

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

Volume 13, No. 2
February 2010

supporting EAP professionals

Measuring Workplace Outcomes in EAPs

New Approach Appears Promising

By David Sharar,
Richard Lennox & John Burke

What defines an effective EAP? Are the most effective EAP providers the ones that obtain the highest utilization rates? Retain accounts over time? Earn the most money? Have the most Fortune 500 employers as clients? Build the best websites? Demonstrate adherence to industry standards?

An owner, manager, or chief executive of an EAP may consider such measures as effective because they denote increased business or customer satisfaction. However, what if effectiveness was defined as obtaining positive outcomes in a workplace setting?

This definition would require you to understand the end results of specific EAP interventions, including the effects that interest employers most — such as reduced absenteeism and presenteeism, increased levels of work engagement, and decreased distress at work and home.

The bad news is that the use of outcome measures in EAPs is still in its infancy, even though it's common today to view requests for proposals (RFPs) that contain a question such as, "Please describe

"It's time to spend less energy and money on measuring processes and invest more in measuring outcomes and demonstrating results."

your approach to measuring outcomes and return on investment."

Conversely, the good news is that a new approach presents a better model for both client organizations and EAP providers by scientifically demonstrating the correlation of cost to results, providing ROI documentation for specific programs, moving from activity reporting to the presentation of empirical results, and differentiating programs and services with outcome data.

However, before this article discusses this new approach, it's necessary to take a step back and explain where the field *has been* in terms of outcome-related measuring practices.

The Historic Approach

To date, few EAP providers have been able to demonstrate a workplace-specific outcome without manually reviewing charts and making subjective determinations or undertaking a complex, retrospec-

tive study that usually involves a time-series design. The reasons for not using a more systematic workplace outcome measurement system include:

- ❖ The lack of a scientific platform or in-house scientific expertise;
- ❖ The absence of a short, valid, relevant, and affordable measuring tool;
- ❖ Limited resources or automated data collection capabilities;
- ❖ Little to no cooperation from employers as to when data is needed; and/or
- ❖ A lack of formal training that emphasizes the integration of research and practice.

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To date, the EA field has operated as though we are in the “counseling” business rather than in the business of improving workplace productivity through our behavioral health expertise. Many EA providers believe their continued viability hinges solely on developing innovative new products, integrating them with other products, and increasing market share.

However, the fact of the matter is that employers don’t care very much about *how* we improve the workplace by helping employees change their behavior — they simply want it to happen. To use an analogy, consumers are only mildly interested in whether the service is better at K-Mart or Walmart.

On the other hand, consumers *are* passionate about understanding the actual *value* of their purchases. Similarly, employers will choose their particular version of value, which is always a balance between costs and perceived or expected benefits and results.

Employers have not traditionally viewed EAP workplace outcome measures as highly persuasive or credible, leaving low price as the one measure they do understand. In theory, no employer is willing to pay for a service that does not produce positive workplace outcomes — but in the absence of standard outcome monitoring, there has not been a link between price and expected results.

Consequently, EAP providers are not paid in proportion to their effectiveness. This is unlikely to change unless we embrace improved outcome measurement.

A New Approach

It’s time to spend less energy and money on measuring *processes* and invest more in measuring *outcomes* and demonstrating results. Employers look mostly to their ven-

dors to initiate outcome evaluation, whereas they struggle with the task of finding a relevant outcome measure that is workplace focused and appropriate to the EAP setting.

The new approach, developed by Chestnut Global Partners in collaboration with Burke Consulting and Richard Lennox, a research psychologist and psychometrics specialist, uses a short, precise, and easy to administer survey that collects employee feedback, both before and after EAP services are provided, on five key aspects of the effects of personal issues on workplace functioning:

- Absenteeism;
- Presenteeism;
- Work engagement;
- Life satisfaction; and
- Workplace distress.

Results may be used in a comprehensive report that not only analyzes the average change in employee behavior, but also documents the impact on their participation and contribution in the workplace.

This approach — a workplace outcome-based survey tool — can illustrate the real ROI from an EAP service by translating improved productivity into cost savings.

