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

The Art of Effective Management
- July 25th, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

EAS Supervisor-Manager Orientation Webinar
- August 13th, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

The Four Keys to Handling the Pressure of Being a Manager
- August 22nd, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Managing the Stress of Time and Competing Priorities
- September 26th, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

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WHAT'S INSIDE

P: 1-866-327-9133 | E: EAS_Help@csc.nj.gov | W: www.nj.gov/csc/employees/advisory

Tips on How to Slow Down, Get Organized, and Say "No"

There are a lot of worn-out people who work demanding jobs, then begin a second shift as soon as they head home.

This might include running errands, picking up children at various locations, and buying dinner before arriving home. Cooking, helping with homework, putting kids to bed, making phone calls, and paying bills may all be part of the second shift before falling into bed exhausted.

Many people live life as if they have two full-time jobs. Most people feel as though they are always working, even when at home. The emphasis on productivity usually found in the workplace has seeped into free time—and it's wearing people out.

Does life need to be this frantic and exhausting? Is it possible, in this stress-filled world, to balance work and personal life?

It is possible, but it requires changing the approach to work and to personal lives. Here are three suggestions as possible starting points:

1. Slow your pace and intensity to focus on what's important.
2. Make a work plan.
3. Learn to say no to urgent but less-important demands.

Slow your pace and intensity to focus on what's important.

The idea of slowing down is scary to some people. They're so accustomed to being in perpetual hyperspeed that they rarely think about using their time differently. However, living at too fast a pace is stressful and diminishes the quality of life. When people deliberately slow down, they are forced to decide how to use the limited time, because they are choosing to do less.

Instead of spouting energy in all directions simultaneously, focus that energy in one direction at a time. This enables you to be more thorough in what you do and to deliver more quality. It allows you to be more engaged and satisfied with your work.

Slowing down also forces people to be mindful of personal values. Truly important activities or people will get the energy they deserve, and lower priorities must wait. Here are some simple but effective ways to begin slowing down:

- Slow the pace at which you walk. Look around you, especially when you're outside. Glance at the sky and notice the shapes of clouds. Feel the breeze on your face.

- When you're eating, take smaller bites. Chew your food more slowly. Taste the flavors. Too often, eating is simply refueling, and not the enjoyable experience it can be.

- Choose your words more carefully in conversation. This will force you to talk more slowly and become more aware of what's being said. Search for words that clearly communicate what you mean.

- When you're driving, ease up on the accelerator. Leave a few minutes early so that you don't have to weave in and out of traffic, tailgate, or get worked up over slow drivers.

- As you develop new rhythms for living, even more techniques will occur to you. People who choose slower ways of living often find they enjoy life more, feel less stressed, and believe it or not, get more done. They're also more satisfied with their work, because they're attending to the things in their lives that are most important.

Make a work plan.

Most people spend too much time on unnecessary things. This means the truly important matters get pushed aside. If this happens often enough, you find yourself moving from one deadline crisis to another.

For instance, look at the case of Dan (his name has been changed for confidentiality), who sought counseling for his problems with stress.

Dan discussed how he spends most of his evenings and weekends at work, trying to stay ahead of his workload. His wife and children resented his employer because his work responsibilities left him little time at home.

When asked how he organized his daily time—how he prioritized his workload for a given day—Dan said had no plan.

In fact, after being asked to keep an hourly log of his time at work over a week, he found that he was spending an average of two to three hours a day chatting with coworkers, checking email, filing documents, and answering the phone—none of which was essential to his main job description.

With practice, he turned that time spent on low-value activities into productive accomplishments. As a result, he rarely needed to work overtime and gained much more time with his family, and he achieved a sense of balance between work and life, which made his job more satisfying.

Effective work plans include events and commitments related to your personal life as well as your job. Start by writing down a list of work and personal events, projects, and commitments. Then, realistically estimate how much time each will take. Finally, plot your course of action to accomplish them.

By putting this all on paper, you make the plan concrete. To increase the likelihood that you'll stick with your plan, tell someone about it, and ask him or her to hold you accountable for it.

Learn to say no to urgent but less-important demands.

