



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

SPRING  
2024

## EMPLOYEE ADVISORY SERVICE SUPERVISOR/MANAGER NEWSLETTER

*The New Jersey Civil Service Commission's Employee Advisory Service (EAS) Supervisor/Manager Newsletter contains useful articles and information for leaders around various well-being and work-life topics. All articles are intended for supervisors, managers, and any other title that has responsibility for the unit. EAS is committed to improving the quality of life for all New Jersey Civil Service employees by encouraging a good work-life balance, and a healthier, happier, and more productive workplace.*



### UPCOMING WEBINARS

#### How to Use Employee Recognition to Increase Productivity

- April 25th, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

#### Resiliency Strategies for Managers and Supervisors

- April 25th, 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

#### How to Give Difficult Feedback to Your Employees

- May 23rd, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

#### NJ EAS Supervisor-Manager Orientation Webinar

- June 11th, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

#### Five Steps to Building Trust with Your Team

- June 27th, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

### WHAT'S INSIDE

Page 2: How To Build A Stress-Resilient Team

Page 4: How to Empower Others at Work

Page 6: Keeping Work Conflicts Constructive

Page 8: Striking It Rich in Productivity

Page 10: Resiliency Strategies for Managers and Supervisors

Page 11: Q2 Webinars - Register Today

Page 12: EAS Outreach Program



# HOW TO BUILD A STRESS-RESILIENT TEAM

How does stress affect you? Do you get a headache, start to overeat, or lose concentration? Do you panic, become anxious, or shut down? Do you have a high stress tolerance level or do small amounts of stress immediately have a negative effect on you?

More importantly, do you know how your team reacts to stress?

Job stress is the major source of stress for adults, with 40% of workers reporting their job as very or extremely stressful. Twenty-five percent of workers view jobs as the number one stressor in their lives, and almost one in five respondents quit a previous position due to job stress.

We all react to stress differently; it affects our mind and body, and a lot of stress can lead to physical and mental problems. In the United States, the cost of stress-related illness and injury were estimated at more than \$300 billion.

*Here are some of the negative effects of stress on your organization:*

- High rates of absenteeism
- Reduced work productivity
- Decreased employee engagement
- Increased job dissatisfaction
- Increased employee turnover
- Increased mental health and behavioral problems
- Increased workplace violence
- Increased workplace accidents

The impact of workplace stress on our teams and organizations is immense, and building a stress-resistant team is essential to ensuring the sustainable success of our teams. Let's look at some strategies that can help us build stress-resistant teams:

## **TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF STRESS MANAGEMENT**

As a leader, you are instrumental in nurturing the work culture and environment. Regularly highlighting the importance of stress management through early detection, speaking up, and demonstrating self-care shows that you take the mental health and well-being of your team members seriously.



## **STAY CONNECTED**

Solicit feedback from your team members. Ask them what their stress levels are, how they are managing their stress, and if the work environment and workload are negative contributors to their work-life-balance. If your team members are feeling stressed, encourage and motivate them to utilize stress-reducing tactics.

## **MAKE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY KEY**

Create an environment of psychological safety, as it improves workplace wellness and is critical for resilience. A team with high psychological safety is one where employees can raise concerns and share ideas and perspectives without fear. Encourage team members to speak up, express themselves, admit to mistakes, and respond with support.

## **CREATE A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE**

Start at the foundation and ensure your organizational structure is clear. Clear roles and responsibilities reduce confusion and conflict, which elevates stress levels.

## **TEAM BUILDING**

Team-building activities and opportunities for social contact help create collaboration, a sense of community, and shared responsibility. This reduces team member friction. It also increases trust and confidence in colleagues during difficult times.



### **ENVIRONMENT**

Nurture a positive work environment by including collaboration or team-building skills as performance metrics. This will help motivate team members to strengthen these skills, which, in turn, helps to create an environment of trust and mutual respect.

### **TRAINING**

Skill gaps or performance challenges can be major sources of stress for team members. Provide support with training and development, access to resources, coaching, and mentoring to improve skills which help to increase self-confidence. This also creates a growth mindset, which increases team members' adaptability and resilience skills.

### **STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS**

Provide self-care and/or stress management options, such as work-from-home, one-day excused absences, and increased break times. Ensure your organization offers resources to team members who may be struggling with stress. This can include access to mental health services or other support programs.

