



# EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

supporting EAP professionals

## Bridging the Generation Gap: Issues Considered Major Workplace Challenges

Companies are struggling with the challenge of managing a more diverse workforce. This is particularly apparent in the widening generation gap, which is threatening productivity and profitability at firms nationwide.

If these workplace issues aren't adequately addressed, this "generational divide"

could undermine the success of any business — internally as well as in the marketplace — warns Mechele Flaum, a noted future

trends and marketing consultant.

The "generational divide" refers to workplace disputes that result from today's unprecedented multigenerational business environment. At no other time in history have organizations been faced with so many generations of employees working together, each with different values, attitudes, and expectations, according to Joanne Sujansky, founder of the Key Group, a business consulting firm. The demographic groups include:

- **Baby Boomers**, those born

between 1946 and 1964;

- **Generation X**, born between 1965 and 1976; and
- **Generation Y**, also referred to as Millennials or Nexters, born between 1977 and the present.

"You can start the new year off right by making a serious effort to understand what is important to people in the office, and what motivates them," said Flaum. "Keeping your best employees happy and your workforce stable should

be a top priority for every business leader."

### Baby Boomers and Gen Xers

Because of their sheer numbers and advancing age, Baby Boomers are at the crux of generational issues. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of people in the workforce 55 and older will nearly double by 2012. However, complicating matters is the fact that, according to the AARP, more than 80% of Baby Boomers will continue working past retirement age. But whether Boomers retire or request a less-

demanding schedule, businesses will have a hard time meeting customers' needs unless they have a plan that prepares for this growing trend.

Generation Xers, increasingly seen as the up-and-coming generation of leaders, are one likely solution. But Baby Boomers and Gen Xers have some clear workplace differences. For example, Gen Xers prefer to integrate work into their personal lives, rather than making work the focal point as much as Baby Boomers. Since many Gen Xers will soon be leading their respective organizations, employers would do well to understand their concerns.

### Other Generational Differences

Age-related disparities in the

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workforce are often the result of misconceptions, according to Flaum. "This can lead to misunderstandings, miscues, communication gaps, morale problems, and most dangerously, lost business opportunities," she stated.

For example, the majority of mature workers (those over age 40) surveyed by Marketing Fire, Flaum's New York-based consulting firm, feel they demonstrate respect to younger workers and treat them well. However, younger workers (those under 40) don't believe this view is accurate.

"Generation & Gender in the Workplace," a recent article issued by the Families and Work Institute, supports Flaum's findings. The report found that mature workers measure performance on hours spent working, while younger workers are more likely to measure success by their level of enjoyment, if they feel they are fairly compensated, and if they have time for other interests outside of work. This can be a source of friction with older workers, who may resent this attitude and feel that younger workers should "pay their dues" just as they did.

Judith, a 58-year-old corporate managing director, reiterated this belief. "I can't believe how some people feel: 'I've been here two years; I deserve to be moved to the next level with a new title and raise,' not, 'I've mastered this skill and role; now it's time for me to move up. I can handle it.'"

But while this viewpoint may be legitimate, it may also mask jealousy. "It's hard for them (older workers) to deal with the fact that I am in a decision-making position, and that I have that responsibility," said Tim, a 24-year-old sales executive.

## Some Consider Generational Issues Irrelevant

However, age issues like these may be more the exception than the rule. An estimated 84% of workers polled by OfficeTeam, a leading staffing service, said they would be comfortable reporting to a manager younger than they are. In addition, 89% added they wouldn't mind supervising employees older than themselves.

Today's employees are recognized more for performance than tenure with a company, noted Diane Domeyer, executive director of OfficeTeam. "In an ideal office setting, managers and staff are focused on the skills and knowledge people bring to their roles, not what year they were born," she said.

Additionally, some workers feel age is irrelevant because they recognize the strengths that different age groups can bring to the workplace. "The good news is that we seem to be learning from each other," said Marie, 53, an office manager. "Even my toughest hold-out attorney has learned to embrace the instant gratification of email and is considering (purchasing) a blackberry!"

