



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Tough Love

HR professionals in small to medium-sized organizations often play multiple roles, a counselor being one of them. This job can be enjoyable, yet frustrating. It helps HR win the trust of colleagues and managers alike. However, it's frustrating when counselors cannot distinguish between being empathetic and being a sounding board, leaving no time for other activities.

Some employees take a lot of HR professionals' time by unburdening all their problems, personal and professional. Though such situations cannot be avoided, understanding the dynamics certainly prepares a manager to tackle the situation better.

The POA

Personal problems. HR personnel can only act as a sounding board and allow the employee to vent his frustrations. However, if this occurs frequently, he/she might be indirectly teaching the employee to manage emotions without finding a solution to the problem.

Professional problem. This demands some informal investigation. Throw the ball in the employee's court by asking him/her what help or training he/she needs to manage his/her job responsibilities effectively. A holistic picture is essential.

The three Rs

Some strategies that will help HR professionals manage their time optimally are:

Resist. Resist the urge to advise as soon as an employee approaches with a problem. Instead, ask how he/she plans to solve the problem and what resources he/she needs for the purpose.

Resources. The HR professional should be innovative in developing interpersonal resources. Start a mentoring program for technical managers to become great managers. Offer training on handling difficult employees, conflict resolution, delegation, and communication and self-management skills.

Refer. Encourage chronically problematic employees to seek professional help.

Summary

Empathetic HR Professionals should empower their employees by enabling them to better their personal and professional relationships instead of merely trying to solve their problems. This will help employees mature while ensuring that HR professionals are left with the energy to deal with their own professional and personal lives.