

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

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An Untapped Market How EAP can Help Small Businesses

By Chris Knoepke, Kate Aronoff, & Maureen Carney

Small businesses are gaining in prominence and importance in the American labor market. Between 1980 and 2010, there was a 30% reduction in manufacturing jobs and a 75% increase in service sector employment (Bodenheimer & Grumbach, 2012). Moreover, nearly 90% of all businesses in the United States have fewer than 20 employees.

In the U.S., EAPs evolved from workplace substance use programs (Masi, 2007) typically offered by large unionized companies, making EAP models and services in a manner most apropos to these organizations. This means that, in order to meet the needs of companies and employees in the 21st century, EAPs need to change to match the present nature of the American workforce. These shifts may include any number of changes, including *where* services are provided to employees, *how* utilization reporting occurs and what it includes, *what* clinical issues are given the greatest level of attention, pricing structure of EAP plans, and procedures that maintain confidentiality.

Industries at Highest Risk

Historically speaking, small businesses – disproportionately represented by service-oriented companies – have lacked access to EAP and

“Why might smaller businesses be more susceptible to workplace issues? Consider that, unlike large companies, they often lack a Human Resource department that can develop and interpret workplace policies.”

other benefits while also illustrating an increased incidence of substance use and mental health concerns. National level data consistently rank a few specific industries at the highest risk for workplace problems, including hospitality and accommodations; construction and maintenance; food service; and arts, entertainment and recreation (SAMHSA, 2007).

Small Business Vulnerability

Why might smaller businesses be more susceptible to workplace issues? Consider that, unlike large companies, they often lack a

Human Resource department that can develop and interpret workplace policies. In many cases, the owner IS the H.R. department by default. Small businesses in the industries noted previously also frequently have:

- Higher turnover;
- A lack of “checks and balances” (what the boss says goes);

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- *A more permissive culture toward substance abuse;*
- *Hourly/“tipped wage” pay and associated economic volatility;*
- *Male-dominated workplaces (especially construction);*
- *Inconsistent work schedules (9-to-5 hours aren’t as typical as they are in larger firms); and*
- *Lack of access to affordable health insurance and other fringe benefits (limiting the opportunities employees have to seek care).* (Hartwell, Steele, French, Potter, Rodman, & Zarkin, 1996; U.S. Department of Labor, 2005)

These issues may contribute to both an increased risk of mental health and substance use problems among small business employees and increased difficulty in access to EAP and other support services.

EAP Challenges

With a lack of organizational policies and framework that is often present in larger companies, it is not difficult to see why a workplace issue can be much harder to resolve at a smaller business. (**Editor’s note:** For a role-playing exercise for EA professionals, see the Case Study sidebar on page 4.) By their very nature, small businesses provide particular challenges to EAP. They include:

- *Financial constraints* (they typically can’t afford EAP services along the usual pricing models);
- *Confidentiality* (when everybody knows everybody, and anyone’s absence from the office is noticeable, it can be hard to keep something a secret);
- *Lack of context* (they’ve never had EAP);
- *Scheduling* (when everyone wears a lot of hats, scheduling appointments is difficult); and
- *Denial of employee issues* (a

small business can be like a “little family” that doesn’t want to let an “outsider” like the EAP know what’s going on).

The financial challenge can be offset by considering consortium models that allow a firm to pool their monetary resources with other small businesses. Education and marketing are also vital.

Workplace Prevention Services

Funded by the Colorado Office of Behavioral Health, and formerly through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Peer Assistance Services, Inc. (PAS), offers the Workplace Prevention Services program. Its core components include: policy development (including Drug Free Workplace Policies and testing referrals), supervisor training, resiliency training for employees, and short-term problem resolution and referral services for employees of eligible companies.

Utilization

Services are valuable only when they are utilized. Increasing utilization generally leads to desirable outcomes, including: *decreased* substance use and associated problems; *decreased* absenteeism/presenteeism (e.g. less time dealing with problems while at work); and *increased* morale.

