

Featured EAP: Next-Gen Approach

Editor's note: This article marks the debut of "Featured EAP", a new feature appearing periodically in *Employee Assistance Report (EAR)* that will examine some of the innovations occurring in the employee assistance field. The initial article takes a look at how Personal Assistance Services (PAS) in St. Louis, MO, is using a Next-Gen approach to EAP to impact engagement, resilience, and performance across today's workforce. The following is an edited excerpt from a conversation *EAR* had with Susan Skinner, founder, CEO, and president of PAS.

EAR: What is the main difference(s) between a Next-Gen Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and a typical EAP, and why does a customer client need a Next-Gen EAP?

SS: Next-Gen EAPs have the tools and body of evidence to do a much better job of identifying and treating current-day problems. However, as EA professionals know all too well, the prevailing choice of many employers is to simply use the least expensive or even "free" EAP platform (embedded in the premiums of another product).

By design, these EAP services are often restricted to brief telephonic support or possibly a few in-person counseling sessions, *if needed*, plus web-based search and self-help tools. These types of EAP platforms only perpetuate the alienation, loneliness, and isolation that contribute to the emotional and social distress of today's workforce.

Conversely, Next-Gen (which is really more like the Original Gen for those of us that have been in the field for a few decades) is all about impacting lives with extensive, personally-arranged services and generating measurable results at the employee and organi-

zational level. Instead of doing less to keep prices low, Next-Gen EAPs cost more money but also deliver more value via return on investment.

EAR: As I understand it, there are five main components of a Next-Gen EAP. What are some of the key points of each?

SS: That is correct. The chart on page 2 illustrates the differences in these components between a typical, and a Next-Gen EAP.

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EAR: *Would I be correct in assuming these five components could be expected to remain basically the same regardless of the particular EAP wishing to implement a Next-Gen approach? How has PAS altered its services to reflect a Next-Gen approach?*

SS: Yes, any EAP can take a Next-Gen approach but they can't do it profitably at the prevailing market pricing. That means the field needs to unite, educate purchasers and charge more for demonstrated value.

PAS has not changed its service approach over the years but we certainly have added new services to meet the changing needs of the workforce. We have always operated as a higher-end, higher-cost, higher-impact partner focused on EAP's roots of caring for people soul-to-soul.

We have amplified our focus on proactive and continuous engagement and leveraged technology to extend ease of access and to create greater operational efficiencies.

EAR: *What can you tell us about the status of PAS implementation of Next-Gen EAP for its members, managers, and purchasers?*

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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

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Typical EAP

Reactive. Utilized only when issues significantly surface (at the "point of personal need") often after the problems have been long-festering.

Vendor-Centered Access. Automated or customer service representative direction to website resources or list of network counselors to contact for self-scheduling.

Uses Technology for website-based information and provider self-search, CBT and symptom-tracking apps.

EAP utilization metrics based on touchpoints (calls or emails to request services, web page visits, training participants, downloaded articles) and contacts with a licensed professional.

Initial roll-out campaign with annual EAP reminders, passive approach to communication and promotion of EAP. Low levels of meaningful engagement and utilization.

Next-Gen EAP

Proactive. Focuses on prevention/early intervention that improves job performance, physical health and personal well-being.

Participant-Centered Access. Multiple means of access to licensed counselors and coaches (voice, text, chat, tele-video), Personally arranged and confirmed care.

Leverages Technology to reduce employee hesitancy to connect; Apps are integrated with synchronous and asynchronous access to EAP counselors.

Outcomes metrics based on level of engagement, cases of service with licensed professionals, validated symptom and quality of life improvement, increased job productivity, averted claims to medical plan.

Continuous internal and external integration within human capital initiatives. High levels of engagement, integration with other benefits and services offered by employer.

SS: Changing job market trends and cultural shifts have resulted in a widespread human capital crisis – namely, too few candidates to fill the growing need for talent. The most successful organizations view talent attraction, engagement, and retention as one of their key business initiatives. It is these types of organizations and their consultative benefits advisors that are most attracted to a Next-Gen approach.