"Over the course of my career, I have gained an increased reverence for older workers," noted Sue, a 31-year-old insurance broker. "Though they may not do things the same way I would, they generally have a very deep breadth of knowledge and experience that I can learn a lot from."

## More Work Needs to be Done

While it's encouraging that some strides have been made, Flaum believes that more employees need to embrace Sue's attitude of being open to learning from older workers who've been "around the block." Conversely, she adds that mature workers also

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have to understand new ways of doing business and new technologies to "stay in the game."

"Younger workers are more savvy when it comes to computer technology whereas the older workforce has no choice but to embrace it whether they want to or not," said Ellen, 50, an administrator. "In an office environment, those who are not computer literate will not survive. For some, this creates resentment and frustration."

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## Retention is a Key Part of Generational Issues

Flaum also strongly believes that companies must consider the devastating effect that turnover, caused by an inability to relate to co-workers of different ages, can have on the bottom line. She estimates the cost of replacing a single worker, when taking into account hiring and training a replacement, vacancy-related expenses until the position is filled, and the time required to bring a new hire up to speed, at \$30,000.

“Excessive turnover is also viewed as a major detriment to quality service, which means customer dissatisfaction,” she added.

In summary, Flaum says that generational differences in the workplace have become the workplace issue that appropriate treatment of female employees used to be. “We need better communication, genuine appreciation, and immediate resolution of conflict among multigenerational co-workers if we’re going to maintain productivity and profits in the future workplace,” she stressed. ■

*Mechele Flaum has been interpreting trends, interviewing consumers, and consulting experts on the future of the consumer landscape for nearly two decades. Additional sources: Mariam Communications, Marsha Lindquist ([www.marshalindquist.com](http://www.marshalindquist.com)) and Workforce Insights, an online resource center about emerging labor trends produced by Veritude ([www.veritude.com](http://www.veritude.com)), a provider of strategic human resources. Veritude, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Fidelity Investments, serves clients throughout the U.S. and Canada. ©2006 Veritude, LLC. Reprinted with permission. **Editor’s note:** Additional ideas on closing generation gaps are provided in this month’s Brown Bagger insert.*

## Quick Ideas

# Why Companies Need an EAP

**W**hen trying to attract new companies, do you have problems explaining to prospective clients that EAPs are not a “frill” or “add-on” benefit? Do they have difficulty believing that EAPs are truly cost-effective? Ask prospective clients to consider the following statistics and the impact they might have on their workforce.

### Work/Life Issues

- Childcare referral programs can reduce employee absenteeism due to childcare problems by 40%.
- Workers need help with caregiving concerns. Caregiving employees take off nearly 19 vacation and sick days per year to deal with personal and caregiving issues.
- Lost productivity due to employee caregiving concerns cost employers at least \$11 billion annually.

### Substance Abuse

- Drug-reliant employees incur 300% higher medical costs compared with health co-workers (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Workers at Risk: Drugs and Alcohol on the Job).
- 70% of adult illegal drug users are employed (CSAT).

### Benefits of an EAP

- 66% decline in absenteeism after alcohol abusers have been identified and treated;
- 33% decline in utilization of sickness benefits; 65% decline in work-related accidents; and 30% decline in workers’ compensation claims. ■

*Additional sources: Interface EAP, Family Caregiver Alliance® ([www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org))  
©National Family Caregivers Association ([www.thefamilycaregiver.org](http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org)).*

## Resources

 **Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information**, (800) 729-6686.

 **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children**, (800) 843-5678.

 **National Domestic Violence Abuse Hotline**, (800) 799-7233.

 **National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Service**, (800) 662-4357.

 **Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in Your Workplace**, by Ron Zemke,

Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak, \$27 list price, Performance Research Associates ([www.socksoff.com](http://www.socksoff.com)).

