## How to Supervise Bad Attitudes and Negative Behaviors: Key Terms

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<th>Term</th>
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<td>An appeasing conflict-resolution technique that emphasizes areas of agreement while it avoids points of disagreement</td>
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<td>Aggravating Factors</td>
<td>Considerations when disciplining, such as short service, history of poor performance, prior instances of performance or conduct problems, and the degree to which the employee has responded to the current problem with denials or dishonesty</td>
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<td>Attitude</td>
<td>A person's way of thinking and believing, manifested in his or her behaviors</td>
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<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>One who requires strict obedience at the expense of personal choice and freedom</td>
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<td>Competition</td>
<td>The use of position, power and dominance to resolve conflict. It involves imposing one's viewpoint at the expense of another and is characterized by a win-lose outcome in which one party overwhelms the other</td>
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<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Material that provides official evidence or information regarding anything to do with the workplace; a record</td>
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<td>Resentment</td>
<td>The feeling that results from the combination of anger, helplessness, and frustration</td>
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<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>A person's overall sense of worth</td>
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HOW TO SUPERVISE BAD ATTITUDES AND NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS
MODULE ONE – GETTING TO THE CAUSE OF BAD BEHAVIOR AND NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

Female:

Module One – Getting to the Cause of Bad Behavior and Negative Attitudes. I don’t know any supervisor or manager that hasn’t had to deal with employees with bad attitudes or negative behavior. Not all of them, certainly. I’ve found that most employees want to do a good job and have a pretty good outlook on their work. But it seems like the employee with the bad attitude takes up more time and management skills than a dozen employees with good attitudes. Don’t you wish sometimes that you could trade places just for a day with a negative employee so that they could see the organization from the management point of view? Not only are you accountable for yourself and for your team’s mission, but you also bear the responsibility for the performance and the behavior of others. That’s a lot of responsibility. Consider some of the challenges that today’s managers face. You’re leading people through some of the biggest changes in the American workforce. I know that when I started out in the workforce, I fully expected to rise up through the ranks in the same organization until I retired with a nice pension. And as it happened that’s exactly what I did. But those expectations are unrealistic today. Some of the challenges that managers are leading their employers through, such as the disruption of short-term contractual employment and increased outsourcing, the chaos of downsizing, reduction in force or resizing -- by which any name means a loss of job security and increased uncertainty for employees. These business tactics designed to help organizations stay afloat and prosper in today’s economy have led to a break in the bond of company loyalty. Add to that the large
number of laws that protect employees and limit or even mandate management’s options in managing their employees. As a result of these laws, managers must also be aware that they could be held legally liable for their management decisions. And think about the expectations that people have of their job, their organization, and their manager. I’ll never forget, I was talking to one of my employees who had recently been promoted to a supervisory position. I was checking back to see how things were going for him, and he said, “Well, I like being in charge and being able to make decisions, and I really like the raise in pay. But it would be a whole lot better if I didn’t have to deal with the employees.” He was perfectly serious. I’m afraid I had to tell him that we didn’t have any supervisory positions available that didn’t involve employees. Managing the technical side of your organization might be relatively easy, and managing the people is not. People present always the changing dynamic of emotions, perceptions, motivations, ethics, morals, likes, and dislikes that are all combined into a team that you’re asked to lead toward greater results. Today’s management challenge is to face these realities in an environment where we’re all being asked to do more with less. There’s no one cause or one simple strategy for managing bad attitudes. I wish there was, but the issue is complex. Employees often blame their bad attitudes on the actions of managers, and managers blame poor performance and disruptive behavior on their employees’ bad attitudes. If employees aren’t performing up to expectations or up to their own capabilities, managers often assume that they’re doing it by choice. If employees disagree with us or don’t show support for new organizational directions and initiative, it’s because they have bad attitudes and negativity. But it’s not that simple. So how are bad attitudes created? I want to talk about six primary causes and some