EAR: Finally, what advice would you have for an EAP wishing to depart from the “same old” way of doing things and utilizing a Next-Gen approach to serving customers in the 21st century?

SS: I think the best way to answer this question is to simply state that all EAPs have their roots in caring for people. However, significantly scaled back “EAP” products have been accepted by more and more employers. Benefits consultants often advise their clients to take the lowest cost EAP option possible to further their goal of overall year-over-year benefit premium cost containment.

And so, by its very design, this low-impact version of EAP doesn’t cost much, doesn’t do much, isn’t used much, and therefore isn’t valued much.

EAP did not begin as an employee benefit – it began as an organizational human capital strategy. The field has been reduced to a “how cheap can we do it” mentality. Next-Gen EAP is all about reversing that price-focused trend and educating purchasers on the value of taking very good care of their people and measurably improving their quality of life and work performance. ■

Resources

🔗 **JobReferences.com.** While the need for a good job reference should be a “given”, many job seekers are misinformed about how job reference vetting really works, say reference experts. Learn more at <https://www.jobreferences.com/>.

🔗 **Emergencies: A Matter of When, Not If,** the first of two articles written by Jack Towarnicky of the Plan Sponsor Council, outlines actions employers can readily take to assist their employees along with other longer-term consideration. Check out <https://www.psca.org/download/emergencies-a-matter-of-when-not-if>. ■



Editor's Notebook

Behind the times. Stuck in a rut.

No doubt you are familiar with some of the not-so-complimentary comments that some people have made about the employee assistance field.

But what about some of the EAPs that ARE successfully rolling out new programs, or incorporating a different innovation of some kind? In other words, what are some of your “thinking outside the box” peers up to?

This month’s cover story marks the debut of a new feature that will take a look at some of the changes occurring in the EA field – innovations such as those occurring at Personal Assistance Services (PAS), a St. Louis-based EAP that is using a modern, “next-gen” approach to employee assistance.

We want to hear more “feel good” stories like these about what *your EAP* is doing to: for instance, introduce new technologies to appeal to employees who aren’t interested in traditional face-to-face discussions. *Just about anything*, really, that demonstrates what *your EAP* is doing to “go above and beyond” the norm for its clients in today’s rapidly changing, technological workforce. Send me an email, or give me a call, and let’s talk! It’d be great publicity for your EAP!

With the September issue, we introduced a new method of accessing this newsletter: Instead of having to rely on links sent via email, by logging on to our website, www.writeitrightllc.com readers are now able to access not only the current *EAR*, but also past issues for those who may be missing a newsletter. You DO need to create a login and password. Give us a call or email with any questions or concerns!

In a brief look ahead, some interesting cover stories we have on tap include the *cannabis dilemma*, *spirituality in the workplace*, and the *ATIP approach to trauma response*. ■

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Winning Ways to Make an Unbeatable First Impression

By Vicky Oliver

Selling yourself to potential employers (and clients) is nerve wracking even for the most extroverted applicants. Just like speed dating, where strangers make snap decisions on your “date-ability,” employers will decide your hire-ability in less time than it takes to walk around the block. With both, first impressions are key.

Use these five winning strategies for making an unbeatable first impression:

1. Put on your pleasant face. Look around in any group of people and you’re more likely to find more frowns and furrowed brows than pleasant and open expressions. We’re no longer socialized for face-to-face conversations and don’t often realize that our default demeanor may appear uninviting. Be hyper-aware that your facial expression will either attract others to listen to your ideas, or will close the door on interaction.

2. Dress professionally. Your choice of attire sends a message, and showing up in a well-pressed business outfit will make a positive impression. Even when the dress code of the company is informal, you’re better off erring on the side of professional attire. Examine cuffs for any frays and be sure to brush off pet hair.

3. Curate your online presence. Many of today’s hiring managers look up job candidates on social media networking sites to learn more about them. The online impression you make has become as important – if not more so – than a word-of-mouth referral or an in-person impression. Keep your LinkedIn profile updated, and make sure your online photo doesn’t stray too far from your true self.

