

## **DEALING WITH MANIPULATION - EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT -**

*As a supervisor, your goal should be to maintain effective work relationships with those that you supervise.*

### **KEY TERMS**

1. Manipulation: is the conscious or unconscious use of an indirect means to achieve a goal. (McConnell, 84)
2. Insubordination: can range from passive resistance to open defiance. The supervisor may label it as “uncooperativeness”, because it may be painful to admit that an employee is deliberately defying authority. (Roseman, 123)
3. Intimidation: to discourage through fear.

*Before a supervisor can handle manipulation, he or she must understand the dynamics that operate in both manipulators and supervisors/coworkers susceptible to manipulation.*

## **THE MANIPULATORS**

### **Constructive Manipulation**

Although manipulation is usually connected with a negative manner, there is a positive manner in which manipulation can be observed. When manipulation is used to meet professional objectives, has a productive goal and has no damaging effects we can refer to it as constructive manipulation. The needs of everyone are satisfied in this case and exploitation is not involved.

#### **Flattery: to charm; to fascinate; to humor; to enchant.**

For example, a nurse who flatters a resident who successfully does an insulin injection for the first time. Scenario: A patient who has never had to have an insulin injection before is very afraid and is giving the nurse a hard time as she attempts to aid the resident. By humoring the resident, you create a more comfortable atmosphere, by fascinating the resident you distract their attention from the fear, *or* by charming the resident you build their confidence. The patient gives less of a hard time next time. A productive, positive outcome.

#### **Commendations: to praise; to acclaim; appreciation; approval.**

For example, a nurse who commends a coworker for a contribution in a nursing meeting. Scenario: you have an employee who seems to be discouraged and does not contribute much to the staff. At a meeting or during an activity, the coworker makes suggestions or gives input. A commendation makes the person aware that you noticed and also boosts their esteem giving them just a little more encouragement to participate than before. A productive, positive outcome.

Sincerity is a must with constructive manipulation. The same flattery and commendation can appear negative and reverse the outcome with an insincere tone of voice (sarcasm), or a snide remark following, (See under destructive manipulation). Constructive manipulation does not call for intervention. There is usually very little difficulty because it is pleasurable and productive. This type of behavior may be encouraged for supervisors especially when dealing with a problem resident or discouraged employee, because other employees may pick-up on these productive positive mannerisms and more effectively deal with a supposedly difficult situation.

Manipulative behavior can be learned or unconsciously encouraged by viewing it in others. For this same reason, when *destructive manipulation* is encountered or observed, intervention should be immediate.

## **DESTRUCTIVE MANIPULATION**

The often-encountered negative manipulators who show a lack of consideration for others in order to meet his/her own immediate wants and needs - is considered destructive. Destructive because this type of manipulation meets the purpose of one party (the employee) at the expense of another party's (the supervisor/the facility/another employee). This may also be referred to as exploitation. Destructive manipulation often appears selfish, callous, irresponsible, and impulsive (McConnell, 85).

### **Flattery/Commendation and Helplessness/Dependency**

A sarcastic or insincere form of flattery or commendation can make someone not feel valued. For example, when talking to a resident. "Kissing up" or "Buttering up" with a reserved motive is an example. Scenario: An employee does not want to do a task and tries to get the supervisor to do it. He/she begins kissing up and charming the other person... "is an example. Scenario: An employee does not want to do a task and tries to get the supervisor to do it. He/she begins kissing up and charming the other person... "You look great today! Your face seems really bright. Have you lost a little weight? I have been having a little trouble with this task and you are so good at it. Do you think you could do this for me while I take my resident to the beauty shop?"

### **Criticism and Complaints**

Criticism can be used to create discomfort, insecurity, intimidation and anxiety. We are not talking about constructive criticism that focuses on problematic behavior, but the negative comments that are generally opinionated. For example, "This nursing staff is so slow. . .everyone does their tasks so sloppy. . ." "Mrs. Jones you look horrible today, I don't think you'll be able to be much help around here."

*Reasons for manipulation/Roots:*

### **WEAK SUPERVISION**

- Employees are reluctant to follow orders of supervisors they don't respect.

### **FEELING OF PROTECTION**

- Perhaps they have been outstanding performers for a long period of time, and they feel they have earned the right to work with minimal supervision

- May feel they have influential friends in the organization who would come to their assistance in case of a confrontation.

### *Methods of manipulation*

#### Types:

- 1- symptomatic: an employee wants to make his/her own decisions; feels that (s)he doesn't have to accept supervision.
- 2- may reflect dissatisfaction with the job or the company and may suggest an unconscious desire to be terminated from the job.

### Mastery

here the employee seeks to dominate or control the situation. Struggle, competition, and conflict are the elements of this state. The mastery state is often associated with the auto centric state - the self-centered state.

#### Results:

- Weakens authority: leads to a loss of control that has adverse effects on work performance.

Supervisors who tolerate insubordination/manipulation will lose the confidence not only of management, but of their peers and subordinates. Supervisors can't be respected if they allow insubordination. No supervisor can afford to have his/her authority undermined

### **STRATEGY:**

A primary strategy in managing insubordinate employees is to resolve *not* to allow insubordination. That means even minor acts of insubordination must be confronted.

*Angry reactions to insubordination may actually promote it rather than suppress it.*

Rather than debate the issues that led to insubordination, the manager must confront the subordinate on the issue of insubordination itself.

(role play pg. 127 Managing the Problem Employee by Roseman)

In arranging consequences, it's important that the consequences "fit the crime." It would be inappropriate to fire an employee who refuses to keep his/her work area clean. But there are lesser consequences that would have impact on the employee and would be more appropriate. Naturally, prolonged and unrelenting insubordination may represent intractable underlying problems. In which case, the employee may have to be dismissed.

### *"PROBLEM" MANAGERS - EMPLOYEE INTIMIDATION*

It is not uncommon for a supervisor to be intimidated by a subordinate. Although most supervisors would be reluctant to admit it, they are bullied by aggressive subordinates. Probably these supervisors have low self-esteem and self-confidence, while their intimidating subordinates have high levels of these qualities.

Sometimes the supervisor may be directly intimidated by a subordinates' close associates - particularly when some of those associates are in positions of influence or power. The supervisor may be fearful that if he antagonizes the subordinate, he may upset the subordinate's powerful friends.

Regardless of whether the supervisor is directly or indirectly intimidated by the subordinate, his authority is compromised. He ignores unacceptable subordinate behavior,

assuming a “hands-off” policy”. Probably he hopes that if he ignores the problem, it will go away. The opposite is usually true: it gets worse.