



**THE  
SUPERVISOR/HR  
NEWSLETTER**

**THE  
TEXAS A&M  
UNIVERSITY  
SYSTEM**

HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR  
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Sept.  
17

**September Online Seminar**

*Information Overload*

Managing the enormous amount of information that is thrown at us is difficult. Understand what contributes to information overload and apply tips and tools for effectively managing information.

Available on-demand starting September 19th at [www.deeroakseap.com](http://www.deeroakseap.com)

**Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series  
& Leadership Certificate Program**

Below are recordings of the webinars presented so far this year as part of this series. Attendance is tracked for both the live and recorded sessions; therefore, viewing the below recordings will count toward the Leadership Certificate requirement of attending 5 out of the 6 webinars.

*Thinking for Success*

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/7693502043189076739>

*How to Motivate Your Employees*

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/1311003071536328962>

*Five Steps to Building Trust with Your Team*

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/3879793188239462914>

Helpline: 888-993-7650  
Web: [www.deeroakseap.com](http://www.deeroakseap.com)  
Email: [eap@deeroaks.com](mailto:eap@deeroaks.com)

# Striking It Rich in Productivity

*Involving and supporting employees is the key to mining their potential.*

The world of work has changed—and so have the workers.

Most employers used to offer employees guaranteed jobs. In exchange, employees offered loyalty, involvement and commitment to the employer. This simple exchange between employer and employee is a thing of the past.

Guaranteed employment is gone and so is employee loyalty.

Today, managers need new ways to get employees to do their best. Traditional carrots and sticks of management—cash, raises, bonuses and the like—aren't enough. While threats and intimidation may have once resulted in short-term changes in employee behavior, such negative techniques now only sap employee morale and build resentment.

Employees are looking for managers to have their best interests at heart and to show it on a daily basis. They're looking for more meaning in their work.

To be effective today, managers must create supportive work environments that can influence, but not force, desired behaviors and outcomes. The best managers are masters of making things happen. They create more energy than they consume; instead of draining an organization's energy, they amplify and channel it back to the organization.

Managers can improve their organizations by energizing individuals, energizing teams and energizing organizations.

## **Energizing Individuals**

The trust, respect, and consideration managers show employees through one-on-one relationships—every day of the week—is the foundation of an energized organization. For example, to keep employee morale and energy high during busy times of the year, I've seen executives at one company personally push coffee around the office, serving drinks and refreshments to front-line partners. Employees appreciate such gestures, which also provide opportunities to bring up and resolve customer issues at the same time.

One of the best ways to involve employees in an organization, and to energize them in the process, is through collecting employees' ideas. For example, the city of Phoenix, Arizona, runs a well-organized employee suggestion program to generate ideas. City employees can win cash if their suggestions

- Increase productivity.
- Cut costs.
- Improve the quality of services.
- Boost employee morale or safety.

Employees are notified in writing about the status of their suggestions within 60 days of submission. Employees are eligible for certificates, plaques or cash. When a suggestion is rejected, a letter explains why the idea wasn't adopted. Employees can appeal the decision to a suggestion committee up to a year after the date of the rejection letter.

## Energizing Teams

In recent years, teams have become fixtures in the business world. Organizations use ad hoc teams, cross-functional teams, self-directed work teams and more. Unfortunately in many cases, teams continue to take orders from managers and have few opportunities to act independently. To energize employees, managers need to empower teams to act independently, decide what needs to be done and how to do it.

At 3M in St. Paul, Minn., Vice President Robert Hershock and corporate researcher David J. Braun reviewed the work of a team that had developed a new model of respirator in record time. Hershock and Braun discovered these keys to team success:

- Empower teams. As Hershock put it, this means “giving the team the authority to make decisions and then act on them.”
- Let teams manage risk. Teams should be given the power to select the level of risk that offers the highest likelihood of success.
- Let teams control their internal budgets. Teams—not outside managers—must make all decisions on project matters, including financial determinations.
- Recognize the phases teams progress through. Managers must recognize when teams needs additional management support or coaching to get through rough times.
- Let teams be involved in the reward process. No one knows better what motivates the team than its members.
- Energized team members can come from unlikely places. To challenge thinking and spur energy and creativity, Honda Motor Co. in Tokyo purposefully assigns employees unfamiliar with technology on the company’s design teams. Innovations arise from the spirited discussions that flow from the blank-slate questions and probing.

