

IMPACT

Manager Supplement

April - June 2004

Did you know?

- Claremont EAP can make referrals for after-school care, day camps, and summer camps
- If you participate in your company's FSA (flexible spending account), new legislation was passed to include some over the counter medicines
- Now is the time to prepare for *next* year's taxes; Claremont EAP can give you referrals to tax attorneys and CPAs

Claremont EAP
800.834.3773

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| Understanding the Working Parent's Needs | 1-2 |
| Managing Your Biggest Time Wasters | 2-3 |

Understanding the Working Parent's Needs

It's 9:30 a.m. when Melissa Perkins rushes into the office 45 minutes late. She promised to review some sales figures with you before an important meeting that's only five minutes away. "It's been one of those mornings, Bob," she says apologetically. "Jennifer was cranky, we got caught in traffic on our way to the child care center and there was no way to call you. Let's go over those numbers quickly before the team gets together."

It's a safe bet that your workplace includes dozens of men and women just like Melissa Perkins who are struggling to balance work and parenting responsibilities. Today's families are different from those in the past. More than half of all mothers with children under age 6 are working. And women are returning to work after the birth of a baby sooner than ever before.

Your company's success depends, in large part, on how effectively it recognizes and addresses the wide variety of challenges facing working parents. More and more employers are using generous work/family benefit packages to attract and retain top workers. Companies and managers who don't accommodate the needs of working parents may encounter serious problems relating to employee loyalty, turnover, absenteeism and stress.



What Do Working Parents Need?

Respect, Understanding, Acknowledgment and Acceptance

Get to know your employees and the wide range of challenges they face. Hundreds of thousands of people in their 30s, 40s and 50s now find themselves squeezed between caring for their children and their elderly parents. As these members of the "Sandwich Generation" attempt to balance work and caretaking responsibilities, they frequently give up much-needed personal time in the process. These employees are likely to feel stressed out and lose productivity until they find new ways to manage their busy lives.

Flexibility and Alternative Work Options

Working parents can thrive with flexible scheduling options that allow them to work part-time, telecommute, share jobs or take leaves of absence. For example, employees who need more personal time around holidays may appreciate the option to make up the work on another day. Be flexible and creative in assisting workers who need to rearrange their schedules.

Resources to Help Them Cope

Employers use a variety of strategies and services to help working parents cope with multiple demands. Some organizations may have Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) that are set up to refer employees to child and elder care providers and a wide variety of other resources, including stress management workshops,

(Continued on page 2)

We're on the web
www.ClaremontEAP.com

Understanding the Working Parent's Needs

(Continued from page 1)
books on parenting and personal counselors.

Be sure to familiarize yourself with your organization's EAP program and other services designed to help your employees manage their work and family

obligations. By supporting your employees' lives outside work, you may help them be more productive on the job.

Managing Your Biggest Time Wasters

Reducing outside interruptions is crucial to premium performance at work. But what can you do if phone calls, visits from co-workers and rambling meetings waste hours of your work time every day?

"You can defend yourself by learning simple techniques that will help you manage time-wasters," says Stephanie Winston, president of The Organizing Principle, a management consulting firm in New York, and author of *The Organized Executive*. "And you can establish greater control without being rude or shutting yourself off from others' needs."

The following suggestions will help you gain control of your worst time-wasters:

On the phone

Keep calls brief. Get to the point immediately when you're making or returning a business call. Develop strategies for dealing with long-winded people, such as beginning calls with, "This is Mary. I have a meeting in 10 minutes. What can I do for you?"



Consolidate call-backs. Return all your calls at a given time each day. Begin with priority calls and work down the list.

Return calls when people are less likely to chat. For example, call right before lunch or near the end of the day.

Develop a message-tracking system. If you're disorganized, you may spend more time looking for your messages than returning them. Avoid putting message slips under a paperweight or in your in-box; they tend to get lost. Instead, use an old-fashioned desk needle or add important calls that must be returned to your master to-do list.

Drop-in visitors

Interoffice visits are a part of office life. The following

strategies can help you regain control if you're constantly interrupted:

Send a clear message. Close your office door or post a note on the entrance to your cubicle saying you're busy until a certain time. You'll deter all but the most insistent visitors.

If your desk faces the door or a corridor, reposition it so a passerby can't easily catch your eye.

Consolidate visits. Limit appointments to a specific block of time each day or week.

Set time limits. Limiting spur-of-the-moment sessions without being rude requires tact, but it can be done. When someone asks if you have a minute, you can respond with, "Could it wait until this afternoon? I'm really swamped right now."

Confer in colleagues' offices. When co-workers want to discuss projects with you, offer to meet in their offices. "It's much easier to excuse

"You can defend yourself by learning simple techniques that will help you manage time-wasters."

Managing Your Biggest Time Wasters

yourself than to ease someone out of your office," Ms. Winston says.

Endless meetings

Eliminate unnecessary meetings. Before calling a meeting, ask yourself if the issue could be handled by a memo, telephone call or informal conference.

Distribute an agenda in advance. List the topics to be

discussed and note any papers, figures and information people should bring.

Set time limits. Try to schedule meetings just before lunch or quitting time. Doing so will curb a tendency for attendees to ramble on.

Take control. If you're the moderator, limit the discussion to topics on the agenda. Unstructured meetings are usually unproductive.

"By learning to define your time as your own," Ms. Winston says, "you are then free to enthusiastically speak and meet with co-workers, clients and other contacts without compromising your own productivity."

CLAREMONT EAP

800.834.3773

www.ClaremontEAP.com

Managers can call Claremont for consultation regarding employees who appear to be experiencing personal problems, whether or not work performance has become an issue. The purpose of this consultation is to help formulate an approach that effectively facilitates the person receiving appropriate help. The Claremont consultant will review the do's and don'ts for handling these often delicate situations and suggest things you can say and do which are most likely to be helpful.