



Q. I hope to be with my employer until retirement, but frankly, I am no longer thrilled with what I do. I am bordering on not wanting to come to work. How can I make my job more meaningful and not allow my attitude to affect employees?

A. Two key dimensions of your job include “what you are doing” and “who you are doing it with.” Your job and duties may be static and inflexible, but your relationships are not. Don’t let these relationships suffer, because enhancing them is the answer to your problem and you are in a great position to change it. Greet employees every day and enhance the people dimension of your work. Encourage employees when they are having rough days and steer employees toward their potential. Discover how you can elevate their lot with mentoring and opportunities. See the book *“Why Motivating People Doesn’t Work (And What Does),”* by Susan Blanchard which was just released in September 2014. You’ll discover powerful insights and new ways of engaging with employees that may help you leap out of bed in the morning. Also, talk to CONCERN. Together you will discover more ways to put meaning in your job.

Q. How do I get an employee to do something that is part of the job when he or she doesn’t want to do it and refuses to do it? By the way, termination is not an option. Can CONCERN motivate this person?

A. You’re hobbled without credible authority in this situation. Refusal to work is usually enabled by a perceived lack of consequences. So the real problem is lack of leverage or influence in the employment relationship. The proof is that the employee is calling the shots. Your focus for a solution should begin here. Is it fair that you should have to manipulate or sweet-talk your employee into doing the job? Meet with your supervisor and next-level manager. Discuss the situation. You may be surprised at how a discussion among you three produces a dramatic shift in manner, approach, and resolve in dealing with the insubordination. You can then clarify the organization’s expectations (not just yours) with the employee. CONCERN can have a definite role in addressing underlying issues of your employee’s behavior, but it is recommended that you first reassert the realistic nature of the employment relationship in unison with your superiors.

Q. The faster the technology becomes, the higher the expectations become for shorter deadlines, more communication, and anxiety about competition. The problem is that humans can only take on so much. How do I avoid burnout? Maybe I am the type that can’t handle the pressure.

A. Burnout is often linked to work culture, where jobs have become more demanding and everyone faces more pressure to respond and dedicate increasing amounts of time and emotional energy to the job. You, therefore, may be expending more effort and using more mental resources (focus) to accomplish work goals. Don’t fall for the myth that burnout happens only to employees who can’t handle job pressure or monotony. The way to fight burnout is to be thinking upstream, anticipating its possibility, and being on the lookout for symptoms.

An example might be waking up in the morning and having an empty or an “I hate this job” feeling. Remaining passive will only allow the intensity of this feeling to grow. CONCERN can help you find one or two behaviors that are contributing to burnout (your response to work pressure can actually contribute to it) and one or two new behaviors you can practice to overcome it.

Q. After a traumatic incident, what can supervisors do to play a helpful role in supporting employees? We aren’t counselors, but employees look to us for direction and strength, so we can’t be unmindful of our role.

A. Employees do naturally turn to supervisors during a crisis. Some may rely upon the supervisor as a leader for direction and guidance, some may vent anger toward them (e.g., “OK, you’re in charge, so now what?”), and others may seek a closer relationship, sharing feelings and seeking empathy and a stronger bond as the wall of formality and detachment momentarily falls. Some may treat the supervisor like a parent. Recognize that these and many more are normal responses following critical incidents. You should not counsel employees, but be accepting of different reactions. Plain visibility and presence have their own healing effect, so “be” with employees as much as possible. After an incident, employees want information, so keep it flowing. It reduces anxiety dramatically. Be alert to more extreme reactions that signal a need for CONCERN’s support, and coordinate with CONCERN how to best employ its services with your group. Finally, ask CONCERN about tips for taking care of you.

Q. What are the most common complaints about bosses?

A. Common complaints from employees about supervisors include being micromanaged, not listening to them, not being tolerant of a different opinion, not following through on promises, giving deadlines that are unrealistic and that put too much pressure on them, not having enough time to talk to them, not giving them enough feedback about their performance, and their supervisor being too disorganized. Except for one issue, the denominator among these complaints is communication. Only “being disorganized” stands alone.

Earlier communication, especially with communicating your concerns to your employee and asking for theirs, being more receptive in interpersonal communication, and encouraging more communication between everyone would resolve these complaints. Are you able to see how your role in promoting, seeking out, expecting, and holding employees and yourself accountable for effective communication can create a more harmonious workplace?

Remember: CONCERN: EAP teams with Human Resources to provide another resource for managers and supervisors to consult about how to manage issues with individuals, within and between work groups, and across departments. When you call CONCERN: EAP, ask for a Management Consultation or request to speak to a Clinical Manager.

Here are some quotes from HR Managers who recently called on CONCERN for a Management Consultation:

“The counselor was very professional and caring. She was extremely helpful in assisting the employees’ understanding of how to get through this difficult time. We appreciated the quick response from CONCERN. Thank you.”

“I was in contact with a counselor as one of my employees was in need of help. The counselor was extremely helpful in what I needed to do (be aware of) as a manager and what steps I should take. I want to thank him for all of his efforts.”

“The counselor provided me the information I needed to help employees cope with a co-worker who was just diagnosed with cancer. He was very sympathetic and understanding of the situation. I also appreciated his offer to talk with anyone directly if they needed to talk to someone.”