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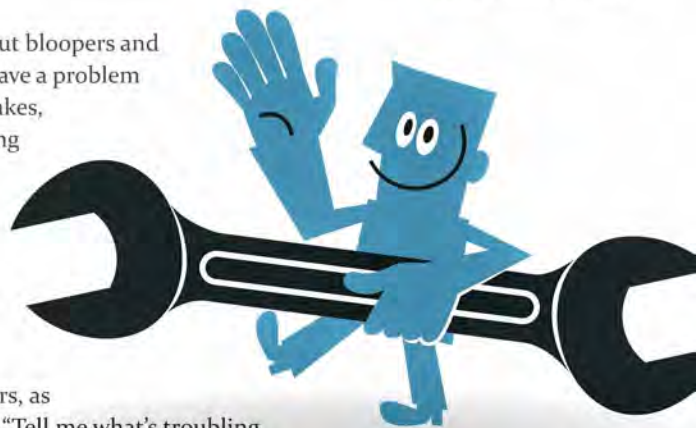
When one of your employees has difficulties, they need guidance, not reprimands.

Fix the Problem, Not the Blame

There may be some better approaches to correcting an employee issue.

by Dr. Noelle C. Nelson

Success does not come without bloopers and failures. When employees have a problem with their job or make mistakes, set them up for success by valuing their efforts to do better, not berating them for the failure. This is an important principle to remember in the high-stress foodservice industry but it can also be applied in any business setting. When a problem with an employee occurs, as the boss or manager, try asking, "Tell me what's troubling you here?" "Where did you get stuck?" "How do you think we can prevent this from happening again? All are more effective approaches than the demanding and demeaning "Why can't you get it done on time?" "You're just too slow" or "You can't do anything right."



Guidance Versus Reprimands

When one of your employees has difficulties, they need guidance, not reprimands. Managers should educate themselves about what is causing a problem instead of looking for whom to blame, which happens far too often. When you give instructions on how to fix an issue, focus on working with your employee to come up with a solution, rather than berating the employee for messing up.

For example, if a worker is chronically late, find out why. It could be a transportation issue, in which case, you may be able to come up with a different shift or different hours that will enable the worker to arrive on time.

If an employee can't grasp the proper use of a new piece of equipment, determine what might underlie the situation before concluding that your employee is lazy or not very bright. Maybe the requisite skills have changed since the employee was hired (and these days, given the speed of technology, skill sets change rapidly) so the equipment is more advanced than the employee's skill level. The problem can be solved by simply offering your employee the needed training to become proficient.

Confusing Messages

Employees can become befuddled over procedures because they are receiving a variety of messages about performance requirements from different supervisors, manuals, email communications and other employees. Too many directives from too many people only confuse employees, which then causes mistakes.

Repeating a consistent message or set of instructions can help employees stay on track. Even if you gave clear direction to your employees at the outset of their job or at the start of a specific project, do not hesitate to reiterate your instructions, and check in with your employees to make sure they understand what is expected.

And, at all times, keep your focus on solving the problem, not blaming your employee. Blame never makes anyone feel appreciated or inclined to work harder. It only sucks the life and energy from your employees and keeps them from doing their best.