secondary contributors to bad attitudes. As you face bad attitudes in your workplace, the cause is most likely somewhere in this mix. First, low self-esteem. Well no surprise here. People who have low self-esteem often display bad attitudes. People with low self-esteem are insecure, and they lack belief in themselves and their capabilities. They create unreasonable expectations of their coworkers and managers, and they like to throw out little tests, expecting you to give them what they need. And when you don’t pick up on their clues, then you’re a terrible and unappreciative manager. These are people who don’t trust others, and keep an ever-watchful eye on what everyone else does. They find it hard to make decisions and are quick to take offense. But you might be surprised to know that many of your over-achievers suffer from low self-esteem. They’re sometimes motivated by their need to prove their own adequacy. Next, let’s talk about fear. Fear is the perception that there’s an external threat to one’s well-being. This sets off the person’s fight-or-flight instinct and causes the person to exhibit both defensive and aggressive behavior. The symptoms could be subtle or extreme, but they include an us-versus-them attitude, silence during a meeting, but very outspoken outside of the meeting, they might be rigid and by-the-book, they’re likely to harbor grievances against coworkers and management. Fear can be a factor in a person who is reluctant to admit mistakes, is at the heart of the rumor mill, but seldom has any public input into improving working conditions. They can be defensive regarding performance appraisals and reluctant to take risks. Does that remind you of anyone you know? Next, there’s boredom. Now most of us have days that we feel bored, overloaded, or unappreciated. But when people feel like this most of the time, it’s a primary cause for negative behavior. Every one of their days is a bad day. This person
could have tasks that are either dull or overwhelming. They might procrastinate and take longer to get things done and spend their time dreaming up something that will engage their interest. And often that results in negative behavior. Next, unresolved conflict. The impact of conflict in the workplace can be devastating to the parties involved and to the business as a whole. Unresolved conflict causes strained relationships, increased customer complaints, absenteeism, loss of productivity, and maybe even sabotage. These symptoms of unresolved conflict can present significant cost to organizations. The next primary cause of negative behavior is the inability to accept change. People who resist change fear failure. They cling to the secure, predictable past where they’re comfortable and they know what to do and how to do it. Some people dig in their heels and refuse to learn anything new or unfamiliar. I already know everything I need to know. Or, it won’t work, so don’t bother me with change. Or, just leave me alone and let me do it my way. The last primary cause for negative behavior is resentment. Now resentment is not the same thing as anger. Anger motivates you to fight for your rights. It’s a message that your mind sends you in order to motivate you to take a certain action. But what if you keep getting the message, but you’re not able to take the action? This makes a person feel helpless and frustrated. The combination of anger, helplessness and frustration is resentment. Symptoms of resentment include trying to get revenge, starting gossip and rumors, sullenness, irritability, a cynical attitude, and complaining about being unappreciated or cheated. The secondary causes of bad attitudes will usually, in turn, activate one of the primary causes and display some of the same symptoms that we’ve just talked about. Stress can cause a host of symptoms, including anxiety, hyperactivity, and can lead to
debilitating physical problems. Physical conditions bring all of their symptoms into the workplace. A lack of understanding in the organization’s goals can cause boredom and misdirected effort. People bring their whole history with them to the workplace. If they had bad experiences in the past, they often color their expectations by their past experiences. Mistrust can cause fear and resentment. Lack of feedback and lack of recognition often builds into resentment. These are two of the causes that you, as a manager, can directly control. We'll talk more about that later in the program.

[End of recording.]