4. Be aware of body language. From a limp handshake to slumped posture, employers read a great deal into people’s character from their body language. Be sure to look interviewers and prospective clients in the eye when you speak to add punch to your point. Whatever you do, don’t look at the floor or over your interviewer’s head. You’ll lose your audience like a dropped call.

5. Think of the interview as a back-and-forth conversation. Fielding interview questions adeptly is one-part



preparation and one-part improvisation. Listen carefully to the question, then take enough time to give a cohesive answer while being careful not to ramble on. Your answers will stand out when you can tie them to an applicable anecdote. For example, if asked how you deal with setbacks, skip the adjectives and share the story about having to keep your cool while changing a flat tire on your way to an interview. ■

*Vicky Oliver is a leading career development expert and the multi-best-selling author of five books, including **301 Smart Answers to Tough Interview Questions** (Sourcebooks 2005). For more information, visit vickyoliver.com.*

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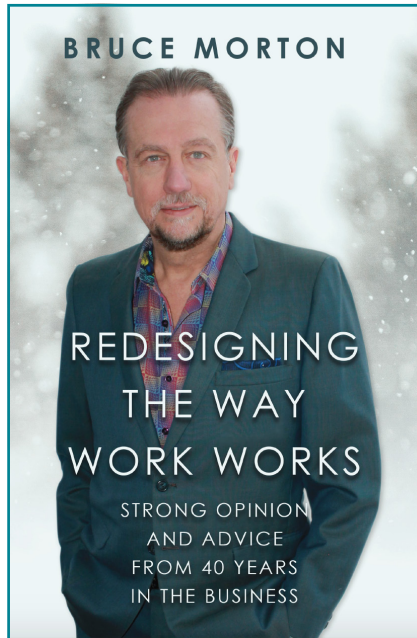
**EMPLOYEE
ASSISTANCE
REPORT**

Redesigning the Way Work Works

Allegis Global Solutions (AGS), a leading provider of global talent acquisition and workforce solutions, is transforming the way work gets done. Head of Strategy Bruce Morton has been a driver behind transformative efforts at AGS and he has written a book based on his 40 years of experience in the marketplace. *Redesigning the Way Work Works*, addresses the changing expectations of HR and Procurement professionals to find, hire, and retain the best talent in the marketplace and challenges them to rethink the way they get work done.

Are you ready for the future of work? Organizational readiness is the new competitive advantage.

According to Morton, to get there, organizations must deconstruct the way work gets done “so we



can reconstruct a partnership between what must be done, who can best do it, and how.”

“Bruce Morton brings a frank and often humorous perspective to show us how modern business can and should operate when it comes to matching existing talent to work or tasks,” writes Craig Fisher, Global Head of Marketing at AGS. “We can no longer ignore the fact that the way we work is rapidly shifting and the talent we employ has options so the art of engaging them and continuously pairing them with the right roles and teams needs constant attention. This book will be an eye-opener for many and is a joy to read.” ■

Clinical Perspective

Study Supports Therapy over Meds

A recent study published in *JAMA Psychiatry* that compared various treatments for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) concluded that while psychotherapy and medications are comparable in the short term, a psychotherapy-based approach is superior to medication in the long term.

The findings support the conclusions of many professional guidelines, which recommend psychotherapy as the primary treatment for PTSD, with medications as a secondary option. That said, the analysis was based on only 12 studies—many with a small number of participants—which highlights the need for more clinical studies of patients with PTSD.

“Our results confirm the recommendations of many treatment guidelines—that psychotherapeutic treatments should be preferred as first-line treatments,” the authors wrote. “We found limited evidence to recom-

mend pharmacological treatments as monotherapies, when sustained and long-term symptom improvement is intended.”

However, the authors also cautioned that only six of the 12 included studies had long-term data, so the conclusions are somewhat constrained.

Researchers pointed out that smaller-scale trials can help identify the efficacy of novel treatments when compared with a placebo. However, larger trials are needed for precision studies; in other words, determining if a patient is more likely to benefit from psychotherapy or an antidepressant.