### **SEEK FEEDBACK**

Regularly ask for feedback in order to review your performance metrics, structures, and targets to ensure they are not stress triggers. Forty-three percent of respondents in the workplace health survey reported that their company "never" or "rarely" had realistic workload expectations.

### **INCLUDE INTANGIBLE REWARDS**

The lack of recognition is a stressor for team members. Rewards are tangible (financial) and intangible (non-financial), and we must not fall into the trap of assuming only financial rewards are required for employee satisfaction. Financial rewards are not enough to motivate high performance. Your reward systems must include intangible rewards like praise, recognition, and awards.

-----

A stress-resistant team is a more productive team with better decision-making skills, better resilience, and better skills in knowledge sharing and problem solving. Such a team can increase innovation and creativity for your organization.



# 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.



# KEEPING WORK CONFLICTS CONSTRUCTIVE

If you've ever worked with a team of people, you know that conflict is inevitable. You may not know that conflict can be constructive.

All too often, disagreements among group members aren't resolved in healthy ways. People may leave meetings feeling hurt, misunderstood, or alienated. Conflicts can linger, creating tension and disrupting work. Over time, people may learn to keep their thoughts to themselves, depriving the group of valuable insights and new ideas.

While you can't stop disagreements from happening, you can turn conflicts into positive opportunities. Constructive conflicts can help to strengthen relationships, improve group decisions, and create a more welcoming and motivating work environment.

## How to Keep Conflicts Constructive

Keeping conflicts constructive requires the commitment of all team members, as well as disciplined leadership to call out and stop destructive or hurtful words and behavior. To make conflicts constructive, each team member should follow these guidelines:

- **Express disagreement.** Be open and honest with each other (while remaining respectful; see next guideline):
  - **Speak up.** Share your thoughts and ideas. If you disagree with a decision or with the general approach of the group, say so, and explain why. Staying silent and holding back are both ways to avoid conflict, and they close the door on the potential benefits of constructive conflict.
  - **Group leaders play an important role here.** They need to encourage open forums where disagreements can be freely expressed. If leaders are afraid of opening the door to contrary ideas and constructive conflict, they can't expect much openness and honesty among team members.



- **Be respectful.** As you express disagreement, be aware of how your words might be heard and interpreted by others. Don't make sweeping statements that generalize or categorize people (such as "Men always..." or "Younger people don't..."). Try not to push emotional hot buttons. Consider how you might frame your arguments so that others will listen to you and pay attention to what you are trying to say.
- **Criticize the idea, not the person.** Express your disagreement in a way that doesn't devalue the person with whom you disagree. Focus on the idea or proposal under discussion, not the person who brought it up:
  - Never sink to personal attacks or name-calling, which can have toxic and long-lasting effects on trust and respect among colleagues.
  - If a conflict degenerates into personal attacks, you need to interrupt the conversation, point out that such behavior is counterproductive, and ask people to restate their disagreements by focusing on the issues. This will set a precedent for future discussions.
  - Over time and with practice, group members will learn to express their disagreements openly and respectfully, and people will speak up because they'll feel safe from verbal attacks.



- **Don't be defensive.** When it's your idea that's being criticized, listen with an open mind. Suppress the natural urge to be defensive. This can be a difficult skill to master. People don't like to be told they're wrong:

- If you think someone's criticism misses the point of what you were saying, ask them to summarize your main points. This allows both of you to identify possible misunderstandings and clarify your positions. By asking questions of those who disagree with you, new ideas and suggestions get thrown into conversations. These may lead to creative solutions that haven't been considered.

- If your idea eventually falls flat—so what? By inviting discussions, you've moved the processes forward in positive ways that defensive reactions could never have accomplished.

- **Focus on one issue at a time.** If, while discussing a point of disagreement, another issue is raised, table it for discussion after the first issue is resolved. Don't let yourself and your team be drawn into an expanding conflict over multiple issues at once.

- **Learn to calm yourself.** If you feel yourself getting overly emotional during the discussion of an issue, calm yourself or ask for a break. Expressing heated emotions won't help you get to a constructive resolution of the conflict. Pay attention to your emotions as clues to what's important to you, but find ways to explain your thoughts and opinions calmly.

