



# EAP SUPERVISOR ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER

March 2024



## DEER OAKS PRESENTS

### Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series

#### *Successful Approaches to Difficult Employee Conversations*

Date: Monday, April 29, 2024

Time: 1:00 PM-2:00 PM CST

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# HOW'S YOUR TEAM'S MOJO?

## Flow and Organizations

Organizational cultures are transforming and shifting to new models. New importance is being placed on employee wellbeing and the need for a culture that supports employee mental health and engagement. Organizations that only focus on profitability have seen their employees lose their drive to work, particularly where their job is viewed as nothing more than just a payslip. This, in turn, leads to lower commitment, productivity, and loyalty to the organization, a lose-lose situation for everyone. Organizations are not getting quality performance from their employees, and employees are not feeling satisfied.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, this is where the need for flow comes into practice. Have you ever been so immersed in a task at work that nothing can distract you? Nothing else around seems to matter and time just flies by? This is known as being in a state of flow.

People enter a state of flow when they are completely immersed in an activity of interest, as discovered by psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi. They are fully absorbed in the task at hand, where all their attention and focus are directed to that activity. This is what an organization wants to achieve. An organization is performing at its optimal when its employees are performing and feeling their best. This was found in Csíkszentmihályi's research, where he noted that employees who regularly experienced the "flow" state had higher productivity levels and obtained more satisfaction from their work.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, they would have a drive to repeat that work to again achieve that state of flow. Setting up your business to achieve flow can have extensive positive effects for both the organization and the employees. But how do you bring the "flow" state into your organization?

## Achieving Flow in Your Organization

### Removal of Obstacles to Flow

To experience flow, the individual needs to be completely immersed in the activity with uninterrupted periods of concentration. However, in today's work environment and culture, this can be difficult. Distractions are constantly present in the form of emails, calls, social media, and other employees. While people cannot shut down all these distractions, there are a few changes you can implement to allow individuals to experience flow. These include single-task mentality, focus rooms, or allowing employees to turn off their messaging or emails for a period of time.



## Employee Focus Groups

Implementing regular employee focus groups gives employees the opportunity to voice their opinions on certain aspects of the business. This also allows for the creation of both short-term and long-term employee-driven action plans. This is crucial; seeking feedback from employees creates an environment where they can perform optimally, because they feel heard and trusted.

## Positive and Optimal Work Environment

Employees want to work for organizations that support both their physical and psychological needs. This includes having a work-life balance to support their wellbeing and mental health. This can also support other psychological needs, such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which fuel employee engagement as supported by the self-determination theory. This theory states that an individual's motivation and engagement in activities is influenced by their experience of competence, autonomy, and relatedness.<sup>2</sup> This impacts their performance, persistence, and focus levels.

By 2025, it is predicted that millennials will represent 75 per cent of the global workforce.<sup>3</sup> It is clear that this generation seeks more than just salaries and wages.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, an employee's psychological need for autonomy can be fulfilled by empowering individuals to make their own decisions on certain things, such as flexible working hours or job crafting. The need for competence can be satisfied by praise and relevant challenges, such as opportunities to learn or mentor. Relatedness is also achieved through quality connections that make employees feel a part of a team. Additionally, being part of a supportive team fulfills employees' need for belonging as well as the organization's need for effective collaboration.<sup>5,6</sup>

### **Clarity of Goals and a Shared Mission**

Implementing clear, concise, and timely goals ensures everyone in the organization knows what is expected of them and understands the goal they are working towards. Uncertainty is a prominent barrier to flow. Rather, clear goals are needed to allow employees to focus on their tasks and to reduce unnecessary meetings. Having a shared mission helps make employees feel their work is meaningful and contributing to their shared goal.

### **Culture of the Team and Organization**

A constructive culture needs to be embedded in the organization to support states of flow. There needs to be a focus on working in an affiliative, humanistic, and encouraging manner with one another to get tasks done well with high levels of achievement and self-actualization. In aggressive cultures there is a focus on competition, power, perfectionism, and/or oppositional attitudes and behaviors. In contrast, passive cultures see high levels of approval seeking, conventional, dependent or avoidance attitudes and behaviors. These are unlikely to promote flow states for team members.