In addition, each scale in the suite can also stand alone, allowing the EAP provider to select only the measure(s) needed or desired. Toward that end, the short scales contained in the suite are designed to provide the “sharpest pencil” available with minimal expense to the EAP provider in terms of data administration and respondent burden.

This is important because one of the major obstacles EAP providers have faced has been that most outcome measures are simply too long, consider only one aspect, and/or are expensive to purchase or dispense.

The survey may be administered manually or automated in a number

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

Editor - Mike Jacquart
Publisher - Jennifer Heisler
Circulation - Scott Kolpien
Designer - Kim Simmons

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of ways — including building the process into your existing EAP database, integrating and installing survey software within a web portal, or designing access to a secure outside web page (provided by the EAP vendor) so employees can log in to respond.

Using the Suite

In order to *introduce* EA professionals to this approach, and for those who would like to share the data for benchmarking purposes, the

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workplace outcome suite is being offered free of charge as an insert in this month's issue of *Employee Assistance Report*.

While EA professionals are permitted to use the suite free of charge, with no strings attached, as a way of measuring their own programs, any additional use or resale of the suite is prohibited and a signed license agreement is required. The short license agreement may be obtained by emailing one of the authors at the end of this article.

In addition, a .pdf of the suite and licensing agreement is provided for readers who receive the electronic version of *Employee Assistance Report*. ■

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Editor's Notebook

The authors of this month's cover story have introduced a workplace outcome approach

that represents a departure from conventional measures used to address the age-old question of whether EAPs actually work.

To date, the usual ways of determining EAP effectiveness have included citing end-user utilization rates, client referrals, or even website click-throughs.

The authors believe they've come up with a better method — a measurement tool that they say helps to objectively identify when programs and services demonstrably work.

We have usually not been in the practice of discussing specific EAP products or services in this newsletter, but given the wide-ranging scope this tool may have throughout the EAP field, we felt we needed to make an exception

and introduce readers to this approach in this month's issue.

See also the special insert.

Contact the authors at the emails listed at the end of this month's cover article for any questions you may have.

Speaking of groundbreaking, I've long felt that layoffs do not save companies money over the long term, but how to prove that? The authors of the "Disloyalty is a Two-Way Street" two-part series, which concludes in this newsletter, offer some of the only insights I've ever read into this issue.

Of course, we hope *all* of the articles in this month's issue of *EAR* are of interest and benefit. We hope your new year is off to a good start. Until next month. ■

Mike Jacquart

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Quick Ideas

Couples Should Ask Each Other More Questions

An estimated 83% of divorces would not take place if couples asked each other the right questions.

How compatible are YOU and the person you are with? Just because you like the same types of foods doesn't mean that you can have a blissful, long-term relationship. Do you know why your mate does or doesn't attend church? Do you know what he or she **REAL-
LY** thinks about the way you dress?

When one spouse discovered

that her husband was once a heroin addict, she asked him why he had not told her before. His reply? "*You never asked.*"

There are hundreds of fun "getting to know you" questions, but there are also important questions that most people don't even think of asking but are absolutely necessary to a happy relationship. This is where *1,000 Questions for Couples* can help! For more information, visit www.theromantic.com/questions.htm. ■

Resources

📖 **Depression Management Benchmarks: Trends in Integration of Behavioral and Physical Health**, \$99, Health Resources Publishing, www.healthresourcesonline.com, (888) 446-3530. Organizations planning to focus on depression management in the near future, or already utilizing an integrated approach to mental and physical health will benefit from this review of industry metrics.

📖 **Handling Difficult Conversations with Employees: What Every Manager Needs to Know**, \$99, .pdf download, PBP Executive Reports, (800) 220-5000, or visit pbpexecutivereports.com. Managers do it all the time — avoid difficult conversations, hoping the problem will go away on its own. The reality is, left unaddressed, problems only get worse. This report helps managers address difficult situations. ■

Feeling Owed Syndrome:

A Cautionary Tale for Caregivers — Part II

By David & Rhonda Travland

How could a man take a gun into a crowded store and start shooting people? How could a mother drown her two children in a car? And what does any of this have to do with caregiving?

