

CONNECTIONS INC

Employee & Family Solutions | Employee Assistance Programs

Vol. 26 #2

A Message from Matt Start Early

Whether talking about our health, savings, or having difficult performance conversations, start early. Problems tend to compound when we put them off until next week, next month, or even next year. Take small steps towards healthier living, save a little each week, and start performance conversations early. Addressing small problems before they become big problems, saves you time and energy in the future. Your future self will thank you



MATT VISSER, CEO
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The EAP is designed to help people work through these issues. You can show support to your employees and combat presenteeism by ensuring they know about these free and confidential resources. Encourage them to prioritize their mental health!

“Life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent of how I react to it.”
-Charles Swindoll



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MAIN TOPIC: THE MANAGER CRISIS

The crisis facing today’s managers isn’t just another HR challenge – it’s a breaking point. In just one year, manager engagement dropped from 30% to 27%, the steepest decline of any employee group. Young managers under 35 saw a 5% fall, while women experienced a 7% drop. These numbers paint a clear picture: the core of organizational leadership is under strain.

This matters because managers influence nearly 70% of the factors that drive team engagement. When they disengage, the ripple effects spread quickly – lower productivity, weakened morale, and less resilient teams.

Compounding the issue, managers are facing both shrinking roles and rising expectations. With 82% of boards anticipating workforce reductions due to AI within three years, middle managers are often the first positions targeted. Yet those who remain must guide teams through the very transformations driving these cuts. Add in the collapse of employee trust—from 46% in 2022 to just 29% in 2024—and managers are expected to lead change in an environment where confidence in them is eroding.

To turn this around, organizations must treat manager wellbeing as essential infrastructure. And that starts with practical, actionable support:

- Conduct a manager time audit to uncover and eliminate unnecessary administrative burdens.
- Cut meeting load by 25%, freeing space for focused, meaningful work.
- Launch manager peer support circles to reduce isolation and share problem-solving.
- Monitor manager engagement: Include a specific manager engagement question in your next pulse survey and track it separately from overall engagement.
- Require baseline training before promotion to ensure new managers are set up for success, covering feedback delivery, difficult conversations, and team motivation.



Strong managers are the backbone of strong organizations. Investing in them is not optional—it’s mission critical.

Article published by The Human Capital Hub – modified and adapted by Matt Visser

Connections Inc. Employee Assistance Program’s mission is to provide holistic assistance products and services that support optimum productivity, team work and healthy community in the workplace.

Connections Inc. Employee Assistance Program mission statement since 1988

NOTEWORTHY

DETECTING ALCOHOL ABUSE IN THE WORKPLACE: THREE COMMON MISTAKES

Andy Visser

Employee JW, a forklift operator, arrived an hour late for his shift and was subjected to multiple breathalyzer tests that morning – all of which registered positive. JW shared that he had taken cough medicine last evening & again this morning. He was unaware that the cough medicine contained alcohol.

JW was dismissed for gross misconduct. Eventually a Labor Court upheld an arbitrator's decision that although JW had failed the breathalyzer tests, this was not sufficient to conclude that the employee had committed alcohol-related misconduct. The employer's serious and costly mistakes?

1. Failing to distinguish between...
 - a. Consuming at work.
 - b. Having alcohol in one's system at work.
 - c. Being under the influence of alcohol.
2. Relying only on breathalyzer tests to prove breach of an alcohol-related rule.
3. A blanket 'zero tolerance' policy.

Breathalyzer tests are a useful screening tool however stronger, reliable evidence must surface. A brief consult describing this situation with a licensed EAP professional or a trusted physician may have led to a much better business decision!

<https://labourwise.co.za/labour-articles/alcohol-abuse-workplace-three-most-common-mistakes>

Employee Assistance Growth in Japan

Andy Visser

First identified in the 1970s, the concept of karoshi (death from overwork) is frequently cited as contributing to a societal shift in Japan towards valuing mental health, reducing stigma, and an increasing use of EAPs. Japanese employers continue to grow in their understanding that healthy workers boost organizational productivity and business performance. Thus, Japanese EAPs are growing, using a mix of local specialists and international providers. Alongside this expansion is a steady rise in numbers of certified EA professionals (CEAPs) and adoption of global delivery standards.

In CONNECTIONS INC. Vol 26 #1, published earlier this year, we noted that EAP research expresses skepticism about AI's role in clinical treatment protocols. Major concerns remain focused on the limits of human connectedness and empathy in AI based interventions. As in other regions, the Japanese virtual counseling platforms and AI-driven analytic innovations are becoming more typical. In all settings and cultures, it will be important to make sure that solid empirical EAP research is distinguishing what role AI components play, in an EAP, to maximize productivity, teamwork, and leadership skills.

https://cdn.ymaws.com/eapassn.org/resource/resmgr/jea/eapa_journal_202512.pdf

Maynard's Corner

Maynard's Corner:

Connections Inc. offers three levels of programs. EAP +, Employee and Family Services with Behavior Risk Management, and Employee and Family Services only plan.

All three of these options include Critical Incident Site Debriefings (CISD). On site assistance when tragic events occur.

At the time of need, all it takes is a phone call. Not a rate negotiation or waiting for payment to be made before receiving needed services.

After all, we are here to help. That's what we do.



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NEXT ISSUE: U.S. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT DECLINES FROM 2020 PEAK

CONNECTIONS INC