

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

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Weighing In Pros, Cons of On-site, Off-site EAPs

By Daniel J. Potterton, COO, FEI Behavioral Health, Inc.

Employee assistance coordinators or benefit planners who wish to add an EAP component to complement their company health insurance plan face the decision of choosing between an on-site (i.e. internal) or off-site (i.e. external) model, or a hybrid of both. How does one know which option is best?

First, consider the benefits of having *any* EAP. It demonstrates the company is focused on helping its employees. There is ample evidence that an EAP – whether internal, external or hybrid – saves the employer money. Research also supports that individuals accessing an EAP are more productive, with decreased medical costs, and less absenteeism and presenteeism. Let's get back to making the on-site versus off-site decision.

On-site Providers

On-site EAPs can be administered by outside contractors hired to be on-site at the company, or the service may be managed directly by the company.

On-site contractors are EA professionals who work in an identified worksite location either full- or part-time. They see company employees for one-on-one counseling, meet with managers on a host of employee behavioral issues, and offer presentations on a variety of topics.

Responding to a "critical incident," such as a death in the workforce, is another important role of the EAP contractor. In these special situations, the contractor provides support meetings with managers and employees to help them process,

manage and cope with the loss. When layoffs and other workforce downsizings occur, the EAP assists those who are displaced as well as the workers who remain.

EAPs employed by a company can perform these, and often additional

services. The internal EAP also functions as management advisor, chairs or serves on health and wellness committees, and is involved in improving the overall welfare of the worksite population. Depending on company culture, the EAP can provide proactive care and guidance to organizations struggling through change.

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Off-site Providers

An external EAP can be of further value to the employer by offering counseling services through an extensive network of EA professionals. This service can be accessed confidentially and can be delivered to employees or family members directly in their community.

Using a broad array of resources, an external EAP can offer a wide variety of benefits to employees, such as free legal services, expert financial counseling and guidance, work-life assistance, such as finding a qualified child care provider, or any other unrestricted dependent care.

When taken advantage of, external services can save employees countless hours of worry, stress and anxiety that become major on-the-job distractions.

Hybrid

A hybrid EAP model offers a mix of internal and external resources. "The internal team sets the course for the program and integrates the program's organizational consultation and training development functions with key partners in management, human resources, law, physical security and other functions," said Ken Dolan-Del Vecchio, LMFT, LCSW, DVS, CEAP, SPHR, vice president, health and wellness at Prudential, which uses the hybrid model.

"The internal team also communicates the EAP's value to those who hold the company's purse strings," Dolan-Del Vecchio added. "Finally, the internal program staff knows and is connected within the company's organizational culture and can therefore work most effectively with clients whose primary concerns involve the workplace. The external EAP

extends the reach of the program, providing a cost-effective network of first-line support for employees and their family members facing personal problems. Also, the external program's inclusion of legal services provides a highly valued additional resource."

On-site Pros and Cons

A quality on-site EAP understands the company culture and knows the pulse and health of the organization. This can be valuable so that an employee seeking help does not need to explain the work environment or stress that he/she is experiencing. Armed with data gathered from observation and analysis, the on-site EAP can be an internal advocate for the health and well-being of the employee population and a valued management asset.

One drawback to an on-site EAP is that counselors employed by the company may be viewed as part of the organization – thus they may not be readily trusted. Although access to EAP services is confidential, an on-site EAP location cannot always protect the observations of others when an employee enters the EAP office. Other drawbacks:

- ❖ A multi-site, multi-state company that wants to offer uniform services to all employees may find this approach financially out of reach.

- ❖ Offering adequate access to employees and their families is also challenging in this model. This is due to the fact that on-site hours are often during the daytime and therefore not convenient for either employees or their dependents.

Off-site Pros and Cons

The benefits of an off-site EAP tend to be just the opposite.

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Providing a choice of daytime, evening and weekend hours is a tremendous benefit, as well as seeing an EAP practitioner in the privacy of an office away from the workplace.

The drawback to the external EAP is that the counselor may be unaware of the company culture and the work pressures of employees. The consequence is that the employee must explain the work

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environment, and it's possible for the EAP practitioner to misinterpret or misunderstand important issues.

