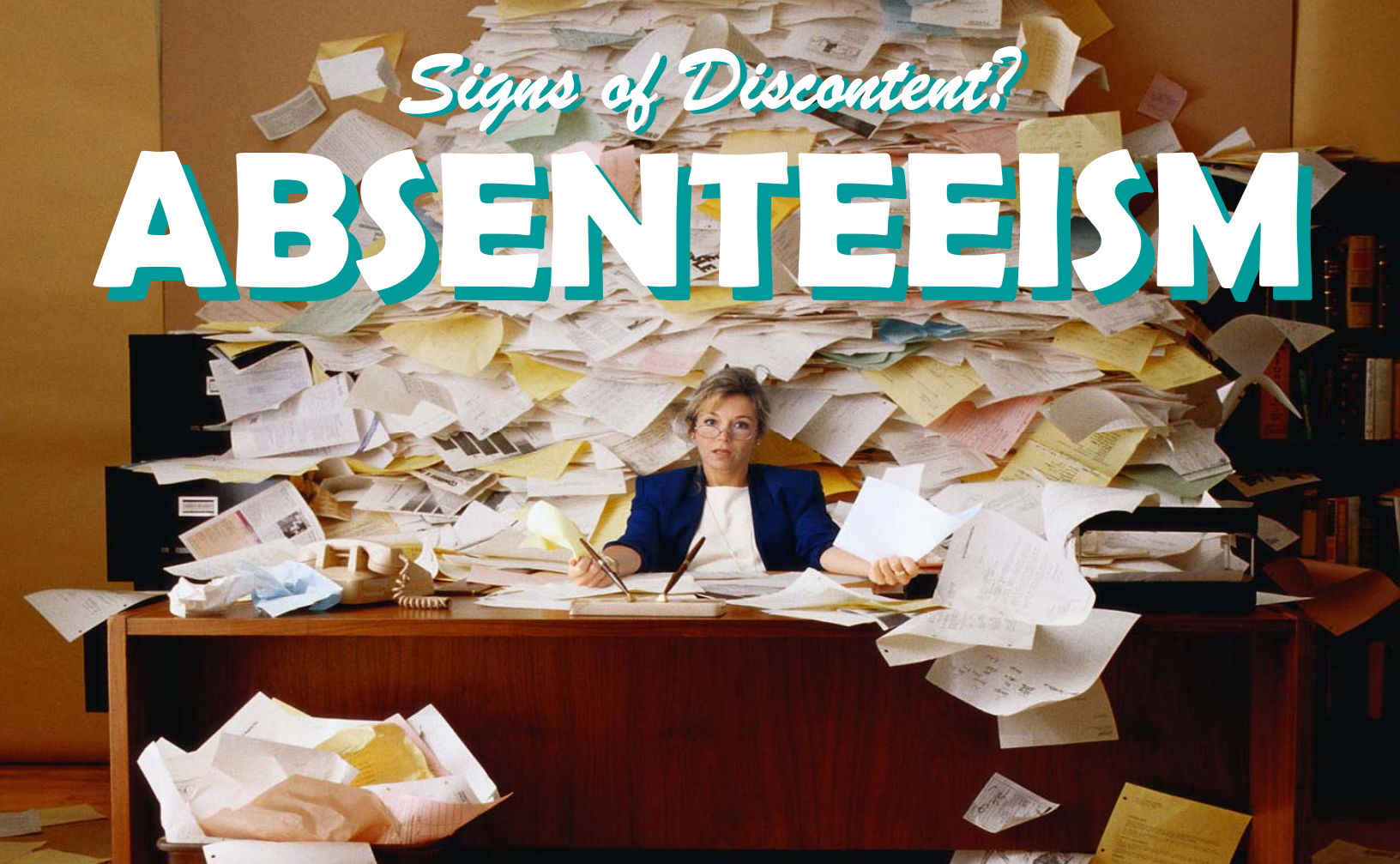


Signs of Discontent?

ABSENTEEISM



Everybody misses work at time for a variety of reasons. People get sick. So do their spouses and children. Sometimes there is a family crisis, or a babysitter simply fails to show up. But excessive absenteeism is another story. When an employee misses work, has a lame excuse each time and really doesn't seem to care, you have a problem. How can you find out what's really going on so you can do something about it?

Reasons For Absenteeism

There can be many reasons. The errant employee may simply dislike his job. Perhaps he finds the work dull and the environment unpleasant. To top it all, he may feel totally unappreciated.

Others maybe dedicated but faced with special problems. One may suffer from a chronic illness. Another may be recovering from an accident, while someone else suffers from a disability.

You may already know about some of those situations, but there are other, less visible problems that you need to recognize, too.

Frequent Monday absences may signal "lost weekends" on the part of a heavy drinker or user of other drugs. But another worker with an equally poor

attendance record may be suffering from depression, or struggling to cope with a recent death, a divorce or serious money problems. Any of these things can be so disruptive that it spills over into the workplace.

Solutions

It's your job to sort out these problems and see that your absentee workers get back on the right track. If some don't like their jobs, you're lucky. Of all the problems mentioned here, that's the one over which you're likely to have the most control.

Ask them why they're unhappy. Can you help improve working conditions? Do the employees need more positive feedback? Do they want more money? Together, you can get goals to assure that a lagging worker will pick ups team and, in turn, will be rewarded for it.

It's also a perfect time to let your unhappy employee know that he or she is appreciated, after all.

Employees with chronic health problems may benefit from a referral to the employee assistance program (EAP). If they are preoccupied with the idea tat they're ill, even small physical complaints may loom large in their

minds. They can benefit from good medical care or from counseling to help them regain perspective. Again, you can help by making them feel valued at work.

Denial is a roadblock that keeps people from seeking help for chemical dependency. Sometimes the worker's family, friends and even you, as the boss, may share in that denial. If you suspect such problems, it's best to refer your employee to the EAP. With professional counseling, he or she can gain new self-esteem and become a more productive worker.

If there are other problems at home, the EAP can help resolve many of them. You can take time to listen, but the actual help will have to come from a professional.

You can show your employees that you value them in the company and want to help resolve these problems. But you must also keep them aware of job performance and tell them how it needs to improve.