Module Two – Positive Conflict Resolution. Conflict is inevitable in the workplace. When coworkers interact in the course of their responsibility, there’s always a potential for conflict. In fact, it just isn’t possible for people with diverse backgrounds, skills, and opinions to work together, make decisions, and meet objectives without some kind of conflict. Over the years, there have been distinct views about conflict in the workplace. The traditional view assumes that all conflict is bad, it always has a negative impact, and it leads to poor performance as the degree of conflict increases. The response to conflict in this traditional view is to reduce, suppress, or eliminate conflict. The manager was responsible for eliminating workplace conflict even by an authoritarian approach. Although this approach works sometimes, it was not generally effective. When they are suppressed, the primary causes of conflict can’t be identified and managed. The contemporary view of conflict argues that conflict is natural and inevitable in all organizations, and can have either a positive or a negative effect, depending on the way the conflict is handled. Performance may improve with conflict, but only up to a certain level, and then decline if conflict is allowed to increase further or is left unresolved. This approach advocates acceptance of conflict and rationalizes its existence. But because of the potential benefits from conflict, managers should focus on managing effectively rather than suppressing or eliminating it. In general, workplace conflict fits into one of three categories, although a specific conflict may have roots in two or more categories. The categories are goal-oriented conflicts, which are associated with end results, priorities, and objectives, and structural conflicts, which refer to management structure
and philosophy and are mainly based on definition of roles and reporting relationships and on responsibilities and authority for tasks, functions, and decisions. Interpersonal conflicts result from a difference in work ethics, styles, egos, and personalities of the participants. What kind of conflicts could be considered goal-oriented conflicts? When I was the systems manager for the Marine Corps Technology Services, some of the biggest conflicts that we had were with the security office. Security’s objective was to make sure that the Marine Corp’s data was secure. To do that, they locked it down as tightly as possible. Our data was locked behind access levels, pass codes, our security measures were subjected to frequent audits. And that sounds like a good idea, doesn’t it? Everyone knows that security is a critical issue today and information needs to be protected. But it was my job to manage the system – to make sure the applications ran and did what they were supposed to do. But when the applications didn’t do what they were supposed to do, my folks had to get into them and get them fixed. And that was our highest priority. Security had our applications locked down so tightly that many times, my staff had to battle for the security access to do our jobs. We compared it to someone locking us out of our own house. Even though we worked for the same organizations, both the security manager and I were positive that we were the one who was best supporting the mission of our organization. We were pretty much in a constant state of conflict. We ended up resolving the conflict by agreeing that our conflict came from both of us having the best of intentions, and we learned that if we didn’t win the battle for security access – if my very smart staff figured out another way to get the job done – then security was right. We didn’t need that access, and it could be locked down. But if there was no alternative, no alternative way to be found, we’d
get the access. It wasn’t easy for either group, but our continual conflict resulted in a series of compromises that ended up to be in the best interest of the organization. Structural conflicts focus on aspects of the organization such as procedures, resources, personnel, and reporting relationships. As a manager, you can see some of these types of conflicts occurring and some of your employees exhibiting some bad behavior and negative attitudes because of these conflicts. But these types of conflicts very well may be within your ability to solve. For example, you can change work procedures to avoid conflict. For instance, your technical team may evaluate and select a product or a vendor for a technical contract. Then when they turn it over to the purchasing department, purchasing follows traditional department procedures and causes delay that could lead to conflict. You can avoid that type of conflict by involving the purchasing department more toward the front end of the process. Making purchasing your partner and ally in a project could mean cooperation in expediting the purchase rather than blame passing and ill will. You can transfer personnel to resolve personality conflicts. For example, a personality conflict between two high-performing employees may be reducing the overall team output. If one of the employees is transferred to another team, then both people may be able to make a significant positive contribution. You can rearrange workspace to resolve conflict. You might have two groups that through difference in mission or objectives, tend to harass one another or disturb each other continually. You can build a physical separation between them to limit their interaction. You can make resource changes to resolve conflict. For example, a conflict and the associated bad behavior can develop if two employees or teams both use the same resource. You can resolve the conflict by getting both people or teams what they