You can make conflicts work for your team, but it takes a commitment from all group members. Each person must agree to honestly state disagreements in a sensitive manner that focuses on the ideas, not the people. Approached in this way, conflicts can be one of your team's greatest assets.

Source: Morgan, H. (2023, December 21). *Keeping work conflicts constructive* (B. Schuette & E. Morton, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options (WPO).



# STRIKING IT RICH IN PRODUCTIVITY

Involving and supporting employees is the key to mining their potential. Managers need new ways to get employees to do their best. Traditional carrots and sticks of management—cash, raises, bonuses, and the like—aren't enough. Employees are looking for managers to have their best interests at heart and to show it on a daily basis. They're looking for more meaning in their work.

To be effective, managers must create supportive work environments that can influence, but not force, desired behaviors and outcomes. The best managers are masters of making things happen. They create more energy than they consume; instead of draining an organization's energy, they amplify and channel it back to the organization. Managers can improve their organizations by energizing individuals, energizing teams and energizing organizations.

## ENERGIZING INDIVIDUALS

The trust, respect, and consideration managers show employees through one-on-one relationships—every day of the week—is the foundation of an energized organization. For example, to keep employee morale and energy high during busy times of the year, executives at one company have been known to personally push coffee around the office, serving drinks and refreshments to front-line partners. Employees appreciate such gestures, which also provide opportunities to bring up and resolve customer issues at the same time.

One of the best ways to involve employees in an organization, and to energize them in the process, is through collecting employees' ideas. For example, the city of Phoenix, Arizona, runs a well-organized employee-suggestion program to generate ideas. City employees can win cash if their suggestions:

- Increase productivity
- Cut costs
- Improve the quality of services
- Boost employee morale or safety



Employees are notified in writing about the status of their suggestions within 60 days of submission. Employees are eligible for certificates, plaques, or cash. When a suggestion is rejected, a letter explains why the idea wasn't adopted. Employees can appeal the decision to a suggestion committee up to a year after the date of the rejection letter.

## ENERGIZING TEAMS

In recent years, teams have become fixtures in the business world. Organizations use ad hoc teams, cross-functional teams, self-directed work teams, and more. Unfortunately in many cases, teams continue to take orders from managers and have few opportunities to act independently. To energize employees, managers need to empower teams to act independently, decide what needs to be done, and how to do it.

At 3M, a software-development company in St. Paul, MN, former Vice President (and now late) Robert Hershock and corporate researcher David J. Braun reviewed the work of a team that had developed a new model of respirator in record time. Hershock and Braun discovered these keys to team success:

- *Empower teams.* As Hershock put it, this means "giving the team the authority to make decisions and then act on them."
- *Let teams manage risk.* Teams should be given the power to select the level of risk that offers the highest likelihood of success.



- *Let teams control their internal budgets.* Teams—not outside managers—must make all decisions on project matters, including financial determinations.
- *Recognize the phases teams progress through.* Managers must recognize when teams need additional management support or coaching to get through rough times.
- *Let teams be involved in the reward process.* No one knows better what motivates the team than its members.

Energized team members can come from unlikely places. To challenge thinking and spur energy and creativity, Honda Motor Company in Tokyo purposefully assigns employees unfamiliar with technology on the company's design teams. Innovations arise from the spirited discussions that flow from the blank-slate questions and probing.

### **ENERGIZING ORGANIZATIONS**

Energy can spring from managers and workers alike. However, many organizations actually de-energize employees through strict rules and procedures that reduce employee initiative to finding the right page in a policy manual. An organization can be flexible—providing options, resources, and tools to its employees—or it can be bureaucratic and policy-bound, creating an environment that erodes confidence, self-esteem, and energy of its employees.

As part of its process improvement training program, the Michigan Department of Transportation issues a "license to change" to each participant. The laminated license, signed by the agency head and deputy director of quality, expresses management's support of employee efforts to break out of their daily routines to streamline processes and improve quality.

The U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Human Resources Administration in Washington, DC, sponsored an idea day for all employees to examine ways to improve customer services, streamline work processes, and enhance the office environment. The event netted 2,134 ideas—68% of which were adopted.