Adding an EAP to Benefit Packages

Once the corporate client has made the on-site/off-site/hybrid decision, incorporating an EAP into an existing benefits plan is pretty simple. The EAP can easily co-exist with a health insurance plan already in place to treat more serious mental health and substance abuse issues. The EAP really stands on its own as an independent service to help employees deal with their problems.

The EAP often acts as an access path for individuals to get necessary help for psychological, emotional and substance abuse issues. Studies have shown that employees with substance abuse issues who have used the EAP as an entry point have a better recovery rate (sustaining sobriety) than those who accessed substance abuse treatment through their health insurance.

Various financial models are used to fund the EAP. An internal (i.e. on-site) EAP is a fixed cost. An on-site EAP is often priced on an hours-per-week basis. Conversely, the external (i.e. off-site) EAP can be purchased on a fully capitated basis (a charge per employee count per month), fee-for-service basis (each serviced is paid for as utilized and usually includes an annual service charge) or some combination, covering a partial or complete list of EAP benefits.

Which Option?

The option chosen depends on the workforce and specific areas of concern the company is trying to address. Frankly, how much



Editor's Notebook

Between face-to-face, over the phone, email, Internet, off-site and on-site – there are plenty of counseling options for employees in today's EAP. And that's not even including choices such as 1-to-3, 1-to-5 and 1-to-8 counseling sessions.

But this month's cover article and *Brown Bagger* focus on the often-debated models of on-site (i.e. internal) versus off-site (i.e. external) EAP. In this month's cover story, Daniel Potterton weighs in on the pros and cons of these models.

"The option chosen depends on the workforce and specific areas of concern the company is trying to address," says Potterton, in his "nuts-and-bolts" look at these models.

Meanwhile, in this month's *Brown Bagger*, Dave Sharar, John Pompe, and Mark Attridge take a different approach in examining these models – using the Workplace Outcome Suite tool to measure *typical* delivery of EAP services.

Like Potterton, these authors stress that one model is not better than the other. They write: "In fact, the value of internal and external EAP may be in the eye of the purchaser. The goals of the employer may dictate how the purchaser defines value and impact."

The key, of course is how do *your* corporate clients define value and impact? Until next time.

Mike Jacquart

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the company wants to invest in the health and welfare of its employees is a key factor. Each organization views and treats its employees differently. Some companies are very paternalistic, while others are not. It is best to engage a knowledgeable EAP benefit consultant or an independent EAP provider to assist the company through the EAP benefit maze. ■

FEI Behavioral Health offers flexible solutions for the full spectrum of workforce resilience goals, from crisis preparedness and management to EAP and wellness services. As part of Families International, the parent organization for FEI and three nonprofit organizations – the Alliance for Children and Families, United Neighborhood Centers of America and Ways to Work – FEI leverages a broad network of resources and connections on behalf of its clients. More information is available at www.feinet.com.

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Keys to Successful Crisis Management – Part I

By Lucien Canton

When the first hijacked plane slammed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center at 8:46 a.m. on September 11, 2001, Robert Scott, president and chief operating officer of Morgan Stanley-Dean Whittier, was at 3 World Trade Center addressing 400 members of the National Association of Business Economists. Scott evacuated the building just in time to watch a second aircraft slam into the South Tower, which he knew housed his company offices and several thousand employees.

By 9:30 Scott and his senior executives had convened at a backup site that became their command center. The decisions made by Scott and his team that day would make Morgan Stanley a case study in successful crisis management and would enhance Scott's reputation as a leader.

What is the difference between a Morgan Stanley and less successful companies? Why do some organizations come out of a crisis with enhanced reputations while others may not even survive as a business? While the reasons are many and varied, it frequently comes down to three main areas – one of which I will describe in this article, with the remainder appearing next month.

❖ **Failure to consider the human factor.** Recognize that you are your own worst problem. Too often in preparing for crisis one tends to ignore the human factor.



Understanding human nature and how people react to crisis is one of the fundamental keys to crisis management.

❖ **No matter how much information on risks they are given, people do not believe that a crisis will happen to them.** They may understand it intellectually but viscerally they do not believe it will happen. This hampers their willingness to prepare for crisis.

