

# Supervising Employees in Stressful Times

Prepared for:

New Hampshire Library Association

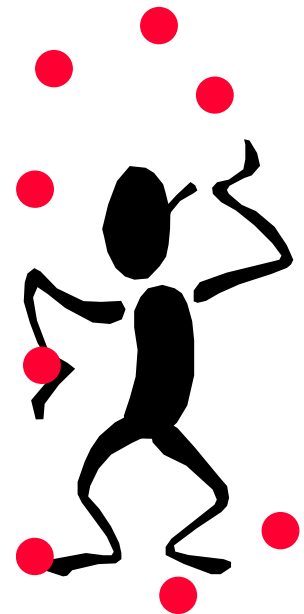
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MKS Performance Solutions



# How's Work?

- Group discussion
  - How has the economy affected your job and your worksite?
  - Even if you have not done anything, what are your employees saying?
  - Can we continue to “Do more for Less?”



# Getting to Know You

1. What is your role?
2. How many of you have done lay offs in the past year?
3. How many of you have ever been laid off yourself?
4. How many will be “restructuring” in the next year?
5. What do you specifically want to get out of this presentation?

# Background

- Strategic Mind Set
  - Employees as Costs to be Cut or Assets to be Conserved and Developed
  - Short-term vs. long-term

# Stressors in a Down Economy

- Job Security
- Financial stability -personal/ organizational
- Family Issues
- External Media Environment

# Potential At-Risk Employees or Situations

- History of aggressive or threatening behavior
- History of depression, substance abuse
- Prior conflicts with management
- Major financial/personal stress
- Inexperience with finding work

# Understanding Survivor Syndrome \*

- Individual Reactions
  - Fear, insecurity, uncertainty
  - Frustration, resentment, anger
  - Sadness, depression, guilt
  - Unfairness, betrayal, distrust

\* Healing the Wounds, David Noer

# Understanding Survivor Syndrome

- Workplace impact
  - Reduced risk-taking
  - Lowered productivity/morale
  - Increased stress, absenteeism, turnover
  - Unquenchable thirst for information
  - Blaming others
  - Denial

# Transition Management Model

- **Endings/Loss**
- **Neutral Zone/Roller Coaster**
- **New Beginnings/Re-engagement**

# The First Stage of Transition: Endings

- Disengagement
- Disenchantment
- Dis-Identification
- Disorientation

# Understanding Loss

- Identify who is losing what
- Accept the reality and importance of subjective loss
- Don't be surprised by "overreaction"
- Acknowledge losses openly and sympathetically
- Expect and accept signs of grieving

# Organizational “Losses” During Transition

- **Identity or belonging**

relationships, group mission

- **Turf/Structure**

physical space, duties and procedures

- **Meaning**

above contribute to this

- **Control**

# Management Strategies During Endings

- Offer support, not solutions
- Accept feelings in yourself and the people you supervise or manage
- Get support for yourself from peers, supervisor, or others
- Decide how much of your own feelings you can share while still being a resource for employees

# Management Strategies During Endings (cont.)

- Listening vs. Giving Advice
- Have Rituals
- Be clear with employees about your expectations for performance. While a temporary decline in productivity and morale is normal, it is important to communicate standards and goals for performance.

# Management Strategies During Endings (cont.)

- Encourage a feeling of “we’re all in this together” vs. factionalism and fragmentation
- Discuss Phases of Transition

# Management Strategies During Endings (cont.)

- Give people information and do it again and again
- Mark the endings
- Treat the past with respect
- Let people take a piece of the past with them
- Show how endings ensure continuity of what really matters

# **The Second Stage of Transition: The Neutral Zone/Roller Coaster**

- Disorientation
- Disintegration
- Discovery

# Stage 2: Roller Coaster

- Confusion
- Vacillate between:
  - Past/Future
  - Hope/Fear
  - Lethargy/High Energy
  - Dependent/Accountable
- Identify what you can't control
- Identify what you can control
- Plan what you want from change

# Management Strategies in the Neutral Zone

- Highlight reasons for endings
- Protect people from additional chaos by prioritizing work
- Encourage cohesion and avoid personalizing problems that occur
- Monitor the process
- Transition Management Teams
- Look for opportunities to create, solidify routines.
- Educate employees about the transition model & transition management
- Be patient and flexible

# **The Third Stage of Transition: The New Beginnings/Renewal**

- New Vision
- Demonstrated Success

# Management Strategies For The New Beginnings Stage

- Communication
- Leadership
- Incentives & Training
- Rituals & New Symbols

# Strategies to Personally Manage Transition

- **Take Your Time...**

If you're standing still, you need time to process the change, it doesn't mean you are doing nothing.

- **Manage Yourself and Your Reactions**

Be aware of how you respond to change, everyone is different.

- **Take Care of Yourself...**

Take extra care of yourself, change impacts us like extra stress. Good lifestyle habits will help combat the adverse impact of change.

# Strategies to Personally Manage Transition (cont.)

- **Talk to Someone About the Process...**  
Find a friend or family member who will listen and not give advice, use the EAP.
- **Explore the Unseen Possibilities...**  
Remember opportunity comes with change.
- **Accept that Transition has a Predictable Shape...**  
Know that things will begin to feel comfortable again. We need to let ourselves grieve and stay in the in-between for a while.

# ***What is Resilience?***

- Capacity
  - Strength
  - Endurance
- Flexibility
- Recuperative Ability

# ***How Do You Increase Capacity?***

- Awareness
  - Recognize and challenge thinking patterns
  - Avoid catastrophic thinking
  - Ask questions, seek information
  - Use your body to change your mind

# ***How Do You Increase Capacity?***

- Attitudes.... Self-Empowerment
  - You're not your job, career, or social position
  - You're stronger than you think
  - Crises are gifts and opportunities in disguise
  - Make friends with the unknown
  - See your life as a journey

# ***How Do You Increase Capacity?***

- Actions
  - Exercise, engage in physical activity
  - Maintain healthy eating and sleeping routines
  - Practice being courageous in relationships
  - *Practice stepping outside your comfort zone*

# ***How Do You Increase Flexibility?***

- Step outside your comfort zone
- Practice befriending “the Mystery”
- Practice breaking free from routines
- Choose spontaneity
- Travel to new places; go on a vacation without an itinerary

# ***How Do You Increase Recuperative Ability?***

- Develop a restorative practice
- Include both active and passive relaxation
- Get serious about having fun
- Recognize that recreation is re-creation
- Spend time in nature
- Spend time with “recharging” people

# ***Strategies for Self-Empowerment***

- Identify your personal goals, responsibilities, and contributions
- Determine what you can control
- Strengthen your personal connections: collegial/social/familial
- Adjust your thinking patterns
- Practice good self-care at work and home

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