They also noted that combining all psychotherapies and all medications into two large pools complicates any interpretation about which approach is superior. ■

Additional source: “Psychiatric News”, American Psychiatric Association.

The Role of Genetics in Suicide

Increasing rates of suicide constitute a major threat to public health worldwide. The latest national epidemiological survey of U.S. adults revealed a recent overall increase in suicide attempts among those with less formal education and those with depressive and anxiety disorders, among other groups.

As well as imposing an enormous emotional burden on families and communities, suicide attempts carry a high risk of mortality and often lead to high costs, both directly and indirectly. Faced with this increasing burden of suicidal behavior, researchers have redoubled their efforts to explain risk factors and preventive strategies for suicide.

Genetic contributions to suicidal behavior have long been suspected on the basis of family, twin, and adoption studies. However, genome-wide association studies (GWAS), which have successfully detected numerous genetic markers for a variety of psychiatric and other common illnesses, have until now failed to find statistically significant markers for suicide.

The results represent an important step forward in the genetics of suicidal behavior. In people with bipolar disorder, suicide attempts were associated in a small but significant way with a common genetic marker on chromosome 4.

Although this marker does not immediately implicate any particular genes, the marker also reached genome-wide significance in the meta-analysis of suicide attempts in mood disorders, suggesting that it is picking up something that bipolar disorder and major depression have in common, perhaps depressive symptoms.

“This study is the first to show that across disorders, suicide attempters carry a greater burden of depression risk alleles rather than simply a higher genetic liability for the psychiatric disorder they are affected by,” wrote the study authors. ■

Source: American Journal of Psychiatry. The entire article can be viewed here <https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ajp.2019.19060613>.

Workplace Survey

Just What Causes Burnout?

A new survey from Accountemps showed that 96% of all senior managers believe their teams experience various degrees of burnout. But according to Accountemps, the two groups disagreed on the causes of burnout. Employees ranked *constant interruptions* as the top cause, while senior managers said *unmanageable workloads* were the primary issue.

Managers' Rankings

Managers also said 2) career stagnation, 3) constant interruptions, 4) toxic culture and 5) dated technology contribute to burnout, in that order.

Workers' Rankings

Workers, however, ordered the causes of burnout as 2) career stagnation, 3) unmanageable workload, 4) toxic culture and 5) dated technology.

The survey also found that, on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the highest level of burnout, 1 in 5 managerial respondents rated their team's burnout as an eight or higher. For workers, the average burnout level was five, but more than a quarter of respondents rated their burnout as falling between eight and 10.

Summary

“Managers need to identify responsibilities that can be reassigned or put on hold,” Accountemps senior executive director Michael Steinitz said in a news release. “They can also bring in temporary professionals to alleviate heavy workloads, support day-to-day needs and assist with projects requiring specialized skills. Companies that don't take steps to prevent employee burnout could drive top performers away and find themselves in a bigger pinch.” ■

Additional source: HR Dive.

Recovery from ID Theft

By David Moakler

Dear EAP reader: While *any* interruption to an employee's work day about his or her financial matters can be unsettling, due to its highly personal nature perhaps none is more disturbing than identity theft. And yet, identity theft is not unusual. Each year, *over 8 million* people have their lives turned upside down due to identity theft.

About Identity Theft

Just what is identity theft? According to consumer.gov identity theft “happens when someone uses information about you without your permission.” The thief could use your name and address, credit card or bank account numbers, Social Security number, and/or medical insurance account numbers.

Why is identity theft such a big deal? Consumer.gov states that, “You will be responsible for what the thief does while using your personal information. You might have to pay for what the thief buys. This is true even if you do not know about the bills.”

- A thief might get a credit card using your name.
- He changes the address.
- The bills go to him, but he never pays them.
- That means the credit card company thinks *you* are not paying the bills.
- That will hurt *your* credit.

Identity Theft: The Odds are NOT in Your Favor!