❖ **When confronted with a crisis, a person's first reaction is denial – they often do not recognize that a crisis is occurring.** This leads to a hesitation to act.

❖ **There is a tendency to normalize crisis, that is, to see what one expects to see rather than what is actually occurring.** It is easy to misinterpret or completely miss indicators that a crisis is imminent or occurring. These indicators may be obvious after the fact but are easily missed during the crisis. ■

Lucien G. Canton, CEM is a consultant specializing in preparing managers to lead better in crisis by understanding the human factors often overlooked in crisis planning. For more information visit www.lucienanton.com. **Editor's note:** Critical incident response will be the theme of the 3rd quarter "Journal of Employee Assistance," which is edited and laid out by Impact Publications, publishers of this newsletter.

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Retention is Main Concern

As difficult as it has become to locate top performers, keeping them on board is proving to be an even greater worry for employers; a recent Robert Half survey shows. Nearly four in 10 (38%) chief financial officers (CFOs) interviewed said retaining valuable employees is their biggest staffing concern for the next 12 months.

“Although general unemployment levels remain high, professionals with specialized skills have more opportunities available to them, which has led to talent shortages in some areas and made replacing valuable employees even more difficult,” said Paul McDonald, Robert Half senior executive director.

Following are five tips for retaining key employees:

1. Maintain an open-door policy. Employees should feel comfortable voicing ideas and concerns. Unhappiness with managers is a main reason many people leave their jobs. Building strong working relationships with your team should be a priority.

2. Promote from within. Your staff will grow discouraged if they feel advancement opportunities aren't available. Meet with employees to review their career paths and discuss how they can move up in the organization.

3. Provide competitive compensation. While money isn't everything,

it is important. Make sure employees' salaries and benefits are at or slightly above market rates.

4. Recognize outstanding work. Whether it's a story in the company newsletter or a bonus, actions and achievements that warrant special acknowledgment should be rewarded promptly. The recognition doesn't need to be expensive. Saying “thank you” and praising individuals in front of their peers are powerful motivators.

5. Offer professional development opportunities. Training programs help people expand their skills and boost productivity. You'll also gain versatility in your team. ■

Source: Robert Half (www.roberthalf.com).

Workplace Stress on the Rise

The U.S. unemployment rate may be falling, but stress levels continue to rise among workers, according to data released in the *2013 Work Stress Survey* conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of Everest College.

The phone survey of 1,019 employed adults found that 83% of Americans are stressed by at least one thing at work, a sharp increase of 10 percentage points compared with 2012 (73%).

“More companies are hiring, but workers are still weary and stressed out from years of a troubled economy that has brought about longer hours, layoffs and budget cuts,” said survey spokesman John Swartz, regional director of career services at Everest College. “Americans have plenty of reasons to be optimistic, but anxiety among employees is rooted

into working lives, and it is important to understand new and better ways of coping with the pressure. One such way is going back to school to receive the necessary education to find a new career that will make you happier and, hopefully, less stressed.”

Fast Facts

❖ While 83% of Americans said at least one thing is stressful about their jobs, 17% said nothing stresses them out about their jobs.

❖ American workers 65 and older are more likely than any other age group to say there is nothing about their job that stresses them out (38%).

❖ Regionally, workers who live in the Northeast are more likely than those who live in the Midwest to say they are most stressed by their job not being a chosen career (11% and 4%, respectively).

Gender Wage Gap

The wage gap between men and women and how it relates to stress is evident in the survey results. Women are more likely to say that low pay is the most stressful aspect of their job, nearly twice the rate of men (18% to 10%). Men, meanwhile, listed an unreasonable workload as the top stressor (14%), followed by annoying co-workers (12%).

Summary

The survey was conducted to coincide with Stress Awareness Month, when health care professionals nationwide join forces to increase public awareness about the causes and cures for the modern stress epidemic. For more information about Harris Interactive, visit www.harrisinteractive.com. More information about Everest College is available at www.everest.edu/disclosures. ■

'MST' is Serious Women's Issue

While male returnees become homeless largely because of substance abuse and mental illness, experts say that female veterans face those problems and more, including the search for family housing and an even harder time finding good-paying jobs.

