

Q&A with Carol

What's Your Question?

Submit by February 15, for the April 2004 issue

Reduce Entitlement Mentality! But how?

Question:

I've read your answers to questions about attendance and absence and have applied some techniques successfully. However, our managers continue to have problems within their departments with entitlement mentality. A suggestion has been made to let employees take a "stress health" day off without pay. Another view is to allow X number of days off for sick or personal days employees feel entitled, no- compelled to take time off! How can we turn this way of thinking around?

Carol:

My answer to this question may seem counter productive! Employees care more than ever about their mental and emotional state and will take time off to fight burnout and stress. We as employers consider personal/sick time a benefit to be used wisely when needed. The entitlement mentality puts a twist on it that says; "I have the time coming, so I might as well take a day off."

Even though the solution we are looking for is obvious, we want people to come to work. It is a fact that employees will take more time off to deal with stress and burnout by staying home for a day. Depending on the company paid leave policy, these same employees may "run out of time" and fall into disciplinary action.

Let's take a look at the possibility of allowing time off to volunteer. Smart employers are beginning to create workplaces that provide time off, paid or unpaid to do volunteer work in the community. Here are some benefits to the employees:

- Personal satisfaction for sharing talent and time with less fortunate in the community
- Working in a team environment. Often crossing department lines allows employees to work with a variety of people.
- Developing leadership skills through opportunities to lead a team and strengthen interpersonal skills.
- Increased awareness of the community and resources available.
- Opportunities to use creative skills that may not be required in daily work activities.
- The image that the employer is concerned about the community and willing to devote resources to a worthwhile cause.
- Everyone likes to do something new. This introduces variety into the workday. Change always makes us more productive.

The Employer benefits too!

- Employees are invigorated and return to activities refreshed.
- Enhanced corporate image in the community. Become known as the employer that gives time off to serve the community.
- Reduced entitlement mentality.
- Improved attendance
- Enhanced employee skills such as team building, leadership, creativity and interpersonal skills.
- Increased employee morale
- Reduced employee stress about personal situations through helping others
- Talented workers who are searching for great places to work will be attracted to companies with a high profile for volunteering in the community.

To get started, develop a plan to sell the idea of corporate volunteerism to top management. Include your managers in this project to sharpen their project management skills. Take a look at your company's mission, vision and values. You may be able to tie this work-life balance program directly into your corporate strategy. Ask other companies if they have a corporate volunteer program and compare notes! A great method to do this is through industry associations.

Good luck!

If you have a specific issue relating to customer contact centers or have a question you would like addressed, please send your question to question@trostle.com. Sources (name and company) are not used in Q&A articles.

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