

# EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

supporting EAP professionals

## State of EAPs and EAPA



Jeff Christie,  
President of  
Employee  
Assistance  
Professionals  
Association

**E**mployee Assistance Report had the opportunity recently to interview Jeff Christie, global manager of Halliburton EAP in Houston, TX, and president of the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA). Christie discussed EAPA initiatives and important issues affecting employee assistance professionals. The following is an edited summary of that conversation.

**EAR:** *Some EA professionals believe that too many EAPs are trying to be too many things to too many people and are losing their identity in the process. Would you agree this is a problem, and if so, what might be some solutions to this quandary?*

**JC:** I still remember an important insight that a wise friend shared with me years ago. She stated, "Whenever you hear a problem framed as an 'a vs. b' dilemma, know that the biggest problem lies in the very framing of the dilemma." Most of life's chal-

lenges are not constructively solved by such thinking. It represents a "false dichotomy."

It seems that the current debate around EAP identity falls into this erroneous thinking. We are asked, "what is better, the services that stem from the old traditional EAP identity or the broader, work-life, wellness-oriented services derived from newer thinking?"

We have not found any diminution in the number of employees who bring their emotional troubles, family crises, chemical dependencies, and

tragedies into the workplace. If that phenomenon has disappeared, we would love to see the proof (and wonder why it hasn't happened in our own workplaces). From all that is discernable, the core EAP skills of assessment, management consultation, constructive confrontation, and case follow-through have not lost their utility.

Some professionals state that they believe EAP should move away from its association with

*continued on Page 2*



### If You're Planning on Going...

**What:** Annual World EAP Conference  
**Where:** Denver, CO  
**When:** Oct. 26-29, 2011

#### Keynote speakers (include):

- *Building a Workplace Culture of Health* – John Dillon Riley
- *Threats of Violence in the Workplace* – Bruce Blythe and Terri Stivarius

**For more information:**  
Contact Debbie Mori, (703) 387-1000, ext. 310, or visit [www.eapassn.org](http://www.eapassn.org). ■

### FEATURED INSIDE

- ▶ Resources
- ▶ Don't Underestimate the Importance of Workplace Culture – Part II
- ▶ How to Say 'No' the Right Way
- ▶ Positive Psychology Offers Long-term ROI
- ▶ Dealing With a Horrible Boss
- ▶ BAD Bosses Worthy of a Chuckle, but Issue is No Laughing Matter
- ▶ Resources
- ▶ The Antidepressant Controversy
- ▶ Beating the 'Sunday Night Blues'

#### INSERTS

- ▶ *Brown Bagger:* EAP Market Share Growing: Benefits Study
- ▶ *Payroll Stuffers*
- ▶ *LifestyleTIPS®*

mental health problems, additions, and trauma because “employees just don’t want to dwell on that stuff.” If you asked me on a good day whether I preferred a banana split or a grief counselor, I’d just as soon have chocolate sauce on my face. However, when my life takes a horrible turn and I’m dealing with tremendous pain and loss, thank goodness my employer has someone with the skills to help me.

That being said, we need to constantly explore ways by which EAPs can broaden their value to employers and employees alike. There is nothing inherently wrong with new frontiers. Employees will “vote with their feet” on which new services they find truly useful. The only caveat is that we don’t throw out those attributes that not only show our utility, but also really make us unique. As one professor once said, “If you want job security, do the things that no one else is willing or able to do.” The answer to this question, therefore, is “A PLUS B”.

*EAR: Is the EAP profession overlooking some areas in which it can make itself indispensable to corporate*

*clients and other organizations? If so, what might some of these areas be?*

**JC:** We are witnessing a growing resurgence of EA professionals who, recognizing the very limiting, damaging effect brought on by the MH/SA gatekeeper function that was thrust upon EAPs since the 1990s, are realizing that EAPs can – and should be – promoted as offering far more than a cost-offset to an MH/SA plan.

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***“That being said, we need to constantly explore ways by which EAPs can broaden their value to employers and employees alike.”***

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In the past several years, we have gained an increasing appreciation that EAPs – whether internal or external – can demonstrate far greater utility to their corporate customers if, rather than seeing that customer as one, singular, undifferentiated entity, take the time to analyze how EAP can support the many varying functions that comprise that corporate entity.

In short, EAPs support HR when they successfully intervene upon, and thereby, help retain valued employees experiencing a job-endangering crisis:

- ❖ Support the **Safety** function by helping assure that workplace risks are mitigated through efforts to identify and refer those individuals whose problems can result in impairment;

- ❖ Support the **Security** function by partnering in multi-disciplinary

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Editor - Mike Jacquart  
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## Resources

☞ **Help for Disaster Victims** serves as a portal for many of the international aid organizations that accept donations to help victims of cataclysmic disasters. Log on to [www.appleseeds.org/aid-relief-agencies.htm](http://www.appleseeds.org/aid-relief-agencies.htm).

