

Effectively managing promotion and prevention-focused employees

When managing your practice employees, it can be extremely useful to recognize what drives their most effective performance. According to the concept of “Promotion or Prevention,” there are essentially two types of employees within your law office. The individual who focuses on the possibility of promotion and the person who works to prevent the negative consequences of failure. While both of these employees can prove valuable assets to your firm, they each come with their own distinct challenges.

The Promotion-Driven Worker

The promotion-driven employee is one who consistently demonstrates a high level of creativity and risk-taking. His ideas are fresh and forward-thinking, though his professionalism and/or appearance may leave something to be desired. He is more likely to take chances than other employees, which can be of great benefit when they pay off. But this impulsivity also creates a larger opportunity for mistakes and, unfortunately, the promotion-driven worker rarely has a Plan B to implement should his efforts prove unsuccessful.

The Prevention-Driven Worker

The prevention-driven employee is the individual whose work is based on a fear of breaking rules or making mistakes. Her work output tends to be pretty close to perfect, but other employees may find her extremely difficult to work around. Co-workers may complain that she micromanages them or creates an uncooperative work environment. This type of worker is

constantly consumed with the possibility of what may go wrong should she not perform perfectly. Her carefulness is not always beneficial though. Even when faced with a great opportunity, the prevention-driven employee would rather say no than risk making an unsuccessful choice.

Managing the Promotion and Prevention Worker

The ideal employee encompasses a mixture of drive based on both promotion and prevention. For the promotion-driven worker, while risk-taking is necessary for growth, it can also place your firm in a less-than-desirable situation if not done with aforethought and consideration. While you want to encourage ambition, you also need to foster responsible decision-making and appropriate professionalism. Acknowledge positive contributions, but also clearly communicate the potential consequences of improper actions. For the prevention-driven employee, reassurance is key. Explain that you welcome some calculated risks and unexpected opportunities for growth. You may also need to reiterate the confidence that you have in your staff as whole and request less micro-management of coworkers.

It may also prove beneficial to pair these workers together for a bit of peer-to-peer mentoring. Have them serve as co-counsels on a matter or collaborate on an office project. You may find that they complement one another, providing you with two ideal employees and maximum productivity.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a freelance writer with a passion for law. Through her business, The Legal Writing Studio, she helps legal professionals deliver effective written messages. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.