Slowing the pace of your life and making a work plan can be derailed if you don't learn to say no when necessary. There's no shortage of urgent requests. Some of these, no doubt, must be completed, but many, if not most, only seem important because they ask for immediate attention.

People who let their schedules be ruled by urgent requests from other people often look at these requests as obligations instead of choices. Here's an example, from a student, Gloria, who recently attended a stress-management workshop.

Gloria told the class she was stressed out because she had so many troubled people in her life who constantly needed her. Every day brought a new "emergency," as she called it, taking her away from her job, family, and other responsibilities.

Another student asked Gloria why she felt that she needed to be the caretaker for all of these people. "Because these people depend on me," Gloria said. "They have no one else."

"Why don't you occasionally say no to them?" another student asked. "Tell them you have personal commitments that keep you from helping at that moment." Gloria, beginning to cry, responded, "I don't feel like I have the option to do what's best for me."

Gloria is a classic people-pleaser. She rearranges her life to accommodate others, in hopes they'll like her and give her the respect for which she longs. The problem isn't her desire to help people, but her willingness to disrupt her life whenever someone makes a request. She doesn't give herself the option to say *no*.

It's perfectly acceptable to refuse urgent requests that come your way. Don't say yes when that small voice inside you screams no! Respect your own limited time and energy. If responding to a so-called emergency means you're inviting unwelcome stress or sacrificing more important priorities, simply decline. Elaborate explanations of why you can't accommodate requests aren't necessary.

Breaking free of overwork tendencies is more about changing what happens inside of you than trying to change your environment. The reality is that you live in a stressful, demanding culture. You can't do much to change that.

You can, however, change how fast you move and how focused you are on the work and personal priorities that are most important to you. That's a great start toward a satisfying balance between work and personal life.

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Source: Gilles, G. & Morgan, H. (Updated 2023). Overcoming overload (B. Schuette, Ed.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options

ATTITUDINAL AWARENESS

Often, the biggest barrier to workplace accessibility is not architectural in nature, but attitudinal. Employees may have misconceptions about people with disabilities and the work they can do.

Examples of such attitudinal barriers include:

- **Inferiority**—The employee is seen as a "second-class citizen."

- **Pity**—People feel sorry for the employee and are patronizing as a result.

- **Hero worship**—People consider a person with a disability living independently to be "special."

- **Ignorance**—The employee is dismissed as incapable because of their disability.

- **Multi-sensory affect**—People assume that the employee's disability affects their other senses.

- **Stereotypes**—People make both positive and negative generalizations about disabilities.

- **Backlash**—People believe the employee is being given an unfair advantage because of his or her disability.

- **Denial**—People may not believe that hidden disabilities are legitimate and therefore do not require accommodations.

- **Fear**—People are afraid they will offend an employee with a disability by doing or saying the wrong thing and, as a result, will avoid the employee.

Employers can help break down attitudinal barriers in the workplace by engaging employees in discussions about disability and providing training to increase employees' perspectives and understanding. Often, local disability service providers offer disability etiquette education and training.

Additional resources include the Job Accommodation Network's "Disability Awareness to Increase Your Comfort, Confidence, and Competence" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFh9zdmC5jE), an online training with handouts that can be used for individual or group training, and the Campaign for Disability Employment's public service announcement (PSA) toolkits (https://www.youtube.com/user/thewhatcanyoudo).

For more information, visit the Working Together page (https://askearn.org/page/disability-etiquette) or take the Working Together online training course (https://askearn.org/learning-center/course/working-together). The Creating Inclusive Workplaces page (https://askearn.org/page/creating-inclusive-workplaces) offers additional resources.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN). (n.d.). Attitudinal awareness. Retrieved November 14, 2023, from https://askearn.org

LEADING WITH LAUGHTER

"Laughter is the shortest distance between two people."
—Victor Borge

WHY CHOOSE LAUGHTER?
In this brave new world, it has become harder than ever to foster creativity, connection, and wellbeing among work colleagues. However, research has shown that laughter is an untapped force that leaders can use to build genuine human connection and wellbeing among coworkers.

When people laugh, the brain releases a cocktail of chemicals that makes you feel less stressed, slightly euphoric, and more trusting of others. As such, it makes people more primed for connection, more resilient to stress, and more creative and resourceful.