At the company and promotional levels, higher employee utilization is associated with: 1) *HR and management promotion of EAP* (Azzone, 2009); 2) *on-site EAPs interacting with staff*, theoretically decreasing stigma (Jacobson, 2010); 3) *employees given procedures specific to EAP*, theoretically increasing confidence and familiarity (Weiss, 2003); 4) *supervisors being trained on EAP*, improving the referral process

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(Weiss, 2003); and 5) *EAPs being adequately staffed*, providing timely service (Weiss, 2003).

Conversely, lower EAP utilization is associated with: 1) Employee fear of discrimination and shame at work (Jacobson, 2010); and 2) “Unusual and significant” employee stress, such as layoffs, natural disasters, etc.; which may increase barriers to services,

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such as distrust of company, lack of basic resources (Azzone, 2009).

To drive utilization, it is important to provide support to managers. Our outcome data seems to suggest that the provision of management consultation services consistently predicts increased employee utilization among small business clients, even when company factors and the presence or absence of other services are accounted for.

PAS learned a number of important lessons necessary to building successful EAP services and relationships with small businesses. Different companies, in different sizes and industries, will develop different cultures, attitudes, and expectations related to workplace professionalism and boundaries. EAPs who are accustomed to working with larger, more traditional organizations should be aware of these differences in culture when working with small businesses.

In terms of problem solving with small businesses, the EAP can have a tremendous impact at an individual level, which can aid companies who rely heavily on these individuals in a variety of ways. Finally, our data clearly illustrate that management consultations led to higher utilization among small business clients.

Summary

“Uncle Bob’s Car Lot” is today’s GM. Small businesses are an untapped EAP market: in fact, these firms have a high need for EAP services. However, there are also unique considerations that need to be taken into account when working with small businesses, including staffing, schedules, available resources, maintaining confidentiality, and others. ■

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Editor’s Notebook

It is a real dichotomy that it often takes a mid-to-large-size company to afford EAP services for their employees even though it is actually *smaller* businesses that are driving the 21st century economy. Chris Knoepke, Kate Aronoff and Maureen Carney present suggestions for better tapping into this market in this month’s cover story.

The article is based on Chris, Kate and Maureen’s 2013 World EAP Conference presentation, “The Biggest Little Untapped Market: EAP Practice with Small Businesses.” (A synopsis was offered in the January 2014 *EAR*.)

I had the good fortune of attending this break-out session, which featured a role-playing exercise to help EA professionals envision the unique challenges that smaller firms face in addressing employee issues that are often easier to resolve at large organizations. I hope that the

case study that accompanies the cover story comes at least close to approximating this audience activity.

This topic also strikes a personal chord with me since Impact Publications, publishers of this newsletter, is a small business. Smaller firms certainly have good points; they can more quickly shift gears to address the needs of their customers than larger companies. They are also more like a family in which everyone knows everybody else.

The point is this: small firms have a high need for EAP services, but there are also unique considerations that EA professionals have to take into account. Happy reading.

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Assistance Services, Inc. This article is based on Chris, Kate and Maureen’s 2013 World EAP Conference presentation, “The Biggest Little Untapped Market: EAP Practice with Small Businesses.”

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Case Study: Excellence Salon

1) Let's assume that one of your contracting businesses is a very successful, dually-owned local salon that employs 20 part-time commission stylists, 10 entry-level hourly stylists, one receptionist, and one office manager. *What are some of the challenges you would expect to find in providing EAP services to this salon?*

Consider some of the following likely challenges: Each employee group may carry with it different levels of status, potential income, preferable schedules, or other issues, creating the opportunity for conflict between groups. Hospitality work provides other challenges in maintaining boundaries, both between employees and with clients, that the EAP should be aware of. Consider also the single receptionist and their functional role within the business. These individuals often know a lot about the operation of the business, and have a lot of control over decisions about personnel, scheduling, etc.

2) The two owners have not gotten along for the past several years, and now have different levels of authority within the company. Both are inconsistent in their treatment of employees (time off requests, discipline, schedules, etc.) *What could the EAP do to help?*

Depending on how the information about the owners' disagreements came to light, the EAP may want to consider a number of options, including the development of an employee manual with delineated processes for time off requests, scheduling, and employee discipline. The EAP may also consider facilitating a dialogue between the two owners about their goals for the company. This dialogue may be productive on its own or represent the beginning of a formal mediation process.