### **Attitude and Focus of Team Members**

Employees need to be focused on wanting to do a good job and help to build a company they can be proud of. Excessive selfish interest that aims only on the self (e.g. "I want to make a million dollars before I am 30") tends to lead to failure because people can become insensitive regarding the joys of doing a good job, helping others, and helping to build a company for the greater good. Without these, flow is almost impossible to achieve.

### **Benefits of Flow in an Organization**

- Individuals become fully immersed in their tasks at work, which leads to optimal performance.
- Engaging work fuels professional and personal achievements.
- It contributes to the growth of your organization.
- Flow drives employee happiness and fulfillment.
- It creates drive to repeat those tasks to experience the flow state.
- Flow state is a source of creativity, which leads to innovation.

For an organization to achieve the optimal state of flow, all members of the business need to be on the same page. Therefore, the organization and employees both need to understand the importance of achieving flow in the business and their work culture to successfully perform and function at the optimal level.

### **References**

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Source: Veretis. (2021, 11 November; Revised 2024 [Ed.]). *How's your team's mojo?* (B. Schuette & E. Morton, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: *Workplace Options (WPO)*.



# HOW TO EMPOWER OTHERS AT WORK

When people feel empowered in the workplace, they are more likely to take ownership of their work, contribute innovative ideas, and just straight-up be happier. There are concrete ways to boost a feeling of empowerment in the workplace. Most of them focus on communication and, you guessed it, actually empowering people. People who are empowered in the workplace feel trusted, which is one of the biggest factors in feeling respected by their workplace. Respect breeds respect, and a lot of employers who take conscious steps to respect their employees find they are given markedly more respect in return.

## Consequences of a Lack of Empowerment at Work

A workplace that fails to empower its employees often experiences negative consequences. Employees may feel undervalued, voiceless, and disengaged. This can lead to a decline in morale, increased absenteeism, and a higher turnover rate. Moreover, a lack of empowerment can stifle creativity and innovation, hindering the organization's growth and adaptability.

Several factors contribute to feelings of disempowerment at work. One common factor is a lack of clear communication and transparency from leadership. When employees are kept in the dark about important decisions or changes, they may feel excluded and powerless. Additionally, a rigid hierarchy and micromanagement can limit employees' autonomy and decision-making authority, leaving them feeling disempowered. Lack of recognition for contributions, limited opportunities for growth and development, and a culture that does not encourage risk-taking can also contribute to disempowerment.

## How to Empower Others at Work as a Leader

A key strategy is building systems that allow people to fail safely. A culture in which all ideas can be voiced safely encourages people to swing for the fences, being ambitious and confident. A lot of "management speak" centers on "blue-sky thinking" and "no bad ideas," but actually following through and supporting people when they contribute things that may be unworkable, without condemnation, can be tougher in situations of stress.

To empower others at work, both leaders and employees can take proactive steps. As a leader, it is crucial to create an environment that encourages open communication, transparency, and participation. Involve employees in decision-making processes whenever possible, and provide them with the necessary information to understand the context and impact of their work.



This doesn't mean that managers can't make decisions that employees won't like, but communicating the reasoning for these decisions will demonstrate the respect necessary to keep employees engaged. It's much easier to bring people with you on a decision if they understand the steps.

It's also vital to recognize and celebrate achievements. This can mean a regular shoutout of successes (or even just admirable efforts). Offering opportunities for skill development and growth, allowing employees to expand their capabilities and take on new responsibilities, makes employees concretely invested in the success of any project. When employees feel connected to a project or workplace, they will make extra efforts and invest more of their ingenuity and passion.



## How to Empower Others at Work as an Employee

As an employee, you can also play a role in empowering yourself and others. Take initiative and be proactive in seeking out opportunities to contribute and learn. Build positive relationships with your coworkers, support and encourage their ideas, and provide constructive feedback. Share your knowledge and expertise with others, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment. Recognize and appreciate the contributions of your teammates, promoting a culture of recognition and appreciation. Culture is more effectively built from the ground up, so engaging in good faith with the management strategies will help the entire organization move forward.