As explained last month, people who commit atrocious acts like these are feeling “put upon.” In their minds, they have done for others and in return have gotten the shaft. They have succumbed to Feeling Owed Syndrome (FOS).

As stated last month, if you opened a door for someone who didn’t make even the slightest acknowledgment of what you did for him or her, chances are you feel “owed,” which resulted in stress.

Multiply this situation by one thousand, as would be the case in caregiving, and you are likely to be facing an accumulation of stress a thousand times worse. Behavioral scientists know that stress is cumulative, one stressor just piles on top of the next one, and it gets worse and worse.

As the relationship imbalance becomes more and more pronounced, we begin to feel that we are not getting nearly enough back from the person we are caring for to counterbalance what we are putting into the relationship.

FOS is experienced not only by caregivers, but by anyone who feels they’ve been short-changed or denied an adequate return on their investment in others.

The more they feel they’re

owed, the more extreme the reaction. This is true regardless of whether the stress is translated into illness, or in some type of acting-out behavior. How can FOS be avoided?

☑ **First and foremost, caregivers must admit they keep track like everyone else.** They need to admit caregiving is extremely demanding, that it is often a thankless job, and that they are carrying around some resentments.

☑ **Caregivers must find a way to reduce the amount of inequity.** They must find a way to limit their “investment” because it’s unlikely they can successfully demand more back from the individual that needs caregiving.

☑ **Caregivers need to pay close attention to their own needs.** Sacrificing too much for another person is a dangerous game, resulting in physical and emotional damage.

☑ **Caregivers need to treat their symptoms of stress seriously.** This includes anxiety, depression, loneliness, and anger. Create an action plan to correct the imbalance in the caregiving relationship.

☑ **Caregivers need someone to talk with who understands caregiving frustrations.** Normally another caregiver is the best choice; a mental

health professional or EAP is another option.

☑ **Caregivers need periodic breaks from caregiving.** Finding a substitute caregiver is crucial, whether it’s a relative, friend, neighbor, or someone hired to sit with the individual.

☑ **Caregivers must distinguish between wants and needs.** Caregivers have a tendency to treat wants and needs alike, but an individual’s “wants” can run caregivers ragged. *Needs* must be met, but not the wants, especially when they interfere with the caregiver’s needs and well-being.

☑ **Caregivers must get enough sleep.** Sleep deprivation amplifies FOS and may result in depression, anxiety and anger.

Summary

Caregivers must take care of their own needs or they will not be effective as caregivers. If there is no relief in sight, symptoms of FOS can get out of hand.

Caregivers make headlines occasionally by exhibiting violent behavior toward their loved ones and themselves. In these cases, FOS was not recognized early enough to head off disaster. ■

David A. Travland, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist, former caregiver, and the author, along with Rhonda, of “The Tough & Tender Caregiver, a Manual for the Well Spouse.” Rhonda is a gerontologist, former nursing home administrator, and was a caregiver for more than 10 years. They are also co-founders of The Caregiver Survival Institute, offering a variety of services to caregivers at www.caregiversurvival.org.

Disloyalty is a Two-Way Street — Part II

By Timothy Keiningham & Lerzan Aksoy

As explained in part one of this two-part article, no CEO relishes layoffs. It means that their companies are floundering.

However, the fact remains that if companies are going to get out of difficult times (and excel in good times), they need two things: (1) *for their customers to stick with them*, and (2) *to improve their productivity*.

As also stated last month, if companies are to resist their natural inclinations to focus exclusively on the short-term in difficult times, they need to get better at understanding the implications of employee loyalty on the *long-term* health of the business.

Getting Started

The place to begin is by asking, “*How loyal are our employees... really?*” Answering this question requires that meaningful feedback be solicited from all employees (management included). As an impartial

third party, the EAP may be able to assist. Tough questions must be asked, such as:

- ☐ Does the company provide the necessary tools and training for employees to perform their jobs well?
- ☐ Is a commitment to serve customers rewarded and encouraged by the organization?