3) One stylist has begun frequently showing up to work either hung over or still drunk from the night before. Co-workers are having to cover for her missed work and supervisors are concerned about accidents. *What could the EAP do to help this employee and the small business?*

First, in a business with scissors, chemicals, etc., consider the liability that an impaired employee could pose to customers. Could the worker with the alcohol problem qualify for addiction treatment services? Also, it seems clear that business coaching is necessary to help the salon

devise a policy for possible future cases of impaired employees and safety hazards. Stress that a reluctance to do so can result in losing good employees.

4) Excellence Salon's issues include: no handbook or drug-free workplace policy, alcohol use allowed on-site, owner conflict (no checks, balances and unnecessary entanglement), and untreated substance use and mental health issues.

Consider referring such businesses to other resources available to small businesses, including local Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), other SBA programs, and local chambers of commerce or offices of economic development. However, also recognize that EAP "buy-in" to any assistance may not be easy as many small businesses owners are used to solving problems independently.

Successes & Lessons Learned

While facilitating changes in a small business like Excellence Salon may not be easy, this does not mean that they don't occur. The Workplace Prevention Program at Peer Assistance Services was able to help:

- Develop an employee handbook, which included a DFWP policy;
- Offer management consultations;
- Provide a forum for staff feedback;
- Improve owners' awareness of employee problems; and
- Increase EAP utilization. ■

– Chris Knoepke, Kate Aronoff, & Maureen Carney

Myths about Introverts – Part II

By Adam Grant

The stigma of introversion is evaporating. However, while people may be more open about being introverts, they still cling to assumptions that don't stand up to rigorous evidence. It's time to debunk five of these myths. We explored two of them last month; the remainder will appear in the conclusion of this two-part article.

Myth: Extraverts are better leaders than introverts.

In one poll, 65% of senior executives said it was a liability for leaders to be introverted.

Extraverts must be better leaders!

Not so fast. It's true that extraverts are more likely to be attracted to and selected for leadership roles, but they're not better leaders than introverts. When I tracked leadership effectiveness, we found that extraverts and introverts were equally successful overall.

Extraverts had the enthusiasm and assertiveness to get the best out of passive followers, but they hogged the spotlight in ways that stifled the initiative of proactive followers, leaving them discouraged and missing out on their ideas.

Introverted leaders thrive by listening carefully to suggestions. When General Charles Krulak, the former commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, took over as the CEO of a bank, he sat down with his vice presidents and said, "Everyone around this table has forgotten more about banking than I know. And because of that, I'm going to need and seek your advice. I may not always agree with you,

and if I don't, I'll let you know why. If you get to a point where you don't feel you can come to me, I've failed as a leader."

Myth: Extraverts are better networkers than introverts.

Networking is about the quality of the relationships you build, not the number of people you contact or the number of times you reach out to them. If you stereotype extraverts as charismatic and introverts as aloof, think again. It's not uncommon for introverts to be just as comfortable networking as extraverts. Plenty of introverts are sociable: they'll strike up a conversation with random people at parties, but get easily overwhelmed by bright lights and loud noises.

Myth: Extraverts are better salespeople than introverts.

When I looked at the evidence, the average correlation between

extraversion and sales performance was a big, fat whopping zero.

Why? We forget to consider the ambiverts in the middle of the spectrum. Most people are ambiverted rather than introverted or extraverted: they're quiet in some situations and loud in others. Sure enough, when I studied sales revenue, ambiverts brought in more sales revenue than introverts or extraverts.

Whereas extraverts are prone to dominating the conversation and coming on too strong, and introverts are sometimes too reserved and reluctant to pitch, ambiverts have the flexibility to adapt to the demands of the situation. So if you want to become better at persuading and influencing, follow the advice in Dan Pink's fascinating book *To Sell is Human*. "Get in touch with your inner ambivert." ■

Adam Grant is a Wharton professor and the author of "Give and Take", a New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestseller about the hidden power of helping others.