Many organizations have found that if they provide flexibility and support, employees will repay them with loyalty and hard work. Stride Rite Corp., a shoe manufacturer in Cambridge, Ma, offers subsidized onsite child care and elder care facilities. This commitment to employees is so firm that Stride Rite's management insisted that a new venture partner in Thailand open a day care center for its employees.

Dedicate yourself to cultivating this spirit at your workplace. Your employees will repay you with enhanced effectiveness and involvement in their jobs, and your organization will reap the rewards through improved productivity and reduced costs.

*Source: Nelson, B., & Schuette, B. (Ed.). (Reviewed 2019 [Ed.]). Striking it rich in productivity. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.*



# Employee Advisory Service

Support - Empowerment - Growth



## Resiliency Strategies for Managers and Supervisors

*In today's dynamic workplace, the ability to bounce back from adversity is crucial. Join us to discover how you can empower your team members to thrive in the face of challenges.*

**Date:** Tuesday, April 30, 2024

**Time:** 12noon - 1pm

Join EAS for this special **April Stress Awareness Month Webinar** with panelists from the NJ Department of Children and Families - Office of Resilience and Office of Employee Health and Wellness

**EAS is here to help!**

[www.nj.gov/csc/employees/advisory](http://www.nj.gov/csc/employees/advisory)

1-866-327-9133 | [EAS\\_Help@csc.nj.gov](mailto:EAS_Help@csc.nj.gov)

**REGISTER NOW**





# Employee Advisory Service

## UPCOMING WEBINARS SUPERVISORS/MANAGERS

### How to Use Employee Recognition to Increase Productivity

Date / Time

- April 25, 2024
- 11 AM - Noon

**About this webinar:**

This practical session will provide an overview of the current best practices in employee recognition, and motivate leaders to be more proactive in utilizing it to maximize the productivity of their staff members.



### How to Give Difficult Feedback to Your Employees

Date / Time

- May 23, 2024
- 11 AM - Noon

**About this webinar:**

Successful leaders have the ability to skillfully discuss difficult or stressful topics with their employees. This important presentation will provide several practical strategies for having these challenging conversations more effectively including building connections with employees, being more collaborative in our approach, and handling disagreement respectfully.



### Five Steps to Building Trust with Your Team

Date / Time

- June 27, 2024
- 11 AM - Noon

**About this webinar:**


This session will cover several of the most important management practices that build trust with individual employees and teams, including how to “walk the talk”, be an open and transparent communicator, and acknowledge your mistakes.



Employee Advisory Service (EAS)  
*Support - Empowerment - Growth*

Your privacy is important to us. Your confidentiality is protected by state and federal law and regulations. All of the services offered are guided by professional and ethical standards. Contact us to learn more.

 [EAS\\_Help@csc.gov](mailto:EAS_Help@csc.gov)

 1-866- 327-9133

 <https://nj.gov/csc/employees/advisory/>





# Employee Advisory Service

Support - Empowerment - Growth

## EAS OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Employee Advisory Service (EAS) is a program designed to assist employees and their dependents with personal, family, or work-related issues that may adversely impact their work performance. EAS provides confidential assessment, counseling, and referral services to help restore the health and productivity of employees and the workplace as a whole.

Here are some key points about EAS:

- **Purpose and Scope:**

- EAS supports both employees and their household members.
- It addresses a wide range of issues, including personal, family, and work-related challenges.
- The goal is to provide timely and effective assistance while maintaining confidentiality.

- **Services Offered:**

- *Assessment:* Employees can self-refer or be referred by their Appointing Authority for an intake/assessment session with a counselor.
- *Counseling:* Professional counselors collaborate with regional providers to offer services throughout New Jersey.
- *Referral:* EAS helps connect individuals with appropriate resources based on their needs.

- **Benefits for Employers:**

- Employers can benefit from EAS services by promoting employee well-being, effectiveness, and efficiency.
- EAS offers webinars and events focused on various topics relevant to employees and supervisors/managers.

If you have any concerns or need support, consider taking advantage of the resources provided by EAS. Our Outreach Team will visit your agency to inform employees about the free benefits that we provide, and how they can request our services. Ask your Human Resources Department to schedule an information session for your team today.



**NUMBER:**

1-866-327-9133

**EMAIL:**

EAS\_HELP@CSC.NJ.GOV

**24 HOURS A DAY 7 DAYS A WEEK**  
(EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES)

12