☞ **Career Potential** offers valuable information for individuals and organizations, including career self-assessments, coaching programs, and more. Visit [www.careerpotential.com](http://www.careerpotential.com).

threat of violence assessment teams;

- ❖ Support the **Benefits** function by offering its expertise in sound MH/SA plan design (policy development rather than gatekeeping); and

- ❖ Support the **Legal** function by serving as collaterals who, in their day-to-day work, provide supervisors and managers with awareness that their presenting concerns may involve FMLA, ADA, EEO, or other implications, and that legal consultation should be sought.

*continued on Page 2*

I could go on, but those are just a smattering of the ways we can be increasing the relevance of EAP to its corporate customers.

**EAR:** *What do you see as the impact of the recent mental health parity legislation on the EAP field? Or is too early to say? Similarly, what about the effect of President Obama's health care reform legislation? Are these two issues interrelated?*

**JC:** Due to these important health care changes, EAPs have an even greater opportunity to demonstrate their expertise on plan designs that are not only compliant, but also ultimately beneficial to employer and employee alike. For example, in some workplaces, if an employee seeks medical or surgical care, he must meet an annual deductible; however, if he seeks MH/SA care, there is no deductible to be met. Parity certainly does not prevent an MH/SA plan from being richer than its medical/surgical counterpart, but more importantly, we have an opportunity to educate our customers that removing any blockades to MH/SA care is often, to reverse a cliché, “penny foolish and dollar wise”.

**EAR:** *Could you briefly discuss the current state of EAPA? What have been a few successes this*

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## Editor's Notebook

I wish to thank Jeff Christie for his time in providing some thoughtful answers and insights for this month's cover article.

While I understand that travel expenses can be tough to afford in today's budget-strapped economic climate, I hope that any readers “on the bubble” about attending the upcoming World EAP Conference will consider going. I found last year's event in Tampa extremely informative overall as well as useful in networking with contributors for articles for both *Employee Assistance Report (EAR)* and the *Journal of Employee Assistance*, which I also edit (for EAPA).

It was the first time since I started editing *EAR* around 7

years ago, that I was able to attend – so I understand quite well that going to annual events like these can be tough to swing financially for many EA professionals. While there's never anything quite like being there in person, for *EAR* readers who *aren't* planning on going to Denver, we hope Jeff's article offers some useful nuggets of information about what's going on in both EAPA and in the EAP field.

Of course, I'll be happy to provide a follow-up report later on as well. Until next time.

Mike Jacquart, Editor  
(715) 258-2448

mike.jacquart@impacttrainingcenter.net

*past year that EA professionals should be aware of? What are some goals or other challenges that lie ahead for the organization for the rest of 2011 and beyond?*

**JC:** Our successes include, in the face of years of recession, an ever-improving financial status that will enable us to further build our capabilities to serve our domestic and international members, as well as strengthen our ability to partner with key stakeholder groups and collateral entities such as government, media, and institutions of higher learning.

As for goals, concurrent with EAPA's financial improvement, EAPA's leadership has developed a very clear, definable, and measurable Strategic Plan that has already begun to “grow legs” through the assemblage and activity of dedicated Strategic Plan Task Forces, each charged with the accomplishment of one strategic goal.

Challenges, of course, persist. Primarily, we must continue, with great purpose and clarity, to improve the understanding of EAP's value to its stakeholders and the public; to increase membership within the Association; and to further the desire of EA practitioners to acquire and for EAP purchasers to demand, that level of EA expertise defined by possession of the CEAP.

**EAR:** *What is some final advice that you have for your peers in the EAP field?*

**JC:** Beware of those nasty “false dichotomies” that seek to divide us. It's not old vs. new; internal vs. external; labor vs. non-labor; or U.S. vs. non-U.S. We are all engaged in a wonderful, multi-form enterprise by which we utilize our unique understanding of human behavior in the workplace to further the very honorable goal of making all of our lives better. ■

# Don't Underestimate the Importance of Workplace Culture – Part II

Workplace culture, also referred to as corporate culture, is probably one of the most overlooked aspects of an employee's job performance. If an individual doesn't "fit in," it's hard to succeed. Part one of this two-part article discussed the importance of workplace culture. The conclusion will explain personality profiles and follow-up.