 **The Opt-Out Revolt: Why People are Leaving Companies to Create Kaleidoscope Careers**, by Lisa Mainiero and Sherry Sullivan, \$28.95 list price, Davies-Black Publishing, ISBN: 089106186X.

 **Managing Generation X: How to Bring Out the Best in Young Talent**, by Bruce Tulgan, W.W. Norton & Company, ISBN: 0393320758.

# Employers Listen to Exit Interviews

**H**ave you ever left a job figuring it didn't pay to be honest in an exit interview because nothing would change there anyway? Not so! The information provided by departing employees during exit interviews *doesn't* fall on deaf ears, a new survey suggests.

According to OfficeTeam, a leading staffing service, when executives were asked, "*How often do you act on information gathered during exit interviews with departing employees?*" 57% said "somewhat frequently," and 19% said "always." Only 6% said "never."

OfficeTeam offers the following

advice for leaving on a positive note:

- **Avoid burning bridges.** Even if your work experience wasn't always positive, keep your interaction in the meeting upbeat and professional. Avoid negative comments about individual supervisors or co-workers. Saying something "bad" might feel good now, but you'll likely regret it later.
- **Keep it constructive.** Managers want information they can use to make improvements in policies and procedures, department struc-

ture, and corporate culture. Offer feedback and suggestions that *can lead to change*. Telling a small employer that they should offer a company gym isn't helpful or realistic.

- **Be candid but accurate.** It's often difficult for supervisors to get honest feedback from current employees, so your candor will likely be appreciated. Be as truthful as you can, but remember that what you say could have an impact on other people's careers. ■

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

## Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained: *Career Resolutions Work for Those who Keep Them*

**W**ith the new year here, the familiar adage, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" may be truer than ever — especially on the job.

A recent survey reveals that, while a small percentage of workers (12%) made career-related decisions at the beginning of 2006, nearly three-quarters (72%) of those who *did* were successful in achieving their goals.

When survey respondents were asked to site their *top professional goal for 2007*, responses were as follows:

- **Improve my skills, 24%;**
- **Earn a raise or promotion, 22%;**

- Obtain greater work/life balance, 20%;
  - Find a new job, 14%; and
  - Improve work relationships with colleagues and supervisor, 8%.
- "Other" and "don't know" rounded out the remaining answers.

"The start of the new year is an ideal time to reflect on achievements during the past 12 months and set goals for the future," said Max Messmer, chairman of Accountemps, which conducted the survey.

For those considering career-related New Year's resolutions, Accountemps offers the following tips:

- **Set realistic objectives.** Make sure they're attainable, and set a timeline for accomplishing them.
- **Develop a specific plan.** Break big goals into smaller items to ensure you stay on track.
- **Reward yourself.** Acknowledge your successes. Doing so will increase your drive to keep achieving.
- **Maintain balance.** Don't lose sight of personal interests. Recognize when you're overloaded and prioritize accordingly.

Source: Accountemps  
([www.accountemps.com](http://www.accountemps.com)).

# Drug Overdoses Take Quiet but Deadly Toll

By Carol Falkowski

Some stark realities, such as accidental deaths from drug overdoses, rarely make “news” anymore. Because they are such long-standing problems they just don’t seem to go away.

Accidental overdose deaths from heroin, cocaine, and meth occur beneath the surface of every major metro area in the U.S. Many opiate-related overdose victims die with syringes containing residual heroin nearby or with empty pill bottles or pipes on the table.

Most are alone when paramedics or medical examiners arrive as they have avoided the authorities at all costs. Many have unexplained circumstances. Some involve violent homicides.

## Addiction: a Common Theme

Many of these deaths have a common theme — addiction. These were not “bad” people or from “bad” families — they simply suffered from a devastating illness.

In the 1970s, heroin addiction killed rock stars Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and Jim Morrison. Then, things changed. Cocaine captured the headlines in the 1980s, just like methamphetamine does today. But in spite of meth-related headlines in recent years, other equally addictive and dangerous drugs — heroin and cocaine — quietly continue to take their toll.

