

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

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supporting EAP professionals

Training the Next Generation – Part II

By Daniel Hughes

Part one of this two-part article discussed the lack of graduate programs with employee assistance-related content – which raised the important question, *how and where will aspiring EA professionals learn the historic methods, techniques, and theory of EA practice?*

“This is not to suggest that the field needs to establish a graduate school of EAP. A more realistic approach would be to encourage and maintain the development of appropriate sub-specializations within existing disciplines – such as occupational social work, counseling psychology, and organizational psychology.”

Part one presented some of the challenges facing us in training the next generation of practitioners, and it offered a brief history of EA training for background purposes. In the conclusion of this article, we will examine this issue further, and suggest some recommendations for training the next generation of EA professionals.

Discussion

Most professions establish educational standards for entry-level practice. Consequently, physicians attend medical school, lawyers attend law school, and so on. The lack of a university-based educational model and standards for EA training weakens the field’s claim to professional status. It also limits access to institutional repositories for the profession’s accumulated knowledge. The issue of knowledge retention is important and deserves a separate discussion. Clearly, a profession cannot share knowledge and information that it does not protect and preserve.

This is not to suggest that the field needs to establish a graduate school of EAP. A more realistic approach would be to encourage and maintain the development of appropriate sub-specializations within *existing* disciplines – such as occupational social

work, counseling psychology, and organizational psychology. The development of an interdisciplinary model of EA training could prove extremely valuable to the field.

However, the data cited in this article suggests that the existing structure for EA training is fragile and at risk. Additionally, there is growing concern that the field’s collective knowledge is in peril due to the lack of protection within institutional archives.

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To a large extent the challenges are economic in nature. Clearly, the field is dominated by a handful of large for-profit companies that operate in a fiercely competitive commodity-based market. Accordingly, they view the cost of training as beyond the boundaries of their business model.

“...the existing structure for EA training is fragile and at risk.”

Moreover, entry-level positions are difficult to obtain for a variety of reasons, including market consolidation and the increased reliance on affiliate networks. These issues are reflected in the surprisingly few training positions currently available to graduate social work students – 90% of which are presently provided by small internal programs and Members Assistance Programs (MAPs).

In addition, substantial debt frequently burdens graduate students. Currently, the average cost of a social work degree at private universities such as USC and Columbia exceeds \$80,000.

Consequently, many students are not inclined to seek education in a field with few training opportunities and limited job prospects.

However, the EA field can ill afford to ignore the importance of knowledge retention and training.

Summary

Knowledge retention and training are essential features of professional activity. Accordingly, the following recommendations are suggested:

❖ **The EA field should rearticulate its value proposition within the terms and conditions of**

“knowledge work”. The EA profession identifies and resolves complex problems affecting workplace productivity. Frequently, these problems are associated with the mental and behavioral health issues of employees. As such, EA practice is built upon a sophisticated knowledge base and specific techniques that require training. Logically, the concept of “knowledge work” provides a basis upon which to construct a professional services model of EA practice – rather than the current prevailing commodity-based model.

❖ **The historic apprenticeship system of EA training is likely to become obsolete as the workplace becomes increasingly complex and knowledge based.** Consequently, our relationships with the academic community need to be developed, nurtured, and sustained. Moving forward, the EA field will depend on an influx of appropriately trained young practitioners. This will require the building of additional training partnerships between EAPs and appropriate academic programs. The large for-profit providers of EA service have a stake in this process and should be involved.

❖ **These partnerships should include the establishment of university-based, EA-focused archives to protect and preserve the field’s accumulated knowledge.** Specifically, the documents, videos, personal communications, letters, artifacts, professional biographies, and general history of the field need to be protected and preserved. Perhaps the EA-related archive established by Cornell University’s Institute of Labor Relations could serve as a prototype. This knowledge should *not* be considered proprietary and made freely available to all

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interested individuals, programs, providers, and institutions.

❖ **The EA field should use its unique position with the workplace – combined with its behavioral health experience – to support and engage in government-funded occupational health research.** Such activity builds knowledge, creates jobs, and offers training opportunities. It also serves

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to reinforce the field's relationship with the academic community.