need so they don’t need to battle over it. And we’re all way too familiar with interpersonal conflict. Interpersonal conflict-resolution techniques are based on the recognition that the choice of a conflict-management strategy depends on the degree of conflict, the level of intensity, the frequency, and the challenge of the resolution. Like a leadership style, the specific method for resolving a conflict also depends on a number of situational variables. The best approach will be one that minimizes the risk to the organization. People attempt to manage interpersonal conflict in a variety of ways, depending on the relative importance and the intensity of the conflict, the time pressure for resolving the conflict, the positions taken by the players involved, and the motivation to resolve the conflict on a long-term or short-term basis. Conflict-resolution tactics range from the power-based steamroll approach to the more defensive diplomatic and tactical approach. In between those two extremes are avoidance, give and take negotiation, collaboration, and problem solving. Managers should analyze the situation and select the appropriate strategy for managing conflict within their organization that will create a climate conducive to creating a constructive outcome. Withdrawing involves avoiding, denying, giving up, pulling out, or retreating and constitutes a refusal to deal with the conflict by ignoring it as much as possible. This style is appropriate when a cooling-off period is needed. Withdrawal is a passive stopgap way of handling conflict, and generally fails to solve a problem. So it shouldn’t be used if the conflict deals with an issue that is of immediate concern or is very important to the organization’s mission. Accommodation or soothing is an appeasing approach of emphasizing areas of agreement while it avoids points of disagreement. It’s appropriate to keep harmony and avoid outwardly conflictive situations. It works when the issues
are more important than the personal positions and aspirations of the parties involved. Since the accommodation tends to keep the peace only for the short term, it usually doesn’t provide a permanent long-term solution to the underlying conflict. Often, that conflict will reappear in another form. Both withdrawing and accommodation incline toward ignoring or delaying tactics, which don’t resolve the conflict, but will temporarily slow down the situation. Managers should remember that if conflict is not handled and resolved in a timely manner, it will likely lead to more intense and severe conflict in the future. Competition or forcing implies the use of position, power and dominance to resolve the conflict. It involves imposing one’s viewpoint at the expense of another, and is characterized by win-lose outcome in which one party overwhelms the other. Forcing is used when there’s no common ground on which to bargain or negotiate, and when both parties are uncooperative and strong willed. Managers should use this strategy when time is critical and vital to the wellbeing of the organization and they believe that they’re in the right, based on what they know. Managers should not take the risk and simply dictate action to simplify things in order to move things forward. This approach is appropriate when quick decisions are required or when unpopular decisions, such as budget cuts or reductions in force, are required. Collaboration is an effective technique to manage conflict. It involves incorporating multiple ideas and viewpoints from people with different perspectives. It offers a good opportunity to learn from others. Active collaboration by both parties contributing to the resolution makes it easier to get their consensus and commitment. Collaboration is not effective when there are more than a few players involved and their viewpoints are mutually exclusive. Realistic managers know that conflict is normal, and in some cases necessary. Conflict can be healthy if it’s
managed effectively. Conflict management requires a combination of analytical and human skills. Every manager should learn to resolve conflicts effectively. They should build an atmosphere designed to reduce destructive conflict and deal with routine infractions and minor differences before they become unmanageable.

[End of recording.]
Female:

Module Three – Turning Around Bad Attitudes. First, let’s talk about negative thinking. As a manager, you’ve seen people who always seem to focus on the negative – the ones who are never satisfied with almost everything going their way. It’s all or nothing. They’re quick to label other people and even quicker to jump to conclusions. And while, of course, they never do anything wrong or make a mistake, they’re great at pointing the finger and playing the blame game. Over the years, I’ve worked with a lot of negative people, as I’m sure you have, too. But one that I particularly remember was a woman in my carpool. We both worked for the same large organization with about 700 people in our facility, but in different departments. Every day on the 30-minute commute to and home from work, this woman would dominate the conversation. And since we were in a moving vehicle, there wasn’t much the rest of us could do. This woman was working full time and had returned to college after her children had grown to finally get her degree. That was admirable. But it was hard to appreciate and admire her when she was so unfailingly negative. No one ever worked harder for less appreciation than she did. Every coworker was plotting against her. Every boss discriminated against her, either because she was a woman or because she was over 40, or because she had a New York accent in the Midwest, or because she was obviously smarter than they were. No one ever gave her a big project until they did give her a big project, which was obviously an attempt to sabotage her career. One day she was talking about the lack of appreciation for her work. "The boss tells everyone else they do a good job, but I never get any appreciation at all. I don’t even know why I bother." I stopped her and said,
