action to get things back on track.

Helpful components of your management toolkit include good documentation practices, clear expectations for employees, a commitment to open communication, and constructive performance appraisals.

Remember that in addition to your human resources department, ParTNers EAP is in place to provide confidential, expert management consultation whenever you need a skilled perspective. Workplace Support team members are available for individual assistance, consultations, tips and more. Call us any time at **1.855.Here4TN** (1.855.437.3486) and ask to speak to a Workplace Support team member or online at [www.Here4TN.com](http://www.Here4TN.com).

**Mark Your Calendar!** ParTNers EAP is hosting a webinar on **conflict resolution**. Topics will include how to approach conflict, ways to solve them and managing conflict. **June 25 from 1 to 2 p.m.** Central Time. **Click here** or go to [www.Here4TN.com](http://www.Here4TN.com) to register.



# Make Performance Reviews Count

When it's time for performance reviews, tension and unease can increase in the department. To make the performance review process more palatable and valuable to both team members and the organization, consider these tips.



- **Document employee performance.** Maintain a basic system for documenting employee performance throughout the year. This way you won't be relying on memory when it's time for reviews you'll have concrete examples of employee's work results in relation to their job objectives.
- **Prepare for performance review meetings.** Team members won't take performance reviews seriously if you aren't well prepared for the review meetings. After completing the written portion of the review, put thought into how you will discuss the review in your meeting with the employee. Decide how you can use the evaluation and "next steps" to help employees grow and move forward.
- **Defuse review tension.** When it's time for the employee meetings, hold them in private but casual settings. You can enhance the collaborative atmosphere if you sit next to the employee rather than being separated by a large desk or table.
- **Introduce the review meeting agenda.** Help the employee know what to expect by reviewing all the topics you'll be addressing in the meeting—such as the employee's past and current performance, goals for the upcoming year and personal development plans.
- **Foster a discussion, not a lecture.** Give the employee plenty of opportunity to talk and provide input in the review process. Ask open-ended questions such as, "How can we help you reach these goals?" Team members will value the reviews more if they see you as a collaborator in their success.
- **Address problems, but emphasize the positive.** First of all, identifying performance problems should not wait until a formal performance review; they should be addressed when they occur. However, you can restate your expectations for improvement as part of the performance review. Then try to devote more time to positive rather than negative aspects of the employee's performance.
- **Attain agreement on the review.** Before concluding your meeting, strive to gain consensus on each individual element of the appraisal so the employee is clear about your expectations. An optimal review outcome is for employees to feel positive about their contributions and future opportunities.

## Warning Signs of an Employee Issue

If you suspect a work performance issue in one of your team members, prompt action is warranted. The following are some examples of common issues and how you might best respond.

- **Work behavior changes**—You may observe reduced work quality or productivity, avoidance of responsibility, impaired judgment or missed deadlines. These behaviors can be signs of a performance issue. Meet with the employee and develop an improvement plan with specific goals on a timeline.
- **Absenteeism**—This could be an employee routinely arriving late or leaving early, frequent Monday/Friday absences, extended lunches or breaks, and improbable excuses for absences. These behaviors may indicate a substance abuse problem. Have a face-to-face meeting with the employee, address the work performance and attendance problems, and make your expectations clear. Recommend that the employee contact the ParTners EAP for confidential assistance with personal problems.
- **Harassment**—You may observe instances of bullying, use of harsh language and/or discord with others. Document the unacceptable behavior, confront the employee and explain the consequences if it continues.

Contact your ParTners EAP for expert, confidential management consultation on challenging employee issues. Call us at **1.855.Here4TN** (1.855.437.3486) and ask to speak with a Workplace Support team member.