❖ **Lastly, the EA profession needs to create jobs and opportunities for the next generation of practitioners.** Creative new applications of EA technology need to be developed and implemented. Clearly, this will be extremely challenging in the current economic environment. However, in the final analysis it is all about the work that those of us in the field need to do to generate growth and opportunity for its future professionals. ■

Daniel Hughes, Ph.D., CEAP, is the director of the Mount Sinai Medical Center's EAP and an assistant professor of preventative medicine at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Dan is a long-time EAPA member who lives and practices in New York City. This article originally appeared in the Journal of Employee Assistance (Vol. 41, No. 4), and is reprinted with permission. For a list of references used in this article, contact Dan at daniel.hughes@mssm.edu.



Editor's Notebook

I wish to thank Daniel Hughes for his interesting and insightful recommendations regarding the future of the EA profession – observations that I think are particularly important early in the New Year – a time when we are more likely to make changes in our personal and professional lives.

Speaking of the New Year, we think this month's *Brown Bagger* offers some useful suggestions about saving for retirement. The way that time flies, it's never too early to save!

Third, while the bulk of this space tends to focus on the cover article and *Brown Bagger* insert, *EAR* recognizes that other articles in this newsletter may be of even greater interest. Gary Foreman

returns this month with his usual practical suggestions for getting the most out of your money. Part II of a two-part article on Alzheimer's in the Workplace – a topic that is affecting more and more of us – concludes this month.

Is today's mobile technology a blessing, curse, or something in between? This month's Clinical Perspective takes a look at the difficulty in detaching from work in today's high-tech society.

In a nutshell, it is always our intent to make *EAR* a worthwhile read from cover to cover. Shoot me an email about how we're doing. Until next time.

Mike Jacquart

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Quick Ideas

Managing Employee Caregivers

With a growing number of Americans providing care for a loved one at home, EAPs' corporate clients need to address this issue in a way that's fair for employees and employers alike.

More than 50 million Americans are "family caregivers" – the primary caregiver for a sick, disabled or elderly family member. Since nearly half of all family caregivers also hold full-time jobs, employers need to be aware of the stress and emotional aspects that come with caregiving situations.

Fortunately, there *are* ways to create a work environment that enables the employee to be

productive despite caregiving responsibilities. The following suggestions are designed to help:

❖ **Managers need to know their staff.** They need to be aware of employees' individual situations and how they may affect job performance. Managers and employers need to spend time with them in an informal setting, such as a break room over coffee, a quarterly lunch hour or simply chatting during a slow time.

The more employers know their employees, the better they'll be at managing them through any challenge – they just need to be cautious about not overstepping

boundaries. They should check with an HR and/or EA professional before discussing delicate issues with staff.

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Work at Home Technology Hinders Ability to ‘Detach’

We know that psychologically detaching from work is important, leading to less fatigue, more positive working-week experiences, and higher overall life satisfaction. How you fill your leisure time has a big impact on psychological detachment. A recent study confirms what many suspect – it’s harder to switch off work when technology can keep you plugged in.

In their study, YoungAh Park, Charlotte Fritz and Steve Jex looked at work-home segmentation: how much we partition our domains of leisure and work. One factor of this issue is simple personal preference – for example, you might choose not to take a job likely to intrude into your home life.

The surrounding norms of where you work also play a role. In other words, for some employees it’s typical to take work home, or to call a colleague about a work issue in an evening.

However, the authors of this study suspected that a major factor in detachment was technology use at home. They investigated this phenomenon through a survey completed by 431 university alumni currently in full-time employment. As well as measures of detachment from work, segmentation preference e.g. “I prefer to keep work life at work”; and perceived segmentation norm, they also looked at frequency of use of different technologies (email, Internet, phone, and pda) for work-

place purposes when at home.

As expected, both a preference for and a culture of less segmentation led to less psychological detachment. People who used technologies for work purposes while at home struggled to detach from work, and the analysis showed that this was a major route through which weak segmentation had its effect on detachment. In part, weak segmentation manifests as work-technology behaviors at home.

