

Supervisory Considerations About Bumping

Q *Bumping occurs and a new person enters your work group. The person is not up to speed with the remaining team and does not express a desire to be so, feels put out that he/she had to bump. How do you deal with this?*

“Bumping” is often accompanied by a unique brand of anguish. Employees may feel awkward or even guilty about exercising their bumping rights. Employees with less seniority feel vulnerable and uncertain. Colleagues may become protective of one another and workgroup factions can develop.

Keep in mind that people don’t usually function at their best under such situations. There may be increased tension and defensiveness for a while. Remind yourself to not take other’s choices or behaviors personally during a time when everyone is stressed.

Remember that the person who bumped into a position will need time to develop skills for the job. They may be missing familiar relationships and routines; they may miss the confidence, knowledge and interest that they enjoyed in their previous role. They may be uncertain about how long they want to stay in their new job – one which may have simply been the only state government alternative available to them at the time.

Consider this possibility: the person most irritating to you is doing the best they can with the information that they have.

As with all performance concerns, make sure that the performance expectations are clear and mutually understood by asking the new employee to share their understanding of expectations.

Once you’re confident that expectations are mutually understood, ask if there is anything that the organization can do to help. For example, the new employee may be feeling incapable of doing the job

or of understanding the work of their new unit. Some people feel foolish in such circumstances and they avoid assignments rather than risk failing at them. If this may be the case, make training available to the employee, since they may be reluctant to request it.

On the other hand, the employee may feel confident in the work, but they may be awkward or unsure about building relationships with new colleagues – especially if they feel guilty about bumping a regular team member off the unit. Give the employee an opportunity to be known by you, at least. Ask them about their preferred work environments and procedures. Ask them what they expect to miss about their old job (perhaps something can be done to accommodate them).

Sometimes performance is hampered by grief. In this case, a bumping employee may be sad and angry about losing a work environment of familiar goals, tasks, relationships and rituals. Especially if they had a positive job experience previously, invite them to talk about their old job. You can build in several minutes for them to do this with your team. Talking about a previous job may make it easier for the new employee to leave it behind.

This is also a time to consider an individual or management team consultation with the State EAP. EAP consultants can be reached at **651.296.0765** or **800.657.3719**.

The EAP Website: www.doer.state.mn.us/eap/eap.htm

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