

## ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*Profile Evaluations, Inc.*

**Question:** Is it a problem to maintain close personal friendships with people who are now your subordinates after you've been promoted from coworker to supervisor and, if it is, how do you break off these close personal friendships?

**Answer:** From our perspective, the degree to which this would become a problem is related to the type of supervisory position you've been promoted to.

In this regard, some centers have their first line supervisor structured as a "lead worker" position. In this type of position, supervision is limited primarily to answering questions and assisting with difficult calls or situations that may come up during the course of the shift. Although the first line supervisor may have some input regarding evaluating performance or scheduling or disciplinary actions, etc., these duties are basically the responsibility of the Director or Assistant Director. The job title may say "supervisor" but in reality the supervisor is the "first among equals". It would be our opinion that if you were promoted to this type of first line supervisory position maintaining existing friendships with now subordinates would not be a significant detriment to your ability to successfully handle the job responsibilities and therefore would probably not need to be addressed.

In other centers, however, the first line supervisor position is more the typical boss-subordinate situation. In this type of center, the first line supervisor does have responsibility for evaluating performance, setting schedules, taking disciplinary actions and so forth. If you were promoted to this type of supervisory position, maintaining friendships with now subordinates could lead to problems and could be a significant detriment to your ability to successfully handle the job responsibilities. Suppose you had to write up your friend or give them a less than satisfactory performance review. Could you do it? How about scheduling or special duty assignments? Would you subconsciously favor your friends and/or would your friends expect special treatment? Some people have the strength of personality to be an objective supervisor and still maintain a close, personal friendship - but not many. You'll have to decide for yourself what category you fall in.

As to how exactly to break off close personal friendships, our suggestion is to do it gradually and subtly. Gradually start backing off from socializing on a continuing basis while at the same time start demonstrating the qualities of an effective leader. In other words, still be friendly but approach the relationship in a more professional manner.

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**Question:** How can you test a candidate's "common sense"?

**Answer:** Basically by taking the emphasis off "common sense" and placing it on decision making/problem-solving abilities. Unfortunately as it relates to "common sense", there is no universal understanding of this term. How it is interpreted depends primarily on the background, the previous experience and the basic mindset of each individual. What appears to be "common sense" to one person may seem totally illogical to another! So, from a testing standpoint, "common sense" is very difficult to measure. Decision making/problem-solving abilities, on the other hand, are measurable through several different approaches including written tests, simulations and personal interviews. It would be our suggestion that you use the personal interview as your method for evaluating decision making/problem-solving abilities. In interpreting the candidate's responses to your questions, consider not only the decision made but also the process the candidate took to make the decision and have the Interviewing Committee decide by consensus if the process was reasonable (i.e., "sensible") given the situation described.

*(PEI's selection program – the Employee Evaluation Program (EEP) includes in its test battery a mental ability instrument that measures a candidate's learning ability and problem-solving ability. The EEP also includes PEI's Complete Employee Interviewing and Hiring Kit that contains several behavior-based interview questions relating to decision making/problem-solving abilities. Check out our "Employee Selection (EEP)" page for more information).*

**Question:** What is the primary focus in an EEP Communications Supervisor selection process and how do you make the final promotional decision?

**Answer:** In the EEP Communications Supervisor selection process the primary focus is on the candidate's supervisory abilities. The EEP Test Battery provides some of the information (i.e., personality characteristics, problem solving abilities, etc.); the EEP interviewing process provides the balance of the information. You can think of the EEP Communications Supervisor selection process like a mini assessment center where you test to determine inherent skills and abilities and then interview to reinforce the testing results and delve deeper into how the candidate would handle typical supervisory situations.

Final promotional decisions should be based on a combination of the following information:

- The results of the EEP testing process;
- The results of the EEP interviewing process; and
- Past performance evaluations of the candidate's job-related behavior and technical knowledge.

Successful candidates should demonstrate through all of the information gathered (i.e., testing, interviewing and past performance) good interpersonal skills; good leadership and decision making/problem-solving abilities, a commitment to the center and center management, a good understanding of center policies and procedures and strong technical knowledge and expertise.

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**Question:** Do you feel it is imperative that the Communications Director be able to step in at any given time and do the job of a telecommunicator effectively? Please explain the answer.

**Answer:** We feel it is imperative in a small center and desirable in a medium to large center. Our opinion is based on two factors – 1) the need for all members of the communications center “team” to be capable of assisting in times of extreme emergency and, 2) issues relating to leadership skills and motivation and morale in the center.

As to the second factor, an effective Communications Director demonstrates good leadership skills. One of the skills of good leadership is the ability and willingness to “roll up your sleeves and jump in to help” when the need arises. Morale and motivation is significantly enhanced when employees know that their “leader” is an individual who respects them and has the ability and willingness to assist and support them when faced with difficult circumstances.

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**Question:** We have a simulator we use in training. Can we also use this as a practical test in our entry-level selection process?

**Answer:** To comply with federal guidelines, if the purpose of the simulator is to train skills and abilities which the employee is expected to learn on the job, it may not be used as a screening tool in the selection process. Any pre-employment selection process used must be supported by validity documentation. Practical testing could be supported by content validity which requires an employer to demonstrate that the content of a test is representative of the content of the job. However, the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection (1978) states that “Content validity is...not an appropriate strategy when the selection procedure involves knowledge, skills or abilities which an employee will be expected to learn on the job.” [Sec. 14C(1), p.38302]. So the bottom line answer is, if it's designed and used as a training tool, it is not appropriate as a pre-employment selection tool.