It’s important to note that technology did not explain all of the variance, which means that setting strict rules about technology use is not the only way to help psychological detachment, nor necessarily sufficient; you may want to develop habits that deal with ruminations, develop end-of-day rituals, or establish clearer boundaries with colleagues. For instance, “I prefer you do not email me after 6

p.m.” or, “Let me know if it’s an emergency, otherwise, if you email me after 6 p.m., I won’t see your message and so I won’t return it until the next day.”

Summary

It seems apparent that many workers will struggle to psychologically detach from work if they use work technology in their down time, and psychological detachment is an important form of workplace “recovery” – especially if the daily “grind” is wearing you down.

It’s worth considering the practices of your own workplace. Are the trends toward shedding work desktops for laptops, and “bring your own computer” programs, helping us – or hurting us? ■

Sources: *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA).*

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Do You Hold the Leash – or Does the Leash Hold YOU?

By Gary Foreman

My wife and I live near a city park, and so we get a lot of dog walkers in our neighborhood. Sometimes we're even on the route for charity walks. Many walks are routine – but once a while we see something a little different. One recent Saturday morning was clearly one of those times.

As my wife and I were on our way out the door, I noticed a woman with a small white dog. It was sure cute – it looked a lot like our shnoodle!

But it wasn't the dog that struck me the most. What really caught my attention was that she wasn't using a leash to walk the dog. She was carrying it! Being the wise guy that I am, I commented that was the first time that I had seen a

dog walk a person. (I admit it wasn't the funniest line you'll ever hear but my wife has learned to put up with me!)

As so often happens, I see money lessons in a lot of strange places. It occurred to me that when it's properly used we have money on a leash. We can control where it goes. We decide what direction that we're going to walk. To put it simply, *we're* in charge.

Unfortunately for some of us, money has *us* on a leash. It may be because of choices we've made (bigger house, newer car, excessive spending). Or it could be because of events in our lives (health issues, accidents, sudden job disruption).

I suspect that none of us like being on money's leash. We don't like the lack of freedom or the ability to control our own destiny.

Sadly for some with real debt problems, it often feels like we're wearing a choke collar.

I wish that I could say that I knew how to throw off the collar. There's no easy way that I know of. But, one thing I do know is this: However long it takes, if you haven't already begun to take control of your finances, there's no better time to start than now. The sooner you get started, the sooner you'll finish!

Here's to the day that all of us have money on a leash! Keep on stretching those dollars! ■

Gary Foreman is a former purchasing manager who currently edits The Dollar Stretcher website at www.stretcher.com. This article originally appeared at <http://community.stretcher.com/blogs/stretcher/archive/2011/09/29/the-money-leash.aspx>. You can follow Gary on Twitter http://twitter.com/#!/gary_foreman.

Workplace Survey

Bonuses Rising in Many Firms

Bonus checks may be a little bigger this year, a Robert Half survey suggests. Thirty percent of executives whose companies awarded bonuses last year said they plan to give higher bonuses this time around. Human resources (HR) managers were most optimistic about increasing bonus levels in 2012 (42%), followed by technology executives, at 25%. Only 14% of those interviewed

expected smaller bonuses than last year.

“For many companies, higher bonuses are in recognition of work by employees who put in extra effort this year, often with fewer resources,” said Max Messmer, chairman and CEO of Robert Half International and author of *Motivating Employees for Dummies*® (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.). “Bonuses also are tied to staff retention – profes-

sionals with high-demand skill sets may have other employment opportunities in the current job market.”

Note: For additional information on employee compensation, including starting salary projections for 2012, visit www.rhi.com/SalaryGuides. ■

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

Alzheimer's in the Workplace – Part II

By Jennifer FitzPatrick

Last month's article discussed Joanne, a 54-year-old sales manager who was fired as the result of deteriorating work performance. No one, including Joanne, knew that the cause was early onset Alzheimer's disease, which affects approximately 200,000 Americans in their 30's, 40's and 50's. This month's article explains what employees and employers can do in situations like these.

