

THE CLUB

Troubled worker needs friendship, for starters



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This month's issue contains an article about testing employees for drug use. Drug or alcohol use is no longer just a problem for the worker; it becomes *your* problem when it occurs on the job. If the employee finds a way around the tests, you have two options. One is to try to be a positive influence on that troubled employee.

(No, I know you're not running a counseling center, but read on.)

We chuckle when we hear of a drunk or drugged person stumbling around the shop, yelling at the boss or fighting with co-workers; but we also realize it's a serious matter, as the article on page 30 attests. But there's more to that kind of behavior than meets the eye.

Experts say self-abuse is used to replace something that's missing from a person's life. They want attention, perhaps, and the misbehavior might be a call for help, or an attempt to escape from personal pain or boredom.

As is being done at K.E.I. in Cudahy, Wisc., it's important that you show care and concern for the employee. I like to think that if I were an employer, and one of my people began to arrive at work under the influence of drugs or alcohol, I would of course first insist that it stop, and then try to find out what's gone wrong in the employee's life. What's the void that the employee has chosen to fill with drugs or drink?

I would be that person's friend first, and employer second; find a way to reach out to that person, and maybe even talk to people who are close to him or her and see what they can tell me.

I would stage some sort of crew contest and fix it so that employee wins. The prize would be a membership at a health club, or something else to hopefully redirect the employee's life.

[GOLF/GROUNDS]

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It's a war zone out there...

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Smart mole cricket control

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Solutions to heat stress

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The problem with part-timers

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Showcase that outfield fence!

I would never talk in a way that encourages drinking as "cool" or "getting wasted" as humorous, and I would ban alcohol from all company functions if it encourages irresponsible drinking.

Of course, you can't let an unruly employee make a fool out of you and disrupt your business, either. That's when your own discernment comes in. If your efforts don't work, and the behavior continues or gets violent, then certainly, your second option is to suspend or fire the employee.

Am I right or wrong? I've never actually been in that situation. I only know what my conscience would tell me to do. Maybe you've tried compassion—to no avail—and would tell me I'm all wet.

But don't think firing the worker will put the problem forever out of sight. Because, if the trend of not being able to find good employees keeps up, and you're not able to draw the "best" people away from the fast-food jobs, you'll probably see more broken people walk through your door.

Which might not be so bad, after all. Perhaps you'll be able to change a life! **LM**

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