## Personality Profiles

Many people hop from job to job before settling on one position – and even then, they aren't always happy in it. Rather than learning these lessons on a trial-and-error basis, it's a better idea for individuals to try to uncover more specifics about their personality from the start. Personality profiles, also referred to as inventories and assessments, can help ensure better workforce fits. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator© (MBTI) personality inventory is one of the leading personality tests.

Some people disregard profiles like the MBTI because they don't always identify what specific jobs an individual might be qualified to do. However, these types of tools can often accurately predict what *type of work cultures* a job seeker will succeed in.

For instance, an individual may state on an MBTI that he or she is very detail oriented and doesn't mind working on one project for long periods of time. In this case, it stands to reason that this person probably wouldn't be a good fit with a company if its culture was such that the majority of employees enjoyed faster, uncomplicated procedures and were impatient with long, slow jobs.

Admittedly, an individual's job skills are important. However, it's crucial for HR professionals and recruiters to get past the "nuts and bolts" of what a worker can do, and into the personality aspects of the job seeker.

Whatever assessment tool is used (MBTI or something else), the key is to learn not only the person's job interests and aptitudes, but also workplace and work schedule preferences, and career goals. More extensive planning and effective questioning up front can help prevent disgruntled employees down the road.

## Follow-Up

Job applicants and recruiters alike must be proactive. The job seeker must consider if the workplace culture would be a good match, as well as the specific job. Likewise, the HR professional or other hiring manager needs to recognize that they are not only on a fact-finding mission to find an *individual* employee for a *particular* position,

they also need to determine if the company is a *long-term* fit for this person. Turnover is expensive – hiring the right person from the start helps.

## Summary

No job is perfect, no workplace culture is perfect, and no one can guarantee success on the job. However, when there is a greater emphasis on a match, rather than just a warm body to do the specific work, the chances of long-term success for everyone involved, improve dramatically.

Finally, the EA professional needs to consider if the workplace problem – whatever it is – can in fact be resolved, or if the issue is due to a bad corporate "fit." There is nothing to be ashamed of if this is, in fact the case– because in some instances, changing jobs is the only solution. ■

Sources: George Nostrand, *Vocational Opportunity Works*; and *Career Choice, Change & Challenge*, by Deb Koen and Tony Lee, JIST Publishing.

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# How to Say 'No' the Right Way

By Carl Van

People who hate to say no find it hard to do, and sometimes do something much worse than hurt someone's feelings. They either don't say anything, which passively sends an incorrect message of "yes," or they say no in such a way that the other person doesn't really know what is being said, sending the message of "maybe."

On the other hand, some people don't find it hard to say no, but they can lack the skills to do so gracefully and very often instill hard feelings, even when that is not their intent. The following are some tips:

❖ "I'm sorry" doesn't have to mean you regret what you did, but that

you *understand* the other person. A little empathy can go a long way.

❖ Repeat back to the other person their point of view. That will allow him/her to listen to yours. Once you prove to someone you understand their point of view, by repeating it back to them, they can stop explaining it repeatedly.

❖ You don't have to prove to someone that the situation is his or her fault. Most people just want empathy, not for you to take the blame. If possible, take this person's side as much as you can, but return to the situation at hand.

❖ Show the other person you wish it could be different. Telling someone, "I wish I could do this for you...however, I just can't" is much

more powerful than saying, "I won't do this for you because I don't have to."

❖ Help solve the problem in another way if possible. Even if alternatives aren't the answer, the fact that you offered them shows you care. Most people, when being told "no," can take the news a little better if it is coming from someone who seems to genuinely care.

❖ Avoid the word "but" when empathizing. When you say, "I understand, but..." what the other person hears is, "I don't understand." ■

*Carl Van is a professional public speaker and business course designer. For more information, check out [www.CarlVan.org](http://www.CarlVan.org) or log on to [www.facebook.com/carlvanspeaker](http://www.facebook.com/carlvanspeaker).*

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## Quick Ideas

# Positive Psychology Offers Long-term ROI

Researcher and author Shawn Achor recently provided the long-term benefits of positive psychology in the workplace. He cited them as follows:

❖ Teaching the principles of positive psychology prepares managers to better deal with the challenges of a modern work environment.

❖ Employee life satisfaction is a direct contributor to productivity and performance.

❖ Even a short training on positive psychology will create clear Returns On Investment.

### Background

In December 2008 as the worldwide economic crisis was beginning

to take shape, a 10-minute survey was administered to managers getting a baseline reading of 14 different metrics including stress, social support and optimism. Then, Achor delivered a three-hour training entitled "Positive Psychology: the Science of Happiness and Potential" to the same 77 managers.