More About Joanne

If Joanne had been aware of her condition, since she had enjoyed over a decade of success with her company, perhaps Joanne and her manager may have determined a way for her to remain in her sales management position. If not, perhaps she could have been offered another opportunity at the company, which would have been better suited to her health changes.

If continuing with the company had been an option, Joanne most likely would have been eligible for some type of disability benefit. This would have protected her from immediately using her savings and retirement account for daily living expenses. Protecting those assets for as long as possible with an early onset Alzheimer's disease diagnosis is critical since Joanne will most likely need to spend that on care expenses as her disease progresses. It is important to delay accessing the retirement account due to hefty early withdrawal penalties since she is still only 54-years-old.

What can Employees Do?

What can employees do to avoid Joanne's plight? Everyone should be aware of the risk factors related to early onset Alzheimer's disease. Major head injuries, diabetes and heart disease are also linked with increased Alzheimer's disease. Clinical studies have also determined that some genes are associated with early onset Alzheimer's – so family history is another factor. *However, they should also keep in mind that only 5% of Alzheimer's cases are of the early onset nature.*

What can Employers Do?

First, an organization can facilitate a climate of trust about issues, health or otherwise, that may impact work performance. It is also important to investigate when a star employee like Joanne fails to meet expectations. Successful employees generally don't start falling off, especially after 15 years, unless something is very wrong. Joanne likely knew something was wrong with her as most Alzheimer's disease sufferers do recognize changes in themselves, but she may have been in denial. *When people are experiencing these symptoms in denial, a compassionate manager or HR professional may be able to encourage the employee to seek help through their EAP.*

If Joanne were suffering from a temporary dementia that could be cured or reversed, the company would have retained an excellent worker. Even in Joanne's case of suffering from permanent early onset Alzheimer's, the organization is in a better position to



defend against a wrongful termination suit when they give an employee the opportunity to seek help when a declining job performance may be the result of an illness or disability.

If the employee is not in denial, and a trusting corporate culture exists, Joanne might have sought out her manager with her concerns about her ability to do her job. Patients experiencing such symptoms often appropriately begin by consulting with their primary care physician. *But if the symptoms persist and a cause is not determined, it is important to encourage the employee to confer with a specialist such as a neurologist, geriatrician or geriatric psychiatrist with experience in dementia.*

Summary

While early onset Alzheimer's disease can create havoc in the workplace for both employers and employees, fortunately it is a rare condition. When everyone in the workplace understands what to look for, it is easier to guide co-workers and subordinates who need help. ■

Jennifer FitzPatrick, MSW, LCSW-C is an author, speaker, and educator. For more information visit www.generationshealth.com.

Social Media Success – Part I

By Genae Girard

Cathy, a small business owner, spent a lot of money on the front end of a social media campaign for her bakery. She set out to incrementally build her following on Facebook, Twitter and her blog. She slowly built a following with her in-store business as well as her distribution nationally. She carefully crafted flyers to put in boxes, an email campaign and newsletters.

Her followers steadily grew until she hit a plateau. She wondered why it took so much effort to build her following, just for her drop-out rate to steadily increase. What Cathy didn't realize is that while it's important to build a following on social media sites, *it's just as important to keep that following engaged.*

In order to keep customers engaged, you must create an emotional bond in order to keep their attention. The average customer is exposed to hundreds of messages everyday on their computer, on their phones and on TV. They have become artificially attention deficit disordered, and that doesn't help your advertising brand. In order to be successful in the social media market *you must engage the customer.*

Cathy can do this by turning to the creative spirit of the company and think outside the box using a number of strategies – two of which we'll describe below – the remainder will be explained next month in the conclusion of this two-part article.

❖ **Create great content.** If Cathy posted interesting antidotes

about the history of certain desserts or the story behind a certain dessert, it is sure to create more buzz. If you have a consulting business, talk about some of the best ways to move a customer's business forward in a down economy.