“Well, wait a minute, Diane. Didn’t you just get selected as employee of the year?” And her response to that was, “Oh yeah, that.” Years later we ended up working in the same office and her supervisor, not knowing that I knew her, came into my office and tried to get me to take her in my division. It seems like she was having a personality conflict with her team. The point is that negative thinking often turns into negative behavior, and bad attitudes turn into problems for the organization. If you’re managing an employee with a bad attitude, trying to fix it will not do you any good. I know the title of this module is Turning Around Bad Attitudes and Negative Behavior, and don’t worry – we’ll get to that. But the best way to deal with bad attitudes is to put aside your concern about the attitude itself and concentrate instead on the specific behaviors that are elevating your blood pressure. So what is bad attitude? When you think about it, bad attitude is just a judgment made by one person about another person based on what that individual says and does. It’s a label that’s slapped on another person’s behavior when someone else doesn’t like that behavior. But rather than using judgments and labels, the trick to solving an attitude problem is to focus on the objective facts. For example, you really never know for sure what kind of an attitude an employee took with someone else unless you were there. What you do know is that someone complained about being treated badly. And even when you witness what you consider to be a bad attitude, you should always focus on the behavior – what this person said or did -- and not on the attitude. But isn’t that what he said, you might argue? It’s the way he said it that was bad. It’s his tone of voice and his facial expressions and mannerisms. So okay, let’s agree that the cause of the bad behavior is really some kind of deep-seated attitudinal deficiency. A person’s core attitudes are pretty much fixed by
the time they start school, so there’s not much that you can do about that now. What you can do to start, when you feel the need to confront someone who’s in need of an attitude adjustment, is never say the word “attitude.” Any person with a genuinely vile attitude has no doubt already been told. Raising the issue from that direction will just be unproductive. Instead, you need to get specific. If this person is egotistical and credit-grabbing, does she pout or sulk when she doesn’t get her way, or is he rude, surly, and inconsiderate? All of these behaviors are different. But all of them could commonly be labeled as an attitude problem. Start by narrowing down the issue to a specific problem then write down the actual behaviors and actions - the evidence that a person is behaving in an unacceptable way. Be sure to record the non-verbal behaviors along with the verbal. Make notes of rolling eyes, arms crossed tightly against the chest, and other gestures. Keep track of how often the behaviors occur. No one is always hateful. No one never helps their coworkers. Get times, dates, and places exactly correct. You have to keep this kind of log in order to get the payoff. Once you have an accurate and complete summary of behaviors that have been generated - the bad attitude diagnosis - you’re almost ready for the discussion. But first you need to answer the question, so what? So what if the person behaves that way? What difference does it make? Your goal here is to be fully prepared not only to explain what the person is doing that causes concern, but why the situation must be immediately changed. Answer these questions. What’s the impact of the inappropriate behavior? What are the business reasons for why the organization expects employees to act in ways other than the employee is acting? How is the employee’s behavior at odds with the standards set by the company or its vision and values? What effect does the negative behavior have on customers
and coworkers? What are all the adverse effects of this individual’s choice of behavior? With your documentation of the unacceptable behaviors that you’ve observed, the lists of times and dates that the behaviors occurred, and your summary of the business reasons why the immediate corrections must be made, you’re fully prepared and ready to talk. But before we talk about this conversation, I want to stop for just a minute and talk about employee documentation. I have always counseled the supervisors that have worked for me that if you didn’t document it, it didn’t happen. I know that you have real work to do. I know it’s time consuming. I know that it doesn’t seem like a positive action. But I also know that it’s the only way that you’re going to be able to back up what you say. Managers and supervisors don’t like to document their employees. But those who don’t are those who most likely have employees with bad attitudes. Now let’s get back to the counseling meeting. Having your written list will boost your self-confidence when you raise the issue with your employee. You’ll need a private place to talk. When you talk to your employee, explain that his behavior – not his attitude – is causing a problem. You can get off to a good start by saying something like, “Ruth, I have a problem and I need your help.” Instead of “you,” say “I.” It reduces their defensiveness. Then you talk about specific things that you’ve seen and heard and only the things that you know for sure that concern you. Tell the person exactly why they concern you, and ask that person’s help in correcting the problem. Don’t expect to get any useful responses. What you will probably get is denial, maybe even an accusation that you’re overreacting or making things up. But that’s okay. Wrap up this initial discussion by saying, "That’s great, Ruth. I’m glad you feel that there’s nothing to it. Let’s schedule another meeting next week and make sure that the problem is solved."
