

# DARTNELL'S FIRST LINE

SUPERVISOR  
TIPS, TECHNIQUES AND IDEAS FOR MANUFACTURING SUPERVISORS

INSIDE

## RAISE AWARENESS OF COMPANY VALUES

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## QUICK TIPS

## One-size solution doesn't fit absenteeism problems

By LISA A. BEACH

When employees miss work, their absence does more than decrease productivity. It hurts morale, too, because employees with good attendance resent those with poor attendance — especially if nothing is done to correct the problem.

But before you determine what to do about employee absenteeism, you must first find out why it occurs.

According to **Susan Rhodes**, associate professor emeritus of human resource management at **Syracuse University**, employees miss work for

two reasons: either they can't come to work or they don't want to come to work.

Those who can't come to work usually have legitimate reasons such as illness, transportation problems or childcare/eldercare responsibilities. Offering a flexible work environment may help curb this type of absenteeism.

However, those who lack the motivation to come to work pose the greatest challenge. To motivate employees, companies often create an incentive program offering bonuses or paid time off. While this sounds like a good idea, it probably won't fix the problem,

(See **ABSENT** on page 2)

## Ignorance of harassment is not legal bliss

Ignorance is not bliss when workplace sexual harassment is the issue. For supervisors who think that if they don't know about sexual harassment occurring under their noses, they aren't liable — think again.

If a lawsuit is filed as a result of sexual harassment in your department and you did not take action (and even if you did take action), supervisors are often named in the suit along with the company. That means you may be held personally liable in a court of law.

Sexual harassment generally comes in three forms:

- **Physical harassment** includes any intentional touching of another person's body, the inappropriate display of body parts, coerced sexual acts,

or activities, such as pushing and blocking the way, which are demeaning to another person.

- **Verbal harassment** includes suggestive comments, sexual innuendo, sexual humor, advances or propositions of a sexual nature, and insults or threats.

- **Non-verbal harassment** includes leering, suggestive looks, gestures, sounds, pictures (including calendars), cartoons, and derogatory written materials.

Remember that how the harassed person perceives the form of harassment is important. If the person thinks he is receiving leering looks, then he is being sexually harassed. You cannot discount how someone feels or thinks. ■

- **Help your stars shine.** If you are looking for ways to raise the profile of your department, think about developing a few of your high performers. Employees who become stars help increase your area's visibility, as well as their own. Productivity also increases when a high performer is well trained and motivated on the job.

- **Keep up cross-training.** If vacations and holidays seem to put a bigger dent into productivity than it seems they should, you may want to think about cross-training your employees. If your employees are already cross-trained, you may want to consider keeping their skills fresh by having them work on the job once a month in which they are cross-trained.

- **Manage "free agents."** Too many rules can demotivate employees. Before creating yet another rule, ask yourself, "is this rule really necessary?"

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Are there certain procedures I should follow when a person submits his resignation? I usually start looking for someone new right away, but I wondered if there was more I could be doing.

(See page 2)

## Tackle solutions daily

"Life is a continuous exercise in creative problem solving."

— Michael J. Gelb

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

## Change poor hiring process through action

When an employee submits a resignation, many companies get started on finding a replacement as soon as possible. Although that strategy may be time efficient, it may not be the most effective way to start the search for a new candidate. Next time you have a job opening:

- **Arrange an exit interview.** The company needs to know what factors played in the employee's resignation. Another manager or a member of human resources generally performs the exit interview.

Although the employee may not feel comfortable revealing reasons for leaving, understanding reasons for turnover is critical if changes to the position, for example, need to be made for any candidate to be successful in the job.

- **Discuss the position with others.** Ask employees who are in the same job or other supervisors who have employees in similar positions to discuss the ins and outs of the job. What qualities are necessary for a person to have if they are in that position? What are some of the less obvious details about the job that may be helpful for you to know when you hire for the position? You may find that the position needs to be changed and the job description modified. You may also find that the position is not contributing to the company's productivity, and decide not to re-hire. ■

Source: David Walker, *Selection Interviewing* (Amacom 1998).

### ABSENT (continued from page 1)

according to **Ed Robbins**, director of performance learning at **Ceridian Performance Partners** in Minneapolis. Why? Because an incentive program will "motivate" sick employees to come to work (when they shouldn't) and reward employees who regularly come to work anyway.

If a generic incentive program won't fix the absenteeism problem, then what will?

The key to reducing absenteeism, according to Robbins, is to sit down one-on-one with absentee employees, ask them why they're missing work and create individual solutions.

Robbins says a "one-size solution" won't work because unmotivated employees cite a variety of reasons for missing work. Some examples include employees who don't like their job, don't like their boss, feel burned out or just need a break. Robbins offers these additional tips:

- **Allow employees to rotate jobs** to provide variety in their work.
  - **Give employees some time off.** (Tip: When the lure of earning overtime pay factors in, you might have to *require* employees to take a day off.)
  - **Change the expectations** of how you work with employees. Brush up on the basics, such as treating employees respectfully; listening; and providing positive, corrective feedback rather than punitive feedback.
- Rhodes provides even more ideas to cut employee absenteeism:
- **Help create an attendance-oriented culture** by recruiting and selecting employees with good attendance records in previous jobs.
  - **Stress your company's attendance expectations** during orientation, and continue communicating *regularly* about this issue.
  - **Involve employees in designing** their own jobs.
  - **Measure absenteeism.** Chart and post the results, possibly showing individual records.
  - **Praise employees for good attendance** in performance appraisals. ■

Sources: Ed Robbins, *Ceridian Performance Partners*, Minneapolis, (800) 884-4729; Susan Rhodes, *Syracuse, NY*, (315) 425-0004.

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