Once the firm has a better idea where it stands in terms of employee loyalty, the next step is to tie this information to the performance drivers of the business. Typically, this comes down to four areas:

- ❖ Productivity;
- ❖ Employee turnover;
- ❖ Customer loyalty; and
- ❖ Revenue.

The key is to aggregate employee data into groups that meaningfully link to turnover, customer loyalty, and revenue. For example, a retail chain might find store level analysis to be the most relevant unit, since customer loyalty and revenue are

tracked at this level, and stores typically have semi-independent management.

A large-scale study conducted by researchers Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes presented compelling evidence that employee loyalty-related attitudes were positively linked to each of the previously mentioned performance drivers.

Despite the ability to pull this information together to gain valuable managerial insight, most companies do nothing (or next to nothing) in this regard. Why? For one thing, people don’t want to hear bad news. And without question, this kind of internal examination is usually not pleasant.

However, the fact remains that employees are only as loyal to a company as they believe it is being loyal to them. Ultimately, building an organization of committed, loyal employees comes down to demonstrating to employees that the company *deserves* their loyalty. ■

Timothy Keiningham is Global Chief Strategy Officer and Executive Vice President for Ipsos Loyalty, one of the world's largest business research organizations. Lerzan Aksoy is an acclaimed expert in loyalty management, and Associate Professor of Marketing at Fordham University. They are co-authors, with Luke Williams, of the book, “Why Loyalty Matters” (BenBella Books, 2009).

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There's Always Hope — Even for a Spendaholic

By Gary Foreman

At the Dollar Stretcher, we receive questions like the following inquiry from “B”:
“I have been married 40 years, I’m 59 and a spendaholic. I have been following Dave Ramsey’s plan and trying to get my credit cards paid off. We have no money and no retirement. Is there any hope for us?”

Yes, there is hope for B. It might take awhile and may not be easy, but just because she hasn’t overcome her spendaholic tendencies doesn’t mean that she *can’t*.

Let’s tackle the problem on two levels: first, the things that she can do to get the problem under control *today*; and second, the long-range things that she can do to uproot the source of the problem.

B. states that she’s using the Dave Ramsey plan for paying off her credit cards. Good for her. Dave’s plan is very workable and is one of two common plans for paying off debt.

(Editor’s note: For more information on Dave’s debt-reduction methods, check out www.daveramsey.com.)

Both plans pay the minimum on all accounts. One pays off the smallest balance first and pays accounts off from smallest to largest. The idea is that you get re-motivated every time you close an account.

The other plan ranks them in terms of interest rates. They pay off the highest rate first and work down from the highest interest rate to the lowest. This is the fastest way to pay off a group of accounts. However, you’ll need to keep *yourself* motivated.

Depending on how much debt she has, it may take B. awhile to pay down all accounts. She’ll need patience and determination. It took awhile to accumulate the debt and it will take awhile to pay it off.

At the same time that B. is reducing her debt level, it’s important that she stop her bad spending habits. She can’t get out of debt if she keeps spending — that has to stop **NOW**.

Based on past experience, her willpower and good intentions cannot be trusted 100% of the time. So until B. can control her spending urges, she’ll need to devise a plan to protect her when her willpower isn’t enough.

This involves recognizing where her bad spending habits are most vulnerable. For instance:

- A) Is she more likely to use cash?
- B) Credit cards?
- C) Online purchases?

If the answer is A, she needs to limit the amount of cash she carries. If it’s letter B, one idea would be to freeze her credit cards in a block of ice so she has to wait for them to thaw before she can use them to charge something! If letter C is her biggest spending problem, she should block certain websites and/or TV shopping channels.

Once B. has made it difficult to succumb to her spendaholic urges, it’s time to try to find out what’s causing her to spend so much. I’m not a psychologist, but I *have* worked with many people and their finances — and money is generally *not* the root of the problem. It’s more likely to be a symptom of a bigger issue, as people will often spend money in an attempt to make



some emotional hurt feel better.