❖ **Consider adding video.** The average consumer responds to video better than written content. If Cathy showed a video of the bakery making their new three-layered rainbow colored cake, that is more engaging for her followers than the average post. Rick's auto mechanic shop could post video on how to look for seals corroding. The options are endless. ■

Genae Girard is a speaker, author and entrepreneur. She is the founder of www.BeyondtheBoobieTrap.com, an online social media tribe of over 23,000 breast cancer survivors.

Managing Employee Caregivers

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❖ **Examine work hours.** Most businesses have core hours of operation during which staff attendance is mandatory. Your corporate clients need to identify those core hours. Chances are they add up to 20 to 30 hours of an employee's weekly schedule. They should make the remaining work week flexible for the entire staff, not just caregivers.

The key is creativity. For instance, they could allow an employee to come in two hours later than usual, but stay two

hours later at night. The goal is not reducing someone's hours – it *is* about being flexible in employees' work and non-work needs. In return, employers will relieve stress, boost morale, and increase productivity.

❖ **Make information available.** Many companies offer benefits for employees who care for a family member. These benefits may include EAP, personal leaves of absence, and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

However, don't assume that employees are aware of these benefits. Employers need to post pamphlets of local service providers of elder care and respite care in break rooms, as well as information on the company's various assistance programs, such as the EAP. ■

Source: American Red Cross. Editor's note: For more information on this topic, see the November 2011 Brown Bagger, 'The Sandwich Generation.'

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Selling Without a Sales Rep

By Shelley Plemons

Selling an EAP without a sales representative can be a headache. Some small to mid-size organizations require the entire executive team to be responsible for sales! This system spreads the pain around, but it doesn't ensure success. Here is an eight-step process for creating an EAP sales system without a salesperson.



❖ **Create a sales team.** The group should consist of three to four people. Job assignments should be based on each member's skill set. You'll need people who are good at research, cold calling, and making presentations.

❖ **Research prospective clients.** Determine the best industries to target, and decide your ideal client's size. Make a list of companies and have your researcher find out who the decision makers are. Ask if they have an EAP in place, if yes; find out when it comes up for renewal. Do they work with a consultant or broker? Have your researcher place all of the key information into a spreadsheet. This should include company names, location, web address, phone numbers, and email addresses for decision makers regarding EAPs.

❖ **Identify who will be your point of contact for prospective**

clients. Set goals for the number of daily cold calls and contacts – usually about 15-20. Make sure calls are tracked and hold this person accountable.

❖ **The person making cold calls should start by building relationships with prospective clients.** The purpose of the initial call is to verify the information gathered by the researcher and to listen. Find out what the client likes and dislikes about the current EAP provider and other pertinent details about their current situation.

❖ **The next step is to gather the sales team to review the information.** They will need to create a presentation that is customized for each prospective client.

❖ **When the client is ready for a formal presentation and a meeting is scheduled, ensure that the appropriate people are invited.** This may include the vice president of benefits or human resources (HR), the director of HR/benefits, and the company's chief financial officer and/or president. Be sure the number of people on your sales team equals the number of people your potential client is bringing to the meeting. Including too few or too many people can result in an awkward situation.

❖ **The sales team should consist of subject matter experts** such as a clinician, a representative from various programs, and potentially the president of your EAP. It is important to rehearse their presentation repeatedly and assign

PowerPoint slides to the various participants. One person should take the lead in the presentation. Always plan the next steps before leaving. Perhaps a tour of your facility, a meeting with someone else, or more references, etc., is required to close the deal.

❖ **A follow-up phone call within 72 hours is critical.** Find out what they liked and what they didn't!

This type of sales process requires a large amount of accountability and persistence. If it is too much and your head still hurts, consider outsourcing your sales program to an expert with a history of success. ■

Shelley Plemons has more than 25 years' experience in the behavioral health industry. Her website can be found at www.strategicsalessolutions.com.

Editor's note: This story is the fifth in a series that will discuss business solutions for EAPs. If you have a topic you would like covered send an email to Shelley@strategicsalessolutions.com or call (817) 946-5334.

