■ **I was discussing my employee's attendance problem when she mentioned that family issues were causing her lateness. She added that she would be contacting SAVE. I look forward to positive changes, but should I have done anything more?**

Beyond following up later and affirming the positive changes in her attendance, the situation with this employee seems to have been handled well. This is a self-referral and a great example of how **SAVE** can work, but there are a couple of tips worth considering. Depending on the seriousness of this attendance issue, you could affirm the employee's decision by offering her the opportunity to use your office phone to call **SAVE** right then and there. This can be reassurance that she is following through. It's the employee's choice, of course. The second is to be firm, supportive and clear that if the attendance problem does not change, then you will be considering the next steps in correcting the problem. This will also facilitate follow-through because a disciplinary step is implied without it being committed to before she seeks support through **SAVE**.

■ **Is a "constructive confrontation" with an employee an interview that always includes mention of some potential disciplinary action to help motivate the worker to feel more urgency about making changes in performance?**

The term "constructive confrontation" has many definitions and applications in human interaction, but in the work setting it typically refers to a purposeful and planned meeting with an employee experiencing performance or conduct issues to motivate the worker to make improvements or desired changes. Although a constructive confrontation may utilize mention of disciplinary action, this is not a required element. Most employees perceive the supervisor to be a legitimate authority figure who has control or influence over the disciplinary processes. This is a dynamic of authority, and it is not overlooked by employees when confronted by supervisors. This dynamic is also helpful to instill motivation. Supervisors who socialize frequently with subordinates or are viewed by them as a friend may experience more difficulty in succeeding with constructive confrontations. This is because the dynamic of authority has eroded. Reasserting this authority can be tough because it requires choices that stress the friendship.

■ **I have been a department head overseeing dozens of other supervisors for many years. I think many don't see all the benefits that come with managing a more complete relationship with a worker beyond**

As you point out, a more complete supervisory relationship with employees has many payoffs. Beyond focusing on quality or quantity of work, these payoffs include improved communication and a closer, more trusting relationship between the supervisor and employee. This reduces supervisor stress and negative emotions that create unwanted, unnecessary distraction when problems arise. Employees become more interested in their work, improve self-awareness, accomplish more goals, and experience improved job satisfaction, which can reduce turnover and loss of a valuable worker. Ultimately, proper employee management reduces

simple concerns about work output. What benefits accrue from more engaged relationships with employees?

conflict, too. Trust and respect between the worker and manager grow, and a collaboration develops that benefits the work unit. **SAVE** can help supervisors develop more engaged relationships with employees by helping analyze personnel problems, conflicts, and communication issues, as well as assist in finding creative approaches to help workers make changes that the supervisor can consider.

■ **My department manager just informed me that one of my employees went over my head to complain. It made me look bad, and, frankly, I am upset. How should I intervene? The concern is related to a disagreement we are having about her job description. My boss hasn't said anything about the end-run.**

End-running can be a problem among troubled workers, but it can also be a naïve decision by a new or younger employee without experience in understanding how hierarchical organizations function. End-runs are usually managed with two issues of concern: addressing the importance of the complaint (i.e. a harassment complaint, etc.) and the organizational problem of the end-run itself. Referring the employee back to the subordinate supervisor is a common response by the upper-level manager for issues that are not serious. Most end-runs are an irritation, but not calamitous. They are teaching moments for employees, and they can help the supervisor examine areas of improvement in conflict and communication management. Discuss with your employee the complications that result from an end-run. If your employee has more serious conduct issues making behavior difficult, then work with **SAVE** to help the worker improve conduct, attitude, and performance.

■ **What can supervisors do to help their employees correct performance more efficiently? I have often met with employees to discuss problems that need fixing, but I have later been surprised by what's been forgotten or not understood despite what appeared to be a well-communicated meeting!**

If you have been a supervisor for any length of time, you have likely noticed how an employee may be very attentive in a corrective interview as you explain a problem, but later it is as though they were daydreaming the entire time they were looking you straight in the eye. You may have asked to have key points in the meeting repeated, but later the details are surprisingly overlooked. There are many reasons for this phenomenon, including attention deficit issues due to stress, fear, or even possibly depression or medical issues. It is common for such employees not to return later for clarification, fearful of the manager's response to their apparent lack of attention. For these reasons, practice putting problems in writing along with the key points needing attention. Doing so early when problems arise may eliminate the need for a meeting entirely. If a pattern of inattention remains, refer the employee to **SAVE** based on performance shortcomings.

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