A sense of empowerment in the workplace is vital for creating a positive and thriving work environment. By recognizing the consequences of a disempowering workplace, understanding the factors that contribute to feelings of disempowerment, and implementing strategies for empowerment, both leaders and employees can contribute to fostering a culture of empowerment. There are steps everyone can take to empower others and feel empowered themselves.

Source: Veretis. (Revised 2024 [Ed.]). *How to empower others at work* (B. Schuette & E. Morton, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: *Workplace Options (WPO)*.



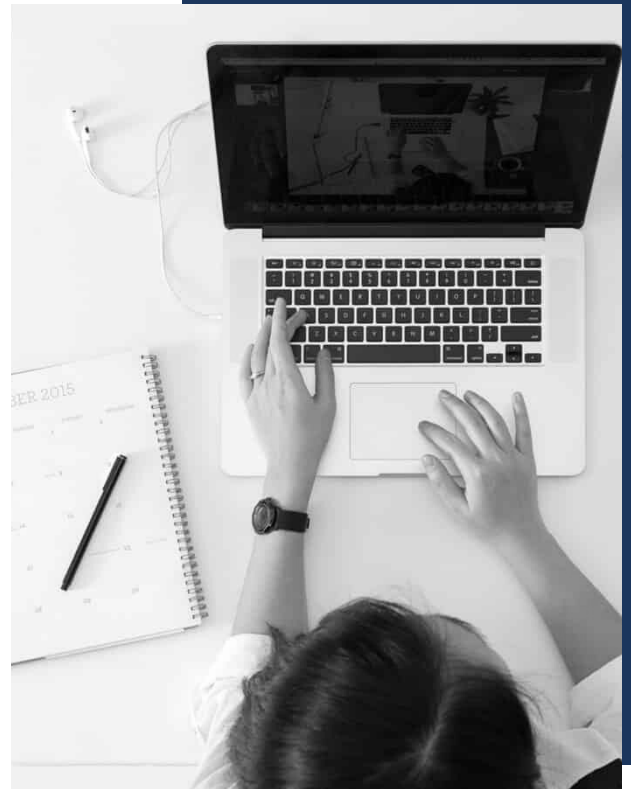
# ASK YOUR EAP!

**Q. I'm excited about my new role as supervisor. I'd like some valuable and practical tips to enhance my career growth and build a positive reputation. What suggestions can you offer?**

A. Here are some practical tips: 1) Know where your job fits into the purpose of the organization. This will enhance your motivation and commitment, and your personal goals will align with those of the organization. 2) Invest your energy in activities your supervisor considers valuable. 3) Ask questions; never be thinking, "I am not sure what the organization wants me to do." 4) Develop an instinct for knowing when to communicate to get answers, clarify issues, and double-check what's expected of you. 5) Share credit with others. When mistakes happen, own them without spreading blame. 6) Learn to finesse how to inform upper management about successes by highlighting positive outcomes, impact, and measurable results of your work. 7) Be sensitive to workplace politics. They are a reality of human interaction. 8) Develop reliable stress management strategies that work for you. 9) Learn the art of staying calm when others are emotional during a crisis. 10) Build a network of individuals who can offer support, share insights, and add to your continuous development.

**Q. I'm reluctant to utilize the EAP for supervisory consultation because I'm concerned that it could be perceived as a reflection on my skills and abilities, despite reassurances from management that it won't have a negative impact. How can I feel more comfortable?**

A. Feeling reluctant to use the EAP for supervisory consultation is not unusual. Realize, however, that consultative help may be the key to resolving a serious behavioral issue with a high-risk employee someday. Keep in mind that EAP consultations are confidential and that they can be conducted over the phone. View seeking EAP assistance as a proactive step for personal and professional growth. It demonstrates a commitment to improvement and learning. If you still feel uneasy, have an open conversation with your supervisor about their thoughts concerning an EAP consultation. Realize that your company culture and values are in line with helping employees and preserving human resources, as demonstrated by their investment in an EAP.



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