B. needs to look for a pattern to her spending. Is there a particular emotion that she’s feeling when her urge to shop is strongest? Knowing this will allow B. to watch for when this emotion surfaces so she can guard against spending.

She might also want to seek outside help. Visit Debtor’s Anonymous (www.debtorsanonymous.org) for online and phone meetings.

Or, B. could find professional psychological help — either to help her find the source of her spending or to deal with the source once it is found. An EA professional may be able to assist.

Summary

There’s no reason for B. to give up hope. She can make it *very difficult* to spend, and that alone will solve most of her problem. And if B. is able to identify the emotional root and deal with those issues then she can be free of her spendaholic habits forever! ■

Gary Foreman is the editor of the Dollar Stretcher (www.stretcher.com) website and various newsletters. The Dollar Stretcher is dedicated to helping people live better on the money they already have. If you’re struggling with debt, check out the section on controlling debt at www.stretcher.com/menu/topic-d.htm#debt.

Lay-ON Instead of Lay Off

By Clint Greenleaf

The most important resource in any company is its people. So, since when did people become so expendable? Too few employers understand that it's not about who's "essential" and who's "expendable," because if you've done your hiring right, *everyone* is essential.

We're a small, independent company, and we produce a non-essential consumer good. For some in this business, that could be a death sentence. Larger rival companies are cutting jobs in the hundreds. On the other hand, we only have about thirty full-time employees. And even one layoff, in my opinion, is unacceptable.

Cutting even one person from the team means losing a valuable resource that helps make the company tick. In the short term, it hurts morale and lowers productivity.

In the long run, it means the company spends substantial time and money trying to make up for the loss of workers — redistributing tasks and overburdening departments, dealing with paperwork, and eventually putting additional man-hours toward rehiring and retraining.

I've asked employees to institute what I call the "lay-on" as opposed to the layoff. Essentially, every employee is putting in one voluntary extra hour per day at work — the extra hour is to be used in the most advantageous way possible: finishing up projects, having a meeting with a client or vendor, assisting a co-worker, etc. Even cleaning a desk or organizing files, if it helps improve efficiency.

The numbers work:

- 30 employees x 1 hour per day;
- Multiplied by a 5 day workweek;
- Equates to 150 extra hours;

- Divide that number by 40 hours per standard workweek; and
- The result is 3.75, the equivalent of almost 4 full-time employee work weeks.

For any company, an extra hour increases the workweek from 40 to 45 hours and is a simple 12.5% increase. And managers don't have to hire a single new person.

Rather than cutting expenses (and revenue), we're keeping all of our employees' benefits and increasing productivity — and revenue as well. And we aren't asking for anything big, just a little extra time each week that's completely flexible.

The program is working. Since implementing "lay-on" in March 2009, company profits are up and reserves for hard times are growing. ■

Clint Greenleaf is the CEO of Greenleaf Book Group and the author of "Attention to Detail."

Workplace Survey

'Nipping Problems in the Bud'

Keeping cool in a crisis is a must-have skill for managers, a survey suggests. According to those polled, 33% of an executive's time is spent responding to crises or other problems.

While spending one-third of one's time on troubleshooting may seem extreme, that figure is actually down from a 2001 poll in which respondents said that 43% of an executive's time is spent addressing critical matters.

In addition, while there may not be anything a boss can do about the number of problems that he or she has to deal with, it is possible to at least spend less time on them.

According to The Creative Group,

which conducted the survey, "nipping problems in the bud" is the key to reducing time spent dealing with crises:

✓ Don't shoot the messenger.

Nobody wants to be the bearer of bad news. Encourage employees to approach you with problems by maintaining your composure, thanking them for bringing items to your attention, and working with them to identify solutions.

✓ Lead by example.

Glossing over errors promotes a cover-up culture. Admit mistakes and discuss the measures you're taking to correct them. Letting staff know when you've made a decision you regret encour-

ages them to be upfront, too.

✓ **Provide leverage.** Give employees enough autonomy to troubleshoot client and customer service issues and reward them for doing so successfully.