For instance, in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, accidental overdose deaths from heroin increased from 72 in 2004 to 102 in 2005, while cocaine-related deaths rose from 49 to 62. Meth-related deaths actually decreased from 20 to 14 over the same period. Heroin and cocaine deaths haven’t disappeared — and let’s not forget the problems related to alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana.

The enduring issue is addiction. Addiction remains a misunderstood, equal opportunity disease. Addiction can happen to anyone, although the likelihood of it developing is influenced by a combination of genetic vulnerabilities and environmental factors.

## Managing a Chronic Disease

Like other chronic diseases, addiction is treatable — but there is no cure. In order to effectively manage the disease, people need to make permanent changes to their behavior.

Professionals are aware that acquiring and using the drug becomes the focus of the addict’s life — at the expense of family, job, health, and relationships. Even years after the individual stops using, craving can still lead to relapse. Hence, managing addiction, like other chronic illnesses, often requires periodic professional services and treatment, just as a diabetic makes repeat visits to the doctor.

Still, there remain a lot of people who don’t comprehend addiction. Their understanding is often clouded by moral judgments and blame. It’s not looked at like other diseases.

For 20 years, I’ve written a biannual report on Twin Cities’ drug trends to identify new drugs of abuse, patterns of use, and populations at risk. I meet twice a year with my colleagues from 19 other cities. We tally up data from medical examiners, hospital emergency rooms, treatment centers, surveys, and crime labs.

After two decades, counting up the accidental overdose deaths is still the hardest part. Every deceased person is someone’s son or daughter — or husband or wife, or mom or dad. Year after year, I can’t get past this realization, and it breaks my heart.

While some may grandstand about the latest drug scourge, be it heroin, crack cocaine, or meth, I wonder if they would approach the issue with a greater sense of urgency and compassion, if they too, had dead bodies to count. ■

*Carol Falkowski is director of research communications at the Hazelden Foundation and author of “Dangerous Drugs.” She has monitored drug abuse trends in Minnesota since 1986 as part of an ongoing drug abuse surveillance of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. She can be reached at cfalkowski@hazelden.org. Editor’s note: This article originally appeared in Volume 11, Issue 2 of the “Hazelden Voice.”*

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# Promoting Positive Office Politics

By Margaret Morford

It's a simple fact that most people still don't "get." The majority of people who lose their jobs, aren't laid off due to costly mistakes, but because they didn't understand "office politics." Being "politically" savvy is what helps you keep your job when you do make a mistake.

How often have you been right, but everyone hates you for it? That's the gap you need to understand. It's not about walking on others to get what you need, but it is about understanding unspoken messages.

One of the most important political alliances to cultivate is your relationship with your boss. Ask yourself this question, "*Do I actually manage my relationship with my boss...or just try not to make him or her mad?*" Most people do only the latter. Turn that around and start creating a more positive relationship with your boss by answering these key questions:

**1) What is the method of communication with which my boss is most comfortable?**

Is it face-to-face, email, or voicemail? Sarah had a boss who responded best to voicemail. He wasn't big on face-to-face because it required too much time. If you sent him a voicemail, you almost always got an answer the same day, especially when he was busy. This strategy also made Sarah look self-sufficient because she wasn't always in his office asking questions. On the rare occasion when she asked for time on his calendar,

he would accommodate her because he knew it was important.

**2) During what time of day is my boss most receptive to talking?**

Your boss may be a morning person, or more open to longer conversations as the day winds down and the phones stop ringing. If your boss is talkative, and you need a quick answer, check his calendar or understand his lunch schedule and visit him 15 minutes before he has a meeting or typically leaves for lunch.

**3) Is there a particular day of the week that is better for your boss than others?**

One governmental group waits until Wednesdays to ask for anything important from their manager, because on Tuesdays the boss meets with the Board of Commissioners and Mondays are spent preparing for this meeting.

**4) When the boss needs advice, who does he consult?**

Build a good relationship with this person so he or she says good things about you to your boss. Remember — this is someone to whom your boss listens and whose opinion he or she values.