Moreover, according to researchers and psychologists, a common path to homelessness for women is military sexual trauma, or MST, from assaults or harassment during their service, which can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Female veterans face a complex "web of vulnerability," said Dr. Donna Washington, a physician at the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs medical center. Washington has studied the ways that women

become homeless, including poverty and military sexual trauma. One such study found that 53% of homeless female veterans had experienced MST, and that many women entered the military to escape family conflict and abuse.

For those hoping to better their lives, being sexually assaulted while serving their country is "a double betrayal of trust," said Lori Katz, director of the Women's Health Clinic at the V.A. Long Beach Healthcare System.

Katz is also co-founder of Renew, an innovative treatment program for female veterans with MST. It incorporates psychotherapy, journal writing and yoga, and accepts women who have been screened for military sexual trauma. Reverberations from such experiences often set off a down-

ward spiral for women into alcohol and substance abuse, depression and domestic violence, she added.

Each class of a dozen women lives together for 12 weeks while spending eight-hour days at a women's mental health clinic. At a program graduation, held in a therapy room, nine women spoke movingly of choosing strength over fragility.

For more information on Renew and other female veterans' programs, visit www.usvetsinc.org/veteran-services/women-specific-programs. ■

Source: New York Times. "Supporting Our Veterans" is a new feature in EAR focusing on hands-on, practical information for EA professionals assisting veterans and their families.

Workplace Survey

E-nough Already!

Less is more when it comes to office email, suggests a survey from The Creative Group (www.creativegroup.com). According to the firm, when composing email messages, it's best to be brief and identify what action is needed at the beginning of the message. Creative Group's other suggestions include:

❖ **Keep it mega-lyte.** Provide links to photos, PowerPoint presentations, and other large files, or offer to send them on request. Many people have limited in-box capacity, and bulky attachments

can be difficult to open or consume needed space.

❖ **Don't be too quick with your "trigger finger."** Before replying to "all," consider whether each person on the list will benefit from the response – then, remove those who won't. Conversely, if someone is copied on a message that you receive, be sure to include the person on the response if he/she needs the information.

❖ **Be specific.** An informative subject line lets the recipient understand the topic and whether

action is necessary. For example, instead of saying "meeting" try "review of today's meeting agenda."

❖ **Unravel the mystery.** Rather than forwarding a lengthy email to colleagues as an "FYI," forcing them to scroll down to understand why they're being copied, offer a brief review. This allows them to decide if they want to read the details.

❖ **Avoid "crying wolf."** Mark messages high priority only if they are truly urgent. ■

Telework: 'Perk' or 'Must-have'?

Thirty million Americans now work from home at least one day a week, with that number forecast to increase sharply in the coming years, according to the Telework Research Network.

By 2020, 1 in 3 people will be hired to work online, from anywhere they want, according to an estimate from Odesk, an online marketplace for hiring remote workers. Clearly, flexible workspaces – policies that allow employees to work when and where it makes most sense – are becoming a staple in some of the nation's most successful companies.

But are flexible work policies just a “perk”, or do they deliver when it comes to the bottom line? American Express and Aetna examples strongly suggest the latter. At American Express the BlueWork program has delivered not only improved worker productivity but also saved between \$10- \$15 million annually in real

estate costs as less office space is needed, the company says.

Assigning Employees to Categories

As part of its BlueWork program, American Express conducts an employee survey, which helps assign employees to one of four categories: *Hub*, *Club*, *Home*, and *Roam*.

❖ *Hub* employees' work requires a fixed desk and their presence in the office every day.

❖ *Club* employees have flexible roles that involve in-person and virtual meetings; they have the opportunity to share time between the office and other locations.

❖ *Home* employees are based from home offices – set up with assistance from the company – on three or more days per week.

❖ *Roam* employees are almost always on the road or at customer sites, and seldom work from an American Express office.

“The ability to work in a flexible workspace is based on the role you have, not personal preference,” said Jose Morabito, a VP of Finance at American Express.

