

CONSUMER MANAGEMENT TIPS

THE SUPERVISOR/EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP:

HOW TO KEEP A PROFESSIONAL WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR EMPLOYEES

At the beginning of most any supervisor/employee relationship, a supervisor will clearly train their employees to know and understand policies, procedures and professional behavior as described by the company they work for. As an employee they will understand, respect and uphold the same.

Just as in any relationship, the longer two people spend time together, the more they come to know each other. As the supervisor/employee relationship continues, it can become comfortable and easy while at the same time, more difficult to follow policies, procedures and professional behavior.

Sometimes a good supervisor/employee relationship turns into friendship, with a positive outcome. Both are able to work together keeping their professional behavior during work hours and the friendship grows. On the other hand, sometimes a supervisor/employee relationship turned friendship has difficulties keeping the professionalism intact and the relationship ends on a sour note. The employee quits or gets fired, the supervisor is left without an employee and the friendship is ruined.

One of the best ways to avoid the blurring of work vs friendship boundaries and maintain professional behavior is to assure all employees and supervisors follow GSIL policies, procedures and professional behavior. Utilize the handbooks you have (Employee Handbook & Consumer Skills Training Handbook) which list GSIL policies, procedures and professional behaviors. Know what professional behavior is and know what it is not. Another great idea is to have in writing and posted in an obvious place, those policies, procedures and professional behaviors that are important to you, so both supervisor and employee have a clear definition of what those policies, procedures and professional behaviors are and what lines you should not cross. That way, when lines do get crossed and those policies, procedures and professional behaviors start to fade, you can always look at what your initial expectations were, see what has been blurred and reel it back a few steps if necessary.

- You have determined a set work schedule for your employee and they agreed. A few months into the schedule, you find your employee not following that set schedule, coming in late, asking to leave early and you are allowing them to do this. Other than scheduling issues, this employee is very good at what they do and you don't want to upset them, that and the employee will go above and beyond when asked. Sit down with your employee and re-examine the schedule. Discuss the importance of your employee showing up on time and working the full schedule then work together towards a schedule that fits both your needs.
- The policy says: No children should be brought to work. Your employee was in a bind for childcare once and you allowed them to bring their child to work. The child is precious and was a pleasure to have over and you told your employee that. Your employee is now bringing her child to your home at least once per week and you can't seem to find the supervisory skills to tell her she can no longer do that. Take the time to talk when the child is not present and find out why she is bringing the child. Let her know this policy is one you both need to follow and make suggestions for how she can go back to not bringing her child to work.
- The policy says: No borrowing/giving out money. Your employee needed 5.00 for gas last week. You gave it to them with the understanding it was just a loan and they paid you back. You know things are tough financially for the employee and you understand that. They ask you to borrow 100.00. You said ok. By allowing the employee to borrow money, you take the risk of never getting it back or getting just some back. Explain to the employee that borrowing money is against policy and is never an easy thing to refuse. Be sympathetic and offer advice, but not the money. Keep your professional behavior and your employee will understand.

Some examples of professional behaviors that can cross the boundaries of a good supervisor/employee relationship are:

- Calling your employee all the time for every little thing. Keep it professional and call only when needed. Recognize that employees have a life outside of working for you and call them only when absolutely necessary.
- Asking your employees to do things they are not supposed to do (moving heavy furniture, doing laundry for the whole family, taking your grandchild out for ice cream, trimming the tree limbs). Realize that good employees will try their best to help you...don't take advantage of that goodwill. Stay professional.
- Rewarding your worker with gifts. Letting your worker borrow your vehicle. Buying your worker groceries. Again, these actions are all beyond the scope of professional behavior.

Remember that there are good people out there willing to go the extra mile for you and are heartfelt in their desire to be helpful. But also know that there are people who will go an extra mile for others because they believe the end result to be that they can take advantage of those people in the long run. Knowing the difference is important. Abiding by policies and procedures, maintaining your professional behavior as well as keeping boundaries in place is a preventative measure that goes a long way towards a healthy, productive supervisor/employee relationship.