A week after the training, the survey was re-administered to the experimental group and compared with a control group (managers who did not go through the training but took the surveys). In April 2009, both groups were tested again. Even after four months, the group of trained managers showed significant increases to optimism and life satis-

faction – one of the greatest predictors of performance and success.

Research has already found that employee life satisfaction is a direct contributor to productivity and performance; thus, a training that conclusively enhances this quality could have far-reaching implications.

Lastly and most importantly, this research indicates that even a *short training on positive psychology will create a clear and long lasting ROI* – an indication that it may be increasingly important for companies to start training their employees on the skills of positive psychology.

For more information, visit: [www.ShawnAchor.com](http://www.ShawnAchor.com) or [www.internationalsspeakers.com](http://www.internationalsspeakers.com). ■

# Dealing With a Horrible Boss

It's no wonder bad bosses often make it to the big screen: Many workers can relate. Nearly half (46%) of employees surveyed by OfficeTeam said they have worked for an unreasonable manager.

Among those who have been beleaguered by challenging supervisors, most (59%) stayed in their jobs and either tried to address the situation or resolved to live with it.

"Bad bosses aren't necessarily bad people, but they certainly can make work challenging for those who report to them," said Robert Hosking, executive director of OfficeTeam, which conducted the survey. "Often, individuals are promoted because they excel in a given job, but that doesn't mean they have the skills to be effective leaders."

OfficeTeam identified five common types of challenging bosses and tips for employees - and EA professionals - in working with them:

❖ **Boss type** – The micromanager has trouble delegating tasks. This boss looks over the employee's shoulder to make sure a project is completed exactly as told.

❖ **Coping strategy** – Trust is usually the issue here, so it must be built. The employee must make deadlines, pay attention to details and keep the supervisor apprised of all steps that have been taken to ensure quality work.

❖ **Boss type** – The poor communicator provides little or no direction. The employee's assignments often have to be



completed at the last minute or redone because goals and deadlines weren't clearly explained.

❖ **Coping strategy** – At the outset of a project, the employee must ask for any information the boss has not yet provided. He/she must diplomatically point out that these details are necessary to ensure meeting expectations. Clarification must be sought when the employee is confused, and regular check-ins should be arranged to ensure that the work is proceeding adequately.

❖ **Boss type** – The bully wants to do things his or her way, or no way at all. Bosses like this also tend to be gruff with others and easily frustrated.

❖ **Coping strategy** – This employee must stand up for himself/herself. The next time a supervisor "shoots down" a proposal, for example, the employee must calmly explain the rationale behind it. Often, this type of manager will relent when presented with a voice of reason.

❖ **Boss type** – The saboteur undermines the efforts of others

and rarely recognizes individuals for a job well done. This supervisor takes credit for employees' ideas but places blame on others when projects go awry.

❖ **Coping strategy** – This employee's job is to make the boss look good, but not at the expense of his/her career advancement. This individual must ensure that contributions are more visible to others, especially senior management. Get information in writing from this person so there is a chain of communications to refer to, if needed.

❖ **Boss type** – The mixed bag is always a surprise. This manager's moods are unpredictable: He or she may confide in you one day and turn a cold shoulder the next.

❖ **Coping strategy** – This employee must try not to take this boss's disposition personally. Stay calm and composed when dealing with this type of supervisor. When he or she is on edge, try to limit communication to urgent matters only. ■

Source: OfficeTeam ([www.officeteam.com](http://www.officeteam.com)).

# BAD Bosses Worthy of a Chuckle, but Issue is No Laughing Matter

Working America – [www.workingamerica.org](http://www.workingamerica.org) – recently announced the second weekly winners of its popular “My Bad Boss Contest”, where workers can share their horrible bosses stories for a chance to win a vacation and \$1,000 toward travel expenses. The weekly winners are:

❖ “Sydney Bristow” of Illinois, who told her boss that she can’t afford commuting costs, which take up one-fourth of her salary. Her boss replied: “I know, when I take my Porsche out of storage for the summer, it’s going to cost a lot to gas it up.” This same boss recently put non-IT staff in charge of tech-support duties after two IT staffers quit because of a toxic environment.

❖ “Traumatized Tracy” of New York tells of her boss, a doctor, who frequently leaves undergarments strewn about the office. Her boss has left bikini underwear on the bathroom doorknob, and once removed her shirt in front of Tracy while continuing to talk business. To top it off, Tracy was recently told her hours will be cut down to part-time effective immediately. She is now on the hunt for a new job.