✓ **Use a patch kit.** If you don't know how to respond to a situation right away, rather than avoiding it, thus making the problem worse, take at least *temporary* steps while you consider a long-term solution.

✓ **Speak up.** Concerns about a vendor's services should be addressed swiftly to keep problems from reoccurring. ■

Source: The Creative Group (www.creativegroup.com).

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He Said, She Said

Communicating Between Genders at Work

By **Beth Banks Cohn**
& **Roz Usheroff**

If you think it's difficult to discern what your significant other is really trying to say to you, consider how complicated communication between genders gets when you throw office politics, power struggles, and work challenges into the mix.

However, misunderstandings can be avoided when co-workers look beyond personalities and consider the different ways in which men and women communicate. Let's look at a few examples.

Men's Behavior

■ **Trash talk:** Joking, teasing, and playful putdowns are common components of male relating.

What women think: Making others feel small is *not* a female trait. Women tend to see putdowns as arrogant or hostile.

The middle ground: In general, trash talk is usually harmless, as long as both parties "play." When both parties engage in it, it can be a way to bond around a problem, such as a trying work assignment or demanding sales quotas.

■ **Prideful self-sufficiency:** There's often truth to the jokes about men not asking for directions. In work settings men sometimes ask few questions, fearing that doing so will communicate to others that they don't know something. Males tend to equate knowledge with power and don't want to appear that they lack know-how.

What women think: Women see this behavior as childish and even arrogant. They also look at it as a huge waste of time, figuring it is more effective

to ask a question, get the answer, and move on.

The middle ground: Some workplace cultures discourage questions, and indeed many people feel self-conscious about asking too many. In meetings or other settings in which everyone needs to be on the same page, both genders need to find ways to give and receive clarification.

■ **Not giving feedback:** Because men don't tend to solicit feedback, good or bad, they also don't *give* feedback. Males don't want to be criticized, feel that compliments make someone less effective, and often think that women who need feedback are "high maintenance."

What women think: Women think men don't value their contributions and are overly critical. They may even feel that men withhold positive feedback in order to avoid giving women promotions or good projects.

The middle ground: Constructive feedback needs to be built into the workplace culture. Both genders need to find a way to make it a tool for improving performance and productivity.

Women's Behavior

■ **Equality-minded:** Women try to maintain an appearance of equality among everyone. They are concerned about the effect something has on another person, and want to make sure everyone feels like a worthy contributor.

What men think: Men tend to see this as a sign that women lack confidence and competence as leaders.

The middle ground: Females can wield "power" by orchestrating collaboration and enlisting cooperation. Men can learn from this. Nevertheless,

women in leadership positions need to maintain a clear boundary between their authority and that of others.

■ **Outside-in negotiating:**

Females want to see the big picture and make sure everyone's on the same page with the same level of understanding before making a decision.

What men think: Since this is the *exact* opposite of what men typically do, men think this tactic means women don't have a clear position or aren't decisive enough.

The middle ground: In negotiations, it's imperative to know all the factors involved before making a decision. On the other hand, trying to make everyone happy is not how leaders make good decisions. A balanced blend of female thoroughness and male decisiveness is ideal.

■ **Likely to downplay certainty:**

Women don't want to appear pushy or uncaring of others' positions or ideas.

What men think: Men think that women *aren't* certain and need someone to take charge.

The middle ground: Moderate self-deprecation and humility are good qualities in leaders. However, *always* deferring to others' opinions and perspectives will be perceived as a sign of weakness. Find a middle way.

Summary

When it comes to communicating between genders in the workplace, the cardinal rule is: *don't judge*. Instead, carefully examine your co-worker's behavior, consider that some of it may be gender-based, and try to gain insight into how this behavior serves — or doesn't serve — workplace objectives. ■

Beth Banks Cohn, Ph.D., is a leading expert in change management and leadership development. Roz Usheroff is an internationally recognized communication expert and personal branding coach. They are co-authors of the new book, "Taking the Leap: Managing Your Career in Turbulent Times...and Beyond." Editor's note: Different styles of communication are also discussed in this month's Brown Bagger.