Could EAPs play a role in helping management identify positive traits of employees—such as eagerness to learn, being a team player, and willingness to take initiative—through the interviewing process so that we could have best hires?

EAPs follow standards of practice that would conflict with the assignment of screening employees for personality style, temperament, and character attributes to assist in hiring. Although an Employee Assistance professional might be capable of such a task, it would easily undermine the goal of an EAP being a safe and neutral source of confidential assistance to employees. A dual role of judging employees to aid in management’s hiring decisions also would interfere with the perception of the EAP as a resource that draws employees to seek help in a safe setting of openness, safety, and receptivity. EAP offers education to supervisors and managers on improving communication, building positive relationships with employees, and engaging with them to enhance their productivity; but, acting purely as an extension of management’s need to classify workers for hire would cause the EAP to be rejected and to be seen as suspect.

I am too much of a micromanager; I admit it. But I am not sure how to change this pattern I have acquired. Do I need counseling in order to deal with my anxiety and learn how to let it go?

Learning basic coaching techniques will help you to feel more confident in delegating responsibilities to the employees which you manage. Once you learn the basic skills of coaching your capacity to delegate and worry less will decrease as the skills of your staff increase. Coached employees become creative forces that can be counted upon to provide solutions which supervisors have not considered. Delegating fosters growth and releases employee potential tapping into unique individual talents. The” HBR guide to Coaching Employees” is an excellent resource for managers who wish to learn more about this option.

How to engage employees is important, but I think the missing piece is making sure they know what they are doing, how they will be measured, and how they fit into the grand scheme of things. In other words, clarity and purpose. Am I right?

Yes. To highlight your point, Jim Moran, professor of Business Administration at Florida State University’s College of Business studied the issue of employees who are kept in the dark about their full purpose, and especially what they were accountable for doing. In his study of 750 workers, incredibly, less than 20 percent really felt certain they knew what was expected of them each day at work. Employees who are uncertain about their jobs showed 60 percent less trust of leadership. They also experienced 50 percent more frustration overall. They had 40 percent higher workloads. And 33 percent of these employees with ambiguous understandings of their jobs were more likely to look for another job and slack off. Obviously, these issues point to engagement problems.

I have sensed a lot of anxiety among employees over the past couple of months associated with world events, politics, terrorism threats, and economic insecurity. Everyone knows about the EAP, but can the EAP do presentations for us and what might such a presentation comprise?

When EAPs help employees with anxiety or other concerns, they carefully rule out other conditions that may mimic anxiety or make anxiety worse. Although your employees know about the EAP, be sure to suggest the program to those you recognize as having more obvious needs. To classify everyone’s reactions to events as “anxiety” could mean that employees with more urgent needs are being overlooked. Talk to the EAP about a presentation. An EAP presentation might include reinterpreting and reacting more effectively to hyped news, especially changing one’s habitual reactions to it. This might include teaching strategies for countering negativity; interrupting negative feedback loops; avoiding catastrophie thinking that stirs anxiety and panic; learning strategies for limiting exposure; learning relaxation techniques; learning to keep motivational, spiritual, and affirming literature handy; and using strategies for instantly countering doomsday thinking. The goal is to help employees do their own “reality check” using cognitive/behavioral strategies, and guiding them in countering worry, stopping fretting, and curtailing misdirecting personal energy better spent on more desirable pursuits.

If you or your family member needs assistance, we can help. YOUR EAP IS HERE FOR YOU!

Visit us at our website at: www.esboces.org/EAP

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