Often, just finding out that others are aware of the bad behavior is enough to get this person to decide to change. A week later, if there’s not been a total turnaround, talk again. Point out any additional examples of bad behavior that concern you, and once more, request a change. Again, expect denial and wrap up the meeting on a positive note. In all of these conversations, your job is to listen as much as talk. Is there a reasonable explanation? Is Ruth even aware of what she’s doing? If you need a third session, now you get more serious. Point out bluntly that getting along with others and maintaining cooperative and business-like relationships are part of the job. Go over in detail the entire list of bad behaviors. Again, describe exactly what the person did that was inappropriate. Explain the business reasons why change is mandatory – not requested, but mandatory. Don’t hesitate to tell the person that she must stop behaving in an unacceptable way. Use your performance appraisal as a tool to bring about a behavior change. Find the most appropriate place on the form to write about the person’s bad behavior and describe it in detail. Be sure to circle the lowest possible rating. Then during the counseling, hand the employee the form. Tell your employee, “I know it’s not time for your appraisal right now, but if it were, this is what it would say.” Then continue by saying, “Ruth, unless there’s a dramatic and sustained change in the way you interact with your coworkers and customers, this is what you can expect on your appraisal. I wanted you to see this now so that there won’t be any surprises.”

[End of recording.]
Module Four – the Disciplinary Process. Documentation and discipline go hand in hand. In order to discipline your employee, you need well-prepared documentation to back up your decision. Any employment lawyer or arbitrator will tell you that more cases are won or lost due to documentation than any other factor. For example, an employee may be fired for coming into work late every day for three months. What happens if she sues the company and the manager has not only not documented the fact that she was late, but also gave her a sloppy performance appraisal with a satisfactory rating? You also need to be aware of the need for consistent discipline. Let’s say that you fire Barbara for habitual tardiness. But what if your records show that Barbara was written upper four times for tardiness during the same period that Jeff, who’s still on the job, was written up six times for the same offense? Your disciplinary process must be applied fairly to all of your employees. The best way to gauge fairness is to compare your employee files and make sure that equal discipline is doled out for similar misconduct. Also, remember that the days are past when the goal of your discipline process is to move that employee out the door. These days, with the large amount of money invested in recruiting and training, the costs to replace an employee are high. It’s usually better to try to turn the employee with bad behavior and poor performance into a productive employee. Your documentation and disciplinary process could be the first step in this process of turning the employee around. Letting the employee know their shortcomings and giving them a chance to improve can be key to turning the bad behavior into productivity. Managers must clearly communicate the
ground rules to their employees. They should know what they can and what they can’t do. You should also communicate very clearly the discipline that will be imposed if the rules are broken. In addition to a clearly communicated disciplinary policy, you should also have a prohibition against discrimination and harassment in your workplace. There are four general types of disciplinary action available when an employee fails to meet expected levels of performance or conduct. The first step is usually a verbal warning. An employee might receive several verbal warnings before progressing to the next step. However, if the problem is serious, you should skip this step. Verbal warnings should be done calmly and in private. If you’re angry at your employee, wait until you calm down before you talk to your employee. Verbal counseling should be documented with a memo or an informal note in the employee’s personnel file. Next is a written warning. The manager should meet with the employees just like a verbal counseling, but the employee should be given the written warning to review. There should be a place for the employee to sign, acknowledging that he or she has received the warning, whether or not they agree with the contents of the warning. If the employee refuses to sign, another manager should be called in as a witness to show that the employee received the warning and refused to sign it, and then that manager should sign the warning. A written warning should state the rule or practice that was violated and the steps which the employee must follow in order to correct the problem or meet the desired level of performance, attendance, or behavior. It should include any commitments of assistance or support made by management and a timeframe to be followed in achieving the goal of improved performance, attendance, or behavior. It should state the consequences that will occur if the improvements are not made within the time frame stated. One
technique that I’ve found that is particularly successful with written warnings for
behavior problems is that I write a statement that if by the end of one calendar year
there’s been no further occurrence of that particular behavior documented in the
warning, that I will remove the letter from the employee’s file and retain no record of its
having been issued. If, however, there’s another occurrence of the same behavior, this
letter will serve as a first warning and the next occurrence may result in the next level of
disciplinary action. I’ve used this technique many times, and there’s only been one time
that I was not able to give that letter back. I set a reminder on my calendar for one year
to the day from the date of the warning. But to be honest, I’ve never had to use that
reminder. The employee sets their own reminder and is anxious to get their letter back
and have that behavior wiped from their record. There’s very little risk and a very big
payoff for using this technique. If the employee’s behavior improves in order to get the
letter out of their file, everybody wins. If, after the year has passed, the employee
reverts to their old ways, you can do the same thing again. You are not losing anything
by not having that prior incident to build on, because an incident over a year past holds
very little weight when trying to establish a pattern. So everybody wins again. You do
have to follow through. Remove the letter from the file and from your thinking process.