**5) What are the last three business books my boss read?**

Any book your boss spends time reading, you should read. I know one manager who wanted funding for an additional employee, but he knew this wasn't likely to fly with his supervisor. His boss was a great fan of the book *Good to Great*.

Even though the manager was not a big reader, he read the book because his boss valued its insights. The manager was then able to justify his request for the new position by saying he needed "*the right people on the bus in the right seats*" (wording that comes straight from *Good to Great*). This spoke volumes to the boss, and he got the approval to hire the new person. You can still use this strategy if your boss isn't a reader. Simply select a book that is short but packed with insights, so your boss will be willing to spend an hour reading it. And never put the cost of the book on an expense report. This is a gift and an investment in your career. Surely your career is worth \$20 or \$25!

Here are three quick "political rules" for successfully dealing with bosses:

**Rule 1 — Stay neutral about new bosses.** When you get a new boss, you will be barraged by people asking you what you think of him or her. These people will repeat what you say throughout the organization, so simply say: "*She seems very smart, but I haven't worked with her for very long.*" This is both non-committal and positive.

**Rule 2 — When your boss says something nice about you, do not deflect the compliment with modesty or with humor by cracking a joke that "*maybe this is a good time to ask for a raise.*"** This devalues the compliment and creates an awkward situation for everyone, even if they know you are kidding. Here's the perfect reply: "*Thank you so much. That means a great deal to me, coming from you.*" You have tripled the chances your manager will say more nice things about you in the future. ■

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**Rule 3 — Last, but not least, never speak badly about your boss in the workplace — even if everyone else calls him “the spawn**

**of Satan.”** By not saying anything bad, you send a clear, unspoken message throughout the organization that you are patient, resilient, and loyal. You enhance your value and reputation simply by shutting up. ■

*Margaret Morford is president of The HR Edge, Inc., an international management consulting firm, and the author of “Management Courage: Having the Heart of a Lion.” For more information, contact her at mmorford@mleesmith.com.*

## Marketing Matters

# Marketing Materials Don't Have to be Expensive

By Cary Griffin and  
Dave Hammis

Employee assistance professionals are always looking for any edge they can find to enhance awareness and increase utilization of their EAPs. Sales and marketing are among areas where they are frequently in need of additional support.

### Fact Sheet Basics

Contrary to popular opinion, expensive, slick marketing brochures and videos don't necessarily work the best. Such brochures are often time consuming and expensive. Consequently, a fact sheet can be an effective marketing tool for an EAP.

Fact sheets work particularly well for those with limited capital. All you need in order to prepare a fact sheet is simple word-processing software; large, eye-catching type (Times New Roman works well); and a laser or other reasonably high-quality printer.

Print only as many fact sheets as the employee assistance professional will need for the next few months. Without a lot of extras on hand, changing a fact sheet in response to consumer demand is easy and painless.

Keeping a fact sheet neat, easy to read, and professional in appearance increases the odds that it will be

read after the employee assistance professional leaves an appointment — or when a fact sheet is included in an introduction letter.

### What a Fact Sheet Should Include

A fact sheet should include a few brief statements that describe the services your EAP provides, and your approach to meeting employer and employee needs. It's a good idea to produce fact sheets for specific industries when demand warrants it. As stated, the low cost of producing a fact sheet makes it easy and cost-effective to update and target specific markets.

The next section should list corporate clients that the EAP works with. Be sure to obtain their permission first. The narrower the focus, the more relevance an employer will often see your fact sheet as having. For example, if an EAP has successfully supported healthcare providers, a fact sheet with a section that lists some of these providers will impress a potential client in the healthcare industry.

### Testimonials also Helpful

Include several client testimonials in the next section, as this will help sell your services. Research indicates that clients want to hear what their peers think of a particular product or

service. Their endorsement gives you credibility in the marketplace, and it gives prospective clients comfort in knowing that their competitors trust your service and utilize EAP.

