

# Solutions for Supervisors

from your

## Affiliated Employee Assistance Program

1.800.769.9819  
[www.affiliatedeap.com](http://www.affiliatedeap.com)

A publication provided by your organization/s EAP (Employee Assistance Program) to help you with common employee dilemmas and/or problems.

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### QUESTION:

**What are some of the biggest mistakes supervisors make when dealing with employee work performance problems?**

### ANSWER:

Being a successful supervisor can be challenging but if you practice effective supervisory skills regularly then you will be prepared to handle just about anything. Below are some of the most important things supervisors can do to create and encourage high levels of work performance. Using these techniques can help to avoid problems down the road, for the supervisor and for others within the organization.

#### **#1: Set clear performance expectations that you can observe and measure.**

Make a list of performance and behavioral expectations for each of your employees. This list should include expectations about attendance, work responsibility, accountability and workplace behavior (i.e. how the employee should deal with you, coworkers, customers, etc.). Change or add to the list as needed and personally meet with each employee to go over the expectations at least twice a year. You stand a better chance of getting what you want if you are clear about asking for it. It also gives you something in writing to refer to if a problem arises.

#### **#2: Address performance concerns quickly before they become bigger problems.**

Supervisors often shy away from addressing problems directly because they want to be liked, they aren't sure what to say, they're uncomfortable with saying it, or they hope the whole situation will just resolve itself. You can't assume that employees will correct their own behavior. Furthermore, if the employee isn't promptly reminded that the behavior isn't OK it will likely get worse. A large portion of the "big" problems we see started out as small problems that could have been fixed much more easily if dealt with earlier. If employees understand that you will hold them accountable for performance standards they are more likely to meet them.

### Did you know?

Your EAP can help you manage your most important asset -- employees. As a supervisor or manager, you have unlimited access to EAP professionals who can give you specific guidance with difficult situations at work and in managing employee problems or performance issues.

**Call 1-800-769-9819**

### Educational Programs for Supervisors

Affiliated EAP offers many educational programs designed to help leaders become more effective in supervising your staff. For a complete course listing or to schedule training contact Liz Ashe, Director of Training at **1-800-648-2727** or visit our website at [www.affiliatedeap.com](http://www.affiliatedeap.com)

# Solutions

continued



## #3: Hold everyone accountable for their behavior

Some employees are easier to talk to than others. This is true for people in general but it is surprising how often supervisors tell us that they try to steer clear of their more “difficult” employees. Not only does this potentially reinforce the behavior by communicating the message that if the person is difficult enough he/she will be left alone but it has an impact on the other employees who recognize what’s going on and often resent it.

## #4: Understand, respect and follow the process set up by your organization to address work performance concerns.

If it isn’t already available to you, ask for training on what happens when an employee’s performance starts to decline or become troublesome and what your role is in the process. A solid understanding of this process will allow you to make informed decisions and avoid unintentionally violating the process because you didn’t have the right information .

## #5: Try not to take the employee’s behavior personally.

When supervisors personalize an employee work performance problem and become angry, frustrated or resentful towards the person it tends to get in the way of solving the problem and can make it worse. Part of being a supervisor involves knowing that there are times when you will have to manage struggling performers. Great supervisors understand and accept this and approach situations as objectively and professionally as possible.

## #6 Acknowledge good, great and superior performance

Effective supervisors consistently applaud high levels of performance. Employees who know they are appreciated and respected are more apt to report being satisfied in their jobs. Genuine praise and appreciation lets employees know that you are paying attention, not just to performance concerns but to performance in general. Sometimes supervisors get so focused on poor performance that they forget to recognize when employees are doing well which can affect morale and future performance.

## #7: Practice positive communication skills

While we can’t control other people, the way we say something can have a large impact on how it is received. Being direct, honest, and appropriate without using blaming or threatening language goes a long way in supporting an employee who is struggling. The ultimate goal is to have everyone working productively, communication about the concerns should preferably reflect this goal.

## #8: Use outside resources as needed.

Supervisors sometimes try to be too many things to too many people or fail to use available resources because they believe they should be able to handle all situations on their own. Effective leaders know when to appropriately use all of the resources available to them whether it’s Human Resources, peers, their own supervisors, or EAP.



**For more information about how to best handle employee work performance problems call your EAP at:**

**1-800-769-9819**

**TTY dial 711 for  
TRS then dial 800-769-9819**

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