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Repeated Deployments takes its Toll on Families

After more than 12 years of sustained war and multiple deployments borne by less than 1% of the population, we now have an entire generation of military families that know nothing but war. Although we're certainly not the first generation of military families to deal with the aftermath of war – there's simply no precedent for how repeated deployments have affected the mental health of military spouses, children, parents and siblings.

It's like living in a continuous state of emergency for more than a decade and never being able to fully exhale in relief. As soon as your soldier comes home, you're counting down the days until he or she leaves and returns to the battlefield.

Incredibly, the majority of families thrive as they transition out of military service and re-integrate into civilian life. But *too many others* are struggling

to cope with depression, anxiety and what some veteran spouses are calling Secondary Post Traumatic Stress.

Research conducted by the University of Southern California found that teens with military connections have a higher rate of suicidal thoughts than their civilian counterparts, while other studies indicate that *military spouses* – particularly those serving as caregivers to support their wounded veterans – *are more at risk to suffer mental health problems*.

In addition, the stigma that prevents many service members and veterans from seeking help is just as prevalent in military families. Ask a military wife how she's doing, and most will answer, "*Fine*" – because what other choice does she have but to keep it together? For some families, the line between "*fine*" and hitting the wall going 100 miles per hour can be a very thin one.

The Defense Department Suicide Prevention Office published a report on the feasibility of tracking suicides among military family members. It stated that it would cost less than \$1.2 million dollars over a 24-month period to expand tracking capabilities to include active duty family members. Even in this era of sequestration and budget cuts, \$1.2 million is a nominal price to pay to expand our knowledge and understanding about military family suicides.

It's up to the House and Senate Armed Service Committees to respond to the report and convene hearings to address the mental health of military families. ■

Sources: CNN and Kristina Kaufmann, executive director of the Code of Support Foundation. Editor's note: Story ideas for this column should be directed to mike.jacquart@impact-trainingcenter.net.

In the News

EAPA Awards Panel Seeks New Members

Each year, EAPA's annual awards program recognizes and celebrates the achievement of individuals and organizations that have distinguished themselves through their contributions to the EA profession and the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA). Selection of award recipients is the responsibility of the EAPA Awards and Honors Committee.

The 2014 EAPA Annual Awards

will be presented during EAPA's 2014 Annual World EAP Conference in Orlando, Fla.

Membership in the Awards Committee will require a total time commitment of two to four hours to review the electronically submitted award nominations (one to two hours) and participate in a one- to two-hour conference call to discuss and decide on award winners.

The committee is looking for

interested U.S. and non-U.S. members, working in external, internal and labor EA settings, to represent the diversity of EAPA's membership.

Members of the committee are not eligible to receive an individual award. If you are interested in serving on the committee, send an email to webeditor@eapassn.org. Include a brief description of your current and previous roles as an EA professional. Questions can be sent to the same address. ■

Feedback is the Key to Success – Part I

By Barry Banther

There are five simple words that can spell doom for a leader – “*If I had only known!*” These are the words a manager might utter right after a major client cancels a contract, a customer stops ordering or an error occurs that costs thousands. That’s why the best leaders and the most competent managers thrive on employee feedback!

So why don’t more managers go out of their way to encourage quick and candid feedback? Too often they are convinced that their employees don’t really get the big picture, they don’t want them to get distracted from their work, or managers simply don’t value their opinion.

Among the most successful working professionals there is one constant truth: *trust between leaders and their associates are built upon a transparency that reflects a freedom to speak and to be heard.* A corporate culture of harm, where

listening to employees isn’t valued, impacts business every day across America.

One typical employee survey asks the question, “If your supervisor could improve in one area that would make a difference in your work performance, what should it be?” Among the numerous answers, a common reply often stands out: “*Value my opinion enough to look at me and listen whenever I am trying to tell you something. I could save you from a lot of trouble.*”

So how can managers create an environment where employees are valued and not ignored? There are three leadership skills that are essential. Without them managers will always be working with half-truths and misinformation. But *with them*, they will become proactive, anticipating both challenges and opportunities, and their reputation as a leader will soar. One of these skills will be addressed below. The remainder will be examined in part two of this two-part article.