One reason humor is so beneficial is because you cannot experience two emotions. If you are laughing and feeling enjoyment, you cannot be feeling pressured or stressed. Hence, the use of humor to bring levity to challenges and pressure can be hugely beneficial.

BENEFITS FOR YOUR TEAM
The research on laughter in the workplace has revealed significant benefits:[1]

- Leaders with a sense of humor are seen as 27 percent more motivating and admirable.
- Employees are 15 percent more engaged with teams led by a humorous leader.
- Such teams are twice as likely to solve a challenge that requires creativity.

Other benefits of laughter include less burnout among employees, higher probabilities of learning, more collaboration among team members, faster recovery from stressful situations, and an increase in overall work effectiveness.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT LAUGHTER IN YOUR LEADERSHIP TECHNIQUES
To use it authentically, you need to understand your own humor and that of your team. However, in general, here are some ways you can implement laughter into your leadership:

- **Use self-deprecation.** By being able to laugh at yourself, especially when things go wrong, you set the tone for levity in your team. Being able to have a laugh at yourself signals to others that everything will be okay.

- **Be clever.** If you can't be "ha ha" funny and tell jokes or stories, cleverness actually goes a long way. This could involve simple wordplay, humorous observations, or witty remarks!

- **Facilitate a humorous working environment.** While you may not be a funny person, you can facilitate laughter by allowing appropriate humor to be expressed by members of your team. This could be done by including an appropriate cartoon in a weekly email, allowing members to start meetings with a G-rated joke or story, and allowing the office jester appropriate space to add a bit of levity from time to time.

However, like with any joke, context is important. Ensure you read the room and make sure your attempts at laughter or humor are appropriate. Avoid using sarcasm, as it sends mixed messages, and never "punch down."

Reference
1. McKinsey. (2021, April 15). Laugh more, lead better [Video]. Retrieved January 30, 2024, from https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/leadership/laugh-more-lead-better

YOUR PROBLEM-SOLVING TOOLBOX

Some problems are easy to deal with. You've encountered them before, and you know just what to do. Others can be more difficult, such as problems with relationships, finances, work or school, or problems that come up during a significant life change. When you face new or complex problems, or problems that leave you feeling stuck, it's time to draw on your toolbox of problem-solving resources. It can also help to follow a step-by-step problem-solving approach.

Your Problem-Solving Resources

You may not realize it when you're confronting a difficult problem, but you have a well-stocked toolbox of resources to draw on. These may include:

- Your qualities and strengths, such as your curiosity, resilience, self-awareness, determination, courage, creativity and flexibility.

- Your skills and abilities, which might include your communication and listening skills, your ability to analyze situations and think critically, your ability to plan and prioritize, and your ability to calm yourself and regulate your emotions.

- Your supportive social connections – the people in your life whom you can talk to; share your concerns with; bounce ideas off of; get honest feedback from; and turn to for help, guidance and support

Steps in Problem-Solving

Building on your existing toolbox of resources, here's one more: a step-by-step approach to problem-solving that can be applied, with variations, to almost any problem you face.

Step 1: Identify the problem.

The first step in solving any problem is to notice, acknowledge and identify it. Ignoring the problem won't solve it and may lead to the problem getting even worse over time. When identifying a problem, it's important to distinguish between the symptoms of the problem and the problem itself. Write down a description of the problem you're trying to solve, being as specific and concrete as possible. Imagine, too, what would be different for you and others if the problem were solved. That vision can serve as your goal as you take steps to address the problem.

Step: 2: Break the problem down, or look for its causes.

Ask yourself questions about the problem to break it down and get at its causes. Why is this a problem? When did it begin? In what situations does it come up? Who does the problem affect? How has it affected you and others? Have you solved a similar problem before? What's different about this problem that's making it harder for you to solve?

Digging deeper into the problem can help you distinguish between symptoms of the problem and the problem itself, or help you identify the part of the problem that's most important to solve. Sometimes, asking a series of 'why' questions can help you get to the problem's causes.