Think identity theft can't happen to you or a loved one? Think again! According to the blog on identityforce.com:

- In 2017, 66.4 percent of consumers became victims of identity fraud — that's about **1 in 15** people.
- One in five victims of identity theft have experienced it **more than once**.
- Over 1 million **children** in the U.S. were victims of identity theft in 2017, costing families \$540 million in out-of-pocket expenses.
- *Of particular note to the EAP, emotional distress* is reported by 77.3 percent of identity theft victims.



In other words, if your chances of winning the lottery were 1 in 15, like the odds of being an ID theft victim, we'd all have family, friends, and colleagues who are millionaires!

ID Theft Hotline

The ID Theft Recovery Hotline is **877-283-8576**.

This agency will help victims in all aspects of getting back their good name.

Helplines EAPs can Trust

The vetting process of the service providers we offer is extensive and ongoing. Before we accept a provider into the network, we look into their background, service reputation, and how their fees and procedures stand up against “best practices” set forth in their industry.

*CareConnect reminds EAPs that when they are contacted by financially troubled employees, they can give out these trusted helplines.**

Summary

When employees need a helping hand, troubled workers need to know that trusted assistance is just a phone call away. ■

David Moakler is the Executive Director of CareConnect USA.

**Editor's note: A list of the CareConnect numbers was provided in the April Employee Assistance Report and can also be found at www.careconnectusa.org.*

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Volunteer – but do it Right!

If you want to feel good, volunteer,” says Lisa Sellman, owner of a pet care business and volunteer. “I realize that many of us are wrapped up with work and family, but I also know that if you do it right, volunteering can be a great stress reliever and source of joy in your life.”

The key, she says, is to let passion be your guide when you decide to volunteer. Sellman’s tips include:

❖ **Choose wisely.** Many people get “roped into” volunteering for an organization because their boss is involved with the charity or a family member is working on a community project. That can be rewarding,

but it’s more important to find what *you* love, and direct those energies into an organization that matches those passions. For instance, if you’re an animal lover, volunteer for a shelter or wildlife rescue mission.

❖ **Watch your schedule.** Don’t let volunteer projects run your life. Most organizations will take as much time as you offer them, but that will leave most people burned out! If you only have a spare hour or two each week, they’ll accept that, too. Volunteering doesn’t have to take over your life. Do it right, and it’ll *add* more to your life than it takes *from* your calendar. ■

Workplace Survey

Is 9-to-5 a Thing of the Past?

A typical work day historically involved eight consecutive hours of effort for full-time workers, but today, most don’t stop working when the clock hits 5 p.m. According to a survey from CareerBuilder, nearly 3 in 5 workers (59%) believe the traditional 9-to-5 work day is a thing of the past. Forty-five percent of workers say they complete work outside of office hours; and 49% say they check or answer emails when they leave work.

The national survey was conducted online by Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder and included a representative sample of 3,244 full-time workers in the private sector across industries and company sizes.

“While smartphones and other technology allow us to remain connected to the office outside of normal business hours, it may not always be a good thing as workers are having trouble disconnecting from their jobs,” said Rosemary Haefner, chief human resources officer for CareerBuilder. “Not surprisingly, younger workers ‘attached to their mobile devices’ are more likely to work and check emails past business hours, while older workers feel less pressure to check-in after they have put in a full day of work.” ■

In the News

EAPA Names Award Winners

Each year the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) recognizes and celebrates the achievement of members, individuals and organizations who have distinguished themselves through their work and leadership in the EA profession.

At the EAPA 2019 Conference and EXPO in St. Louis, Jim Nestor will receive the Lifetime Achievement Award, which honors an EAPA member who has made a significant contribution to EAPA and the EA profession over an extended period of time.

Other award recipients this year include: Dirk Antonissen (Global EA Champion), First Sun EAP (Excellence in Business Development), the New York City EAPA Chapter (Outstanding Chapter Award), Renu Khosla (Ross Von Wiegand Award) and the International Employee Assistance Digital Archive (Best Use of Technology in EAP), among others.

The awards will be presented on Thursday, Sept. 26, at the EAPA Annual Awards Reception. ■