❖ **Stop, drop, and listen.** When an associate is talking with a manager, they shouldn’t be multi-tasking. Instead, they must stop whatever they are doing and *listen*. A director in a major urban hospital was accused of frequently checking his email and text messages while meeting with his team. He agreed for one week to keep the phone in his pocket or on the desk and look right at his associates and just listen.

The results were staggering. Countless team members commented on how much they appreciated his new behavior. More importantly, one associate who was usually reluctant to share much, told the director of an impending problem that would have been catastrophic for the hospital. Merely giving his undivided attention proved invaluable to the director’s business! ■

Barry Banther is the founder and CEO of Banther Consulting. His new book, “A Leader’s Gift: How to Earn the Right to be Followed,” was released in April 2014. For more information, visit www.barrybanther.com.

Quick Ideas

Do’s and Don’ts in the Workplace

❖ **DON’T** let negativity become your “go-to” response.

❖ **DO** respond constructively when someone presents an idea.

❖ **DON’T** give in to the temptation to whine. It doesn’t get anyone anywhere.

❖ **DO** push for solutions instead.

❖ **DON’T** leave critical or harsh messages on voicemail or send them to an email inbox.

❖ **DO** conduct tough talks in person.

❖ **DON’T** confuse activity with progress.

❖ **DO** set goals and hold yourself and employees accountable for results. ■

Source: Jon Gordon, author of “Soup: A Recipe to Nourish Your Team and Culture” (www.soup11.com).

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Grow Your EAP with Mobile Apps

By *Brendan Lim & Chris Selmer*

Some people associate mobile applications – or apps for short – with fun and games like iPhones, Blackberries, and others. That’s one aspect, certainly, but the truth of the matter is that mobile apps represent the future for today’s businesses. This is true regardless of the field.

Just how prevalent are apps? Even three years ago, people were using an average of nearly seven apps every day! Surely that amount has increased since then. In any case, smart businesses and other organizations are developing their own apps for both internal and external use.

Consider that since most people’s mobile devices are always connected, when you offer cus-

tomers a useful app, you’re giving them the opportunity to access your services from anywhere.

Whether you’re considering creating an app for your firm or just want to learn more about this marketing option, the following are a few points to keep in mind:

❖ **Your clients are always on the go.** Most people consider their cell phone their most important tool and couldn’t imagine life without it. So if you think your clients will naturally think of you in the midst of their hectic lives, think again. You are potentially losing market share to companies and organizations that *do* offer apps.

❖ **An app can boost your bottom line.** When you engage clients,

create a bond with them, or simply offer them a useful application, they will think of you whenever they have a need for your services, and they’ll refer others to you.

Summary

Businesses and other organizations that ignore this trend could potentially lose business by not catering to an increasingly mobile audience. The more useful your apps are for your clients, the more it’ll help your bottom line. ■

Brendan Lim, partner at Intridea and director of mobile development, has years of experience as a systems architect. Chris Selmer is a senior partner at Intridea, and director of client solutions. For more information, visit www.intridea.com.

Workplace Survey

Many Execs Not Worried about Losing Baby Boomers

One-fifth of the U.S. workforce has passed or is nearing retirement age, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, yet research suggests many executives aren’t too concerned with losing Baby Boomer employees to retirement in the next couple of years. Only **31%** of chief financial officers (CFOs) interviewed for a recent Robert Half survey said they were worried about this possibility.

Among CFOs who are worried about losing Baby Boomers to retirement, executives most commonly

cited leadership (**39%**) and legacy knowledge (**23%**) as the greatest potential losses to their organization.

“Although losing Baby Boomers to retirement may not be a universal concern yet, employers, as a best practice, should prepare themselves for the exit of experienced professionals from the workforce,” said Paul McDonald, Robert Half senior executive director.

“Mentorship and succession plans can be effective means of passing on legacy knowledge, and retaining and developing a company’s next generation of leaders.”

McDonald added that businesses of all sizes can benefit by implementing programs that allow professionals to transition into retirement and remain engaged with the firm.

“Even as they move closer to retirement, many people want to continue contributing their skills and expertise,” he added.

“Companies can take advantage of working with these employees on a consulting basis, who can in turn train other staff members on both the needed technical and nontechnical attributes.” ■