It can also be helpful to get another viewpoint as you break a problem down. That might be a friend or work colleague who has a different perspective or relevant experience.

Step 3: Make a list of possible solutions.

Once you've identified the problem that needs to be solved or the causes of the problem that needs to be addressed, make a list of all the possible solutions you can think of, even ones that seem impractical or even silly. Don't judge or rank the ideas as you're generating them. Be as open-minded and creative as possible as you generate ideas, and make as long a list as possible.

Involve other people who might help you come up with ideas you might not think of yourself. That might be friends, work colleagues (for a work problem) or a professional counsellor or coach (for an emotional problem or one involving hard-to-change habits). You may need to do some research to learn about solutions that have worked for others in similar situations. A book, online research or a conversation with an expert might help you identify potential solutions you're unlikely to think of on your own.

Don't rush this process. Fresh ideas might come to you after you sleep on the problem, or when you're doing something else and not working at coming up with ideas.

Step 4: Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each possible solution.

Once you have a good list of possible solutions, consider the advantages and disadvantages of each. You might do this by making a chart with columns to note pros and cons.

For each possible approach, consider whether it would really solve the problem, how hard it would be to act upon and whether making it work is within your control or would depend on other people changing their behavior.

Try to be rational and realistic, avoiding overly negative or overly optimistic thinking, but also pay attention to your feelings. How would you feel if you were to act on a particular solution? As you narrow your list of options, think about the worst possible outcome if you were to try a solution, the best possible outcome and the most likely outcome.

Step 5: Choose a solution to try.

From your options, choose a solution or combination of solutions to try. You're not looking for the perfect solution. That probably doesn't exist. You're choosing the one that seems to have the best chance of working for you.

Step 6: Map out a plan of how to act on the solution.

Once you've settled on an approach to try, make a step-by-step plan for making it happen. What will you need to do differently than you do now for this to work? What resources or support will you need? How will you need to communicate your plan, and to whom? What step or steps will you need to take first?

Step 7: Put your plan into action.

Starting with one small step, put your plan into action. Allow yourself to experience the feeling of success as you make progress, even small progress, and keep building on those successes.

Step 8: Review and adjust.

As you make progress on implementing your solution, pay attention to how it's going. Is it working? Are you getting closer to solving the problem you set out to solve? If not, what might you do differently or what other solutions might you try?

Don't worry if you don't solve your problem on the first try. Look at it as a chance to learn and grow. You'll know more, and have new skills and experience, when you try again in a different way.

Employee Advisory Service

UPCOMING WEBINARS
SUPERVISORS/MANAGERS

EMPLOYEE ADVISORY SERVICE (EAS)
CONFIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT, COUNSELING AND REFERRAL SERVICES
STATE OF NEW JERSEY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
1-866-327-9133

The Art of Effective Management

REGISTER NOW

Date / Time
- July 25th
- 11 AM – 12PM

About this webinar:
This session offers a thorough overview of the management and leadership skills, along with strategies essential for a supervisor to effectively motivate and engage their team. It will cover key skills such as employee relationship development, teambuilding, coaching, performance management, conflict resolution, and effective management strategies.

How to Effectively Supervise a Remote Team

REGISTER NOW

Date / Time
- August 22nd
- 11 AM – 12PM

About this webinar:
Supervisors who are responsible for managing remote workers face several unique challenges. This important session reviews the core management and leadership skills necessary to ensure that remote employees are engaged and productive. Areas to be discussed include methods for keeping remote workers connected, the importance of establishing a communications rhythm, and strategies for effectively coaching and managing remote worker performance.

The Keys to Creating a Thriving Team Culture

REGISTER NOW

Date / Time
- September 26th
- 11 AM – 12PM

About this webinar:
This session is designed to help leaders to better understand the characteristics of a great team culture and provides several strategies for creating and maintaining a workplace environment in which their employees can thrive.

Employee Advisory Service (EAS)
Support - Empowerment - Growth

✉ EAS_Help@csc.gov

📞 1-866- 327-9133

🌐 https://nj.gov/csc/employees/advisory/

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EMPLOYEE ADVISORY SERVICE (EAS)

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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.

> **BOOK NOW**

NUMBER:
1-866-327-9133

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

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