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Dates to Remember

September 4, Monday
Labor Day Holiday

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Next HR User's Group

The next HR User's Group meeting will be in September. There will not be a meeting in August. We will send the meeting topic to the HR list serve soon.

If you are not a member of the HR list serve, and would like to be, please sign up at:
<http://www.uaf.edu/uafhr/PPA/index.html>

Meeting dates and times are confirmed, so please mark your calendar:

September 21, 2006 (Thursday)
10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
Wood Center Ballroom

Deal With Poor Performers—or Pay the Consequences

By Kathryn Tyler

Poor performers exist in every corporate office and on every factory floor. They're easy to spot: They're the ones who consistently arrive late and leave early, who fabricate excuses when things go wrong or deadlines are missed, and who cause colleagues to work overtime to fix their mistakes. What's more difficult to see is the effect of poor performers on others.

"Actively disengaged workers tend to spread discontent," says Robert Moore, CEO of The Effectiveness Connection, a consulting firm in Tampa, Fla. "The impact on profitability can be enormous." That impact on the bottom line comes in the form of lowered productivity and morale—and increased turnover because high achievers leave when managers tolerate mediocrity, says Francie Dalton, president of Dalton Alliances Inc., a consulting firm in Columbia, Md. "But mediocre performers will remain because they know they're safe. The entire organizational culture, along with its reputation in the marketplace, can be affected by poor performers."

Dick Grote, author of *Discipline Without Punishment* (AMA, 1995) and president of Grote Consulting Corp. in Addison, Texas, adds, "The poor performer is not only making the supervisor's life miserable, he is also making the other employees miserable. When a supervisor turns a blind eye, it's a slap in the face to all of the good people who don't have the ability to do something about the situation."

Firing poor performers may seem like the best solution; however, experts say it's actually more cost-effective to invest time in employees who are performing poorly if they can be rehabilitated. But many managers either ignore the problem or fire the poor performer without attempting other solutions. These managers fall into three camps, says Jim Gulian, partner for Seattle-based MPC Films, a media production company that creates training videos such as *Painless Performance Improvement*. They are:

- ◆ Managers who just ignore the problem, reassign workloads, and hope the poor performer will quit or become someone else's problem.
- ◆ Managers who talk to the team as a group, instead of the individual, which insults the good performers.
- ◆ Managers who take the poor performance as a personal insult and confront the employee in a threatening way. This usually starts a downward spiral of accusations and documentation for termination.

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Poor Performers *continued from page 1*

If you find yourself in one of these groups, try these four steps when dealing with problem employees:

1. Begin handling the issue early on.

The time for action is when you first detect a problem with performance, and you should document every major discussion in case it is needed for future disciplinary action. Frequent, specific feedback is the key to keeping underperforming employees on track. “Often, the greatest hurdle is the inability of the line manager to accept there is a performance problem,” says Bob Manuel, partner at Charter Solutions, a training consultancy in Lancaster, England. “Taking the first step to counsel poor performers is often the most difficult step for a newly appointed manager.”

2. Find the root cause.

Is the employee failing because of a lack of skills, poor work ethic or a bad attitude? Or is there some non-work-related problem, such as illness, substance abuse or loss of a loved one? If so, inform employees of programs available to deal with these problems (i.e., your company’s employee assistance program), so they can seek advice. If there aren’t extenuating circumstances, focus on the ways in which the employee is failing—make professional observations, not personal ones—and create an improvement plan.

3. Give constructive criticism.

“Managers are reluctant to confront employees because they don’t know how,” says Grote. He recommends that managers follow this script:

- ◆ Say, “[Employee’s name], I have a problem.”
- ◆ Describe the gap between the employee’s performance and the performance needed for the job. For instance, “I need the systems report on my desk by Tuesday every week. For the last six weeks, I’ve received it on Tuesday only once.”

Say, “Tell me about it” and then remain quiet while the employee talks. Once you’ve become adept at using this script, you can vary it, Grote says.

4. Know when to pull the plug.

If attempts to rehabilitate performance fail, you must be prepared to terminate poor performers—before they infect your other workers.

Before terminating an employee, check with your Human Resources Department and the progressive discipline policies in the UA Board of Regents Regulation: P04.07.040, Corrective Action, www.alaska.edu/bor/policy/policy.xml.

Kathryn Tyler, M.A., is a freelance writer and former HR generalist and trainer in Wixom, Mich. Reprinted with permission from SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management). The information is not intended to serve as a substitute for legal advice. ◆

Personnel Payroll Submission Schedule		www.uaf.edu/uafhr/Payroll.html			
Pay Period	Job Forms In Personnel by 2 p.m.	Timesheets to Payroll by 12 p.m.	Scheduled Payroll Run #	Check Issue Date	Holidays
09-Jul-06 to 22-Jul-06	14-Jul-06	24-Jul-06	R16	04-Aug-06	
23-Jul-06 to 05-Aug-06	28-Jul-06	07-Aug-06	R17	18-Aug-06	
06-Aug-06 to 19-Aug-06	11-Aug-06	21-Aug-06	R18	01-Sep-06	
20-Aug-06 to 02-Sep-06	22-Aug-06 *	01-Sep-06 *	R19	15-Sep-06	
* Early submission required					