The payoff is worth it. The one instance where I wasn’t able to give back the
employee’s letter involved a woman who had flown off the handle and started a
screaming, fist-pounding incident directed, unfortunately, at me. During the year
following my issuing the letter, she had transferred to another job with another manager
– a manager who had come to me for advice when she enacted the same kind of scene
with a coworker. On the anniversary of the letter, she did, indeed, show up at my office
and demand her letter back, because I personally hadn’t reprimanded her since the last incident. I told her that her personnel file was with her current supervisor and that if he assured me that there were no further incidents, I would make sure she got that letter. Knowing what I would hear from her current supervisor, she did not press the issue. After the written warning, the next step is usually suspension. This may range from one day to two weeks or more, depending on the circumstances, and is generally unpaid. You need to make sure that your employee is aware of the consequences if the behavior does not improve after a suspension. If your next step is termination, make sure the employee can’t claim that he or she thought the result would be another suspension of a longer length. Before terminating an employee, you should review the personnel file and all of the relevant documents in order to determine if the determination is appropriate. You should make sure that similarly situated employees have been treated similarly in the past. There are some behaviors that warrant automatic termination. Examples include violent behavior or threats of violence; drug or alcohol use on duty; carrying a weapon on company property; disregarding safety rules; theft, destruction of company property, or falsifying documents; gross insubordination; and job abandonment, which amounts to no call or no show for three or more consecutive days. When selecting a course of action in response to bad behavior, there are important factors to consider in evaluating the mitigating and aggravating factors. Mitigating factors are things such as long service with the company, history of satisfactory appraisals, prior commendations or awards, and defenses or excuses offered by the employee in response to the problem in question. Aggravating factors are such things as short service, history of poor performance, prior instances of
performance or conduct problems, and the degree to which the employee has responded to the current problem with denials or dishonesty. Another important factor to consider before disciplining the employee is the risk associated with retaining the employee. These risks include that retaining the employee’s attitude will deteriorate because he perceives that he’s gotten away with something; that the employee will engage in future misconduct resulting in a liability for your company for negligent retention of the employee; that the morale of the other employees will be harmed if the employee is retained; and the risk of setting a precedent that other employees will expect you to follow. You should also consider the harm associated with termination or severe discipline. Evaluate the risk that the employee will claim discrimination on the basis of membership in a protected group. Try to minimize that risk by making sure that similarly situated employees who were not in that protected group were treated the same way. An employee may also claim retaliation for engaging in a protected activity such as union activities, or filing a complaint with the EEOC. To minimize this risk, make sure that other employees who have not engaged in protected activities have been treated the same way in similar situations. One last word. In discussing discipline, you have to talk about suspension and termination and reducing the risk to your organization. But remember that we talked about the importance of using your disciplinary process to improve performance and behavior. Only move on to the more severe forms of discipline if you’ve run out of other options.

[End of recording.]