### Don't Forget to Include a Contact Person

Finally, list the name of a contact person on the fact sheet, preferably the same person making the sales call. The addition of a phone number signals your commitment to working with the employer and may be just the reassurance a business owner needs when weighing their options.

### Summary

Do not waste space on your fact sheet with incidental information about your agency or services. Employers usually do not understand the nuts and bolts of different EAP models. Including information that's too industry specific only serves to confuse, not explain what you're about.

Try putting together a fact sheet. Mail it along with an introduction letter to prospective clients, or leave a copy behind after an initial sales call. ■

*Cary and Dave are senior partners at Griffin-Hammis Associates ([www.griffinhammis.com](http://www.griffinhammis.com)), a full-service consulting and training firm specializing in community rehabilitation improvement, leadership development, supported employment, and self-employment. Contact them at [cgriffin@griffinhammis.com](mailto:cgriffin@griffinhammis.com) or [dhammis@griffinhammis.com](mailto:dhammis@griffinhammis.com).*

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# Niches Still Remain for Small EAPs

By Pam Ruster

The majority of EAPs provide a core of basic services. However, small EAPs have a responsibility to educate employers about the type of services they can expect.

With the advent of large, national providers with impersonal service, it appears that expectations have been lowered, and the types of services have been altered. Instead of traditional, face-to-face appointments, telephone counseling has been presented as the best option.

Certainly, phone counseling may be effective; however, the majority of services provided by EAPs are for family relationships, and children, family, and marital services. These matters are not conducive to phone sessions, at least not when it is appropriate to have multiple family members present. Remind current clients and prospective customers that EAP is not an insurance-based DSM IV/CPT coded service.

Technology can also help the small EAP. It's no secret that 21st century-society is more technological than ever, and its impact on EAPs is no exception. Having an online presence, in addition to participating in various search engines' advertising services, is a major source of new client visibili-

ty. When considering enhancing your online presence, look for linkages that are reputable and provide valuable information.

Small EAP providers are also providing services for a previously untapped market — the small company. According to the Small

Business Administration, small firms (defined by some as those with fewer than 100 employees) represent the largest segment of business expansion. A local

EAP can tap into this growing market by offering a personal connection that's clearly a "win-win" situation for all involved.

The impact of returning Iraq National Guard units, on families and the workplace, is yet another opportunity for EAPs to align with top decision makers. **(Editor's note:** Watch for an article on this topic in *EAR* in March.)

EAPs come in all shapes and sizes. There is enough business for everyone if we look closely and are creative in marketing our services. ■

*Pam Ruster, ACSW, LCSW, CEAP, is president of Supportive Systems in Indianapolis, IN ([www.supportivesystems.com](http://www.supportivesystems.com).)* **Editor's note:** This article is condensed from a story that originally appeared in the May 2005 *EAR*. For more on this subject, and in the issue of fairness to larger EAP providers, see the May 2006 *EAR*.

## Editor's Notebook

Those of you who took the time to complete a reader survey deserve to hear some of the results, so this month I thought I'd hit on a few of the highlights.



First, we're thrilled that so many of you are enjoying LifestyleTIPS®. I especially appreciated your story ideas, which included wellness, marital issues, mental health, and eldercare.

Second, comments about the Payroll Stuffer and Poster catalog inserts were mixed. Some of you clearly enjoy them, while other readers reported that electronic changes have decreased their value. Without any clear mandates, it's doubtful we'll be making any changes in these areas, at least for the time being.

We hope that you will consider ordering full-color, personalized Posters, which appeared in the January *EAR* and will likely continue to be published quarterly as an insert in *EAR*. I think you'll find our pricing very competitive.

However, *most important* were your overall comments and other story suggestions, which included stress and anger management, time management, external & internal EAPs, unions, and the future of EAPs.

We will run as many of your story ideas as time and space permit in 2007. THANK YOU for supporting this newsletter for TEN YEARS! Until next month. ■

*Mike Jacquart*

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