The companies found that when employees have the support to create a work style that best meets their needs, they are more engaged while working, committed to the company and able to drive results.

Developing Online Training

American Express guides both employees and managers through the productivity hurdles that might accompany the transition, with a structured series of trainings, tool-kits and leadership discussions. After they're trained, BlueWork employees can access information at any time on the program's website. ■

Source: Jeanne Meister, contributor to "Forbes" magazine.

Quick Ideas

Working with Difficult People

Work is difficult enough without having to deal with a grumpy boss, or a gossipy or obnoxious co-worker. The following are a few ideas to build workplace harmony:

❖ **Accept others as they are.** No matter how hard you try, you cannot change another person.

Trying to do so only leads to frustration and exhaustion. You can't change anyone but yourself. Giving up the fight to control others frees you to determine *your* response to work issues.

❖ **Establish boundaries.** Acceptance doesn't mean you have to become a doormat or tolerate disrespectful behavior.

Instead, refuse to argue or engage in a power struggle with a colleague who wants to start a debate and prove his/her way is right. The more often you set boundaries, the more you will promote an attitude of respect and not discord. ■

Source: Chris Karcher, relationship and spirituality expert.

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Be Sun-Savvy this Summer

By James Dowd, M.D.

It's long been assumed that Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is caused by the lack of exposure to the sun. However, the shortest day of the year is Dec. 21, which means that SAD *should* be at its worst just before the end of the year. The reality is that we feel lousier in February and March. Why is that?

It turns out that it's not the lack of sunlight that's the problem. Rather, it's the lack of vitamin D that we make from it. People in the Midwest and Northeast stop making vitamin D from sunlight in October, and it can't be made again until late March or April. So although the shortest day of the year is in late December, vitamin D levels don't bottom out until March.

Studies confirm that vitamin D replacement relieves symptoms of SAD. Moreover, increasing intakes of certain foods – fish, fruits and vegetables – can also enhance the power of vitamin D to elevate mood.

The good news is that making simple lifestyle changes this summer can boost vitamin D and make next winter depression-free. The following are a few ideas:

❖ **Start a no-SAD diet.** With the arrival of summer's fresh seafood and produce, it's a great time to make dietary changes to vitamin D and nutrient-packed foods that anyone who suffers from SAD should start eating now.

❖ **Become "sun-savvy."** Sunlight is a primary source of vitamin D, but most of us don't

get enough of it. Chronic underexposure to the sun is actually more dangerous than overexposure. You need to avoid overexposure to be sure, but you also need enough sun to increase vitamin D levels.

❖ **Consider vitamin D supplements.** Supplements are often necessary, but do you know which one to buy? What dosage to take? Take the time to investigate. ■

James E. Dowd is the author of "The Vitamin D Cure," \$24.95 retail, Wiley.



Quick Ideas

Employee Benefits that Work

Companies don't have to spend a lot of money on employee benefits for them to reap dividends. The following are a few of the benefits that Bremen Castings, an Indiana-based foundry, provides for their employees:

❖ **Monthly luncheons:** On the third Thursday of each month, employees are treated to a luncheon as a sign of continuous appreciation. For instance, it offers "theme" meals for seasonal holidays and in the summer executives get behind the grill and cook hamburgers and hot dogs for employees.

❖ **Celebration breakfast:** Having recently reached the *Million Man Hours without a Lost Time Accident* milestone, Bremen will host a celebration breakfast in honor of the event. Employees and their families are invited to the off-site event, which will feature a fully-catered breakfast and prize giveaways.

❖ **The Ten Year Club:** During November, Bremen honors employees who have fulfilled 10 years of service or more with their *Ten Year Club* dinner. Guests of honor and their families are treated to an elegant dinner at a select restaurant or country club and everyone in attendance is recognized for their years of service.

❖ **Cash-free wellness center:** Bremen recently opened an on-site wellness center so their employees will always have access to affordable health care. The facility is open 40 hours a week and is cash-free, meaning that employees and dependents can receive free generic prescriptions and care.

❖ **Summer picnic:** During the summer, Bremen offers a fun-filled day of activities and food for employees and their family with its annual summer picnic. The event features games, amusements and treats for all ages. ■