## Energizing Organizations

Energy can spring from managers and workers alike. But many organizations actually de-energize employees through strict rules and procedures that reduce employee initiative to finding the right page in a policy manual. An organization can be flexible—providing options, resources and tools to its employees—or it can be bureaucratic and policy-bound, creating an environment that erodes confidence, self-esteem and energy of its employees.

As part of its process improvement training program, the Michigan Department of Transportation issues a “license to change” to each participant. The laminated license, signed by the agency head and deputy director of quality, expresses management’s support of employee efforts to break out of their daily routines to streamline processes and improve quality.

The U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Human Resources Administration in Washington, D.C., sponsored an idea day for all employees to examine ways to improve customer services, streamline work processes and enhance the office environment. The event netted 2,134 ideas—68% of which were adopted.

Many organizations have found that if they provide flexibility and support, employees will repay them with loyalty and hard work. Stride Rite Corp., a shoe manufacturer in Cambridge, Mass., offers subsidized onsite child care and elder care facilities. This commitment to employees is so firm that Stride Rite’s management insisted that a new venture partner in Thailand open a daycare center for its employees.

Dedicate yourself to cultivating this spirit at your workplace. Your employees will repay you with enhanced effectiveness and involvement in their jobs, and your organization will reap the rewards through improved productivity and reduced costs.

*Source: Nelson, B. (Reviewed 2017). Striking it rich in productivity. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.*

# 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. The best supervisors in my career did not just supervise; instead, they raised employees up, attracted their loyalty, and inspired their desire to be part of a cohesive and close work unit. I think this is a learned skill, not just charisma. Am I correct?*

A. You are describing the qualities of a good leader. The following are a few contrasts between being a supervisor and being a leader. Instead of simply administrating, look for ways to innovate and improve systems within your work unit. Place your focus on people and developing them, rather than only paying attention to the letter of their job descriptions. Take safe risks with your employees' abilities and talents, rather than pigeon-holing them into who should do what. This inspires trust between you and them. Think about the future of your work unit, not just what is happening from day to day. When employees complain, pay attention to their needs. Do not see making changes as giving in to demands, but rather as challenging the status quo. You have unique talents. Know what they are, and how you will elevate your work unit and organization with them. Focus on doing the right thing for your employees, rather than thinking "we can't do it that way because it has never been done." Stepping outside of the structure will cause you to make some mistakes, but leadership means you will lack one attribute: being perfect.

*Q. How can supervisors support employees who suffer from depression? I know at least two within my group of workers who are on medication. I don't pry or get personally involved, but I don't want to be completely unaware of what might be helpful to them.*

A. Recognize that depression is a disease like other chronic illnesses, and that it is managed, usually with the help of a medical doctor. The patient and doctor work together to reduce symptoms in order to prevent interference with social and occupational functioning. Symptoms may lead employees to be less assertive about their needs or when discussing their thoughts, feelings, or ideas around a project or work problem. Do not misinterpret this as laziness or unprofessionalism. If your workplace is under stress, and serious changes are at hand, this can also make depression worse. Encourage all employees to be open with you about their needs and how you can support them. Remind them as appropriate to reach out to the EAP, but also hold employees to the standards reasonably expected for their positions. This can help troubled employees in general seek help sooner from the EAP, no matter what their problem might be.

*Q. I had an employee retort, "You have to earn my respect!" I've heard this before, but I say it's manipulation. Supervisors deserve respect because of who we are and what we do. Can you discuss this often-heard phrase? I think younger supervisors are intimidated by it.*

A. "Respect is earned" may sound valid or like common sense, but it is more fitting for an advertising slogan than for employee expectations in the workplace. Respectful behavior and respect (as in high opinion or admiration) are different things. Certainly the position you hold as supervisor entitles you to demonstrated respect from employees beginning on day one, because you represent the employer. You manage and oversee the employment relationship. And you have all its responsibilities. Your supervision style is something your employees may come to admire and respect, however, and this is what is usually meant by the phrase respect is earned. You may hear this one-liner from difficult or troubled employees, but it is typically an attempt to manipulate or control the relationship for a specific purpose.

**Copyright © DFA Publishing, LLC**

*Information contained in this newsletter is for general information purposes only and is not intended to be specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. Some of it might not apply to your particular company policies and available programs. This information is proprietary and intended only for eligible EAP members. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.*