Two previous weekly winners were announced last week. Details of all the weekly winners can be found at: [http://www.workingamerica.org/badboss/?appState=listStories\\_semi](http://www.workingamerica.org/badboss/?appState=listStories_semi). A grand prize winner will receive a seven-night vacation and \$1,000 toward airfare or other expenses.

The contest coincides with release of the zany comedy “Horrible Bosses” starring Jason Bateman and Jennifer Aniston. However, unlike this movie, *we recommend sane workplace protections and good jobs to counter the crazy. After all, bullying and other bad bosses is no laughing matter for their employees – many of whom feel they have no recourse but to quit.* The Workplace Bullying Institute is dedicated to the eradication of workplace bullying. Check out [www.workplacebullying.org](http://www.workplacebullying.org). ■

*Editor’s note: This article originally appeared on our blog at <http://impactpublishing.wordpress.com>.*

## Resources

📖 *The Art of Leading: Three Principles for Predictable Performance Improvement*, by Wally Hauck, [www.wallyhauck.com](http://www.wallyhauck.com). The author presents leadership principles in order to build a successful foundation for employee engagement. Hauck not only looks to assist established executives and managers, but also to help those new to their careers.

📖 *Green Golf Balls*, by Dan L. Schoepf, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). The author provides readers with a guide to identify and achieve their goals in order to develop their true potential.

🏠 *AmeriCares* is a nonprofit disaster relief and humanitarian aid organization, which provides immediate response to emergency medical needs worldwide. Visit [www.americares.org](http://www.americares.org).

📖 *From Rage to Resolution*, by DeAnne Rosenberg, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). The author offers strategic tools for neutralizing anger and hostility – especially in the workplace.

🏠 The *HandsOn Network* is a nonprofit organization that works with action centers located in disaster-impacted regions from the recent domestic tornadoes and flooding. It also supports a center working on recovery efforts in Japan. Check out <http://handsonnetwork.org>. ■

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# The Antidepressant Controversy

Could drugs that are ingested by one in 10 Americans each year, drugs that have changed the way that mental illness is treated, really be a hoax, a mistake or a concept gone wrong? According to Peter D. Kramer, a clinical professor of psychiatry at Brown University, this supposition is worrisome.

“Antidepressants work – ordinarily well, on a par with other medications doctors prescribe,” wrote Kramer, in an opinion piece that appeared in *The New York Times*. “Yes, certain researchers have questioned their efficacy in particular areas – sometimes, I believe, on the basis of shaky data. And yet, the notion that they aren’t

effective in general is influencing treatment.

“Critics raise various concerns, but in my view the serious dispute about antidepressant efficacy has a limited focus,” Kramer adds. “Do they work for the core symptoms (such as despair, low energy and feelings of worthlessness) of isolated episodes of mild or moderate depression? The claim that antidepressants do nothing for this common condition – that they are merely placebos with side effects – is based on studies that have probably received more ink than they deserve.

“My own beliefs aside, it is dangerous for the press to hammer away at the theme that antidepressants are placebos. They’re not. To

give the impression that they are is to cause needless suffering.”

The complete article can be found at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/10/opinion/sunday/10antidepressants.html?pagewanted=1> ■

*Editor’s note: This article originally appeared on our blog, <http://impactpublishing.wordpress.com>.*



## On the Job

# Beating the ‘Sunday Night Blues’

By Ford R. Myers

U h oh, it’s Sunday night again! Just a few more hours of enjoyment before the dreaded event: returning to work on Monday morning.

If this is the thought that goes through either your mind – a colleague’s, or that of a struggling employee of a corporate client, the following five steps will help beat the “Sunday Night Blues” and establish a fresh approach to work each Monday.

❖ Plan out your week on Sunday nights and write down your tasks. This will help break things

down into smaller pieces so the work won’t seem so overwhelming.

❖ Schedule at least one activity every Monday that you truly enjoy. This will give you something positive to look forward to at the beginning of your week,

❖ Make Monday “Career Day.” Devote part of every Monday to career management activities, such as networking or researching other opportunities.

❖ Assess whether you’re in the right career or job in the first place. People who truly enjoy their work generally usually don’t get the “Sunday Night Blues.”

❖ Change your attitude. If you’ve been complaining about your job for

a long time, you must take full responsibility for your situation and change it for the better.

## Summary

Sunday nights are tough for many people, regardless of how happy they are in their current employment situation. However, if you’re *continually* unhappy in your job, chances are you’re not in the right career. No amount of Sunday night planning can improve upon that! ■

*Reprinted by permission of Ford R. Myers, a nationally known career coach and author of [Get The Job You Want, Even When No One’s Hiring](#). Download a free special report, [10 Vital Strategies to Maximize Your Career Success at www.careerspecialreport.com](#).*