HOW TO SUPERVISE BAD ATTITUDES AND NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS
MODULE FIVE – MOTIVATING BAD-ATTITUDE EMPLOYEES

Female:
Module Five – Motivating Bad-Attitude Employees. I’m not going to pretend that motivating bad attitudes is easy, because it’s not. A negative employee, as we’ve talked about, can be a real liability in the workplace. Negative attitudes are contagious. And they can, at the very least, be a drain on morale. A positive atmosphere focusing on teamwork and good communication makes for a healthy workplace. Don’t let negative behavior pull that healthy workplace into what’s referred to as a toxic environment. So how do you motivate employees with bad attitudes? One challenge is to recognize that many of the current trends in motivational theory may not work on employees with bad attitudes. Being motivated to achieve or gain something might be unrealistic for them if they lack the self-confidence and self-esteem to be able to grow, achieve, acquire, and succeed. Attempting to motivate bad behaviors by fear is ineffective. It results in no positive change in workplace behavior. It only reinforces what they already thought to be true. When motivation is based on taking something away, this reinforces the perception that they are persecuted and a victim. People who lack self-esteem expect attempts to be made to take things away. When it’s threatened, or actually happens, their response could very well be, “I knew it. I told you so.” Think about what you’d like your work environment to be like. Do you want a positive atmosphere where team members cooperate and support each other - a collaborative environment that’s focused on getting the job done? First, you might want to take an honest look at yourself and your own attitudes and your own behavior. Are you enabling and fostering the kind of environment that you’d like to have? Or are your
actions making that kind of environment an impossible dream? You should be setting
an example of positivity in your organization. You should create and sustain team
connections, show your support for your employees by engaging in positive
conversations without resorting to complaining or belittling comments about other
people, your customers, other teams, or other departments. You should promote a
collaborative environment not just within your own department, but within the entire
organization and also your customer base. It’s very motivating to other employees
when they see that you’re treating another employee’s negative behavior as a
performance issue. We talked about documenting and addressing bad behavior.
Knowing that you take such behavior seriously is a motivator to employees who work
with a negative-attitude person. If your staff lacks motivation, before you blame them,
you should look inside and see if you’re guilty of any of these employee de-motivators.
Do you bark orders and display a negative attitude of your own? The first rule of
employee motivation is setting a positive attitude. Your employees won’t be positive if
you aren’t. Do you criticize or condescend? Or do you offer praise and constructive
feedback? Do you acknowledge your employees’ efforts? Most people want to do a
good job and they put in a great deal of effort. A great way to motivate employees is to
appreciate their efforts. Do you listen, or do you dismiss your employees’ ideas and
concerns? No one likes to be dismissed. When staff members offer ideas or concerns,
listen attentively and take them seriously – even when you don’t agree. Do you treat
everyone fairly, or do you have a favorite? Do you confide more inside information to
some of your employees and not to others? Of course you can’t be forced to like all of
your employees equally, but you should treat them the same regardless of your
personal feelings. Are you a micromanager? If you find yourself micromanaging, take a look at your training and staff-management strategies and make necessary adjustments. Then, let your employees go off and do the work. Don’t hover and see if you get better results. Do you set clear expectations? Let your employees know what you want them to accomplish and why. Help them to understand each of their roles and their place in the big picture. Do you change course without sharing the reasoning? Often in business, things change. It’s easier for people to embrace change when they understand why changes are necessary. Keeping employees in the loop helps keep them motivated to comply. How are your motivational skills? How about your communication skills? Employee motivation is much easier when you communicate clearly and positively. Here are some things that you can do to promote a motivating environment. Always have a positive attitude. This helps you see the good side of your people and about the things in your organization. Appreciate and genuinely acknowledge the contribution of your employees. Be there for your people, both physically and emotionally. Seek to understand what your people need. Don’t make promises that you can’t keep. It’s easier to promise that you will speak up on behalf of your people than promising them that they will get what you promised. Build trust. Ensure that you explain clearly when conveying any message to your people. Provide opportunity for your employees to grow and improve. If employees feel that they are trapped or stuck in a dead-end job, it’s hard for them to have a positive attitude.

[End of recording.]