Effective Supervisory Practices

Fifth Edition

Edited by Michelle Poché Flaherty

ICMA PRESS

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Better Results Through Teamwork

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Effective Supervisory Practices

Fifth Edition

Better Results Through Teamwork

Edited by
Michelle Poché Flaherty
Director of Performance, Strategy, and Innovation for the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D.C., and formerly Manager of Organizational Development, city of Rockville, Maryland

ICMA PRESS

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Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

ICMA advances professional local government worldwide. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing professional management of local government. ICMA, the International City/County Management Association, provides member support; publications, data, and information; peer and results-oriented assistance; and training and professional development to more than 9,000 city, town, and county experts and other individuals and organizations throughout the world. The management decisions made by ICMA's members affect 185 million individuals living in thousands of communities, from small villages and towns to large metropolitan areas.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Effective Supervisory Practices: better results through teamwork.—5th ed. / edited by Michelle Poché Flaherty

p. cm.

Prev. ed.: c2005.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-87326-774-8 (alk. paper)

1. Local government—Personnel management. 2. Supervision of employees. 3. Team building. 4. Leading change. 5. Customer service. I. Poché Flaherty, Michelle. II. International City/County Management Association.

2013

Printed in the United States of America

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ABOUT THE EDITOR

Michelle Poché Flaherty served as the organizational development manager for the city of Rockville, Maryland, from 2006 to 2012. She was responsible for change management, leadership development, and performance improvement. She is also president and founder of City on a Hill Consulting, providing leadership development and executive coaching to elected officials and chief executives from all levels of government. Currently Flaherty holds the position of director of performance, strategy, and innovation for the Architect of the Capitol, in Washington, D.C.

With 20 years of public service experience, Flaherty has held senior executive positions in federal, state, and local governments. These include the positions of assistant county manager of Washoe County, Nevada; regional director for the California Technology, Trade, and Commerce Agency; and acting deputy chief of staff for the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Flaherty graduated with honors from the University of California at Santa Barbara and is a professionally trained coach. She has served on the California Coastal Commission and the Board of Examiners for the U.S. Baldrige Performance Excellence Program. Her leadership workshops are frequently featured at national conferences for ICMA and the National League of Cities.

PREFACE

Effective Supervisory Practices: Better Results Through Teamwork, Fifth Edition, is designed for local government supervisors—new or experienced—from the front line to the most senior managers. The leadership strategies explored throughout the book will benefit department directors and public administration executives as much as new or aspiring supervisors for whom a foundation of basics is introduced.

In addition to offering pragmatic recommendations about the day-to-day duties of a supervisor—such things as scheduling employees, managing projects, and maintaining employee records, this book offers guidance for addressing the more complex challenges all managers confront as they seek to effectively communicate, motivate, and model ethical decisions and lead a team.

Effective Supervisory Practices is informed by well-established best practices and the most current thinking from the field of business leadership. These concepts are presented within the unique environment of local government, where customer service is often related to enforcement of regulations and every team's work plan should align with community vision, character, and culture. Individually, each chapter is a reliable resource for a particular topic; taken as a whole, the book's recurring themes reinforce the greater benefits of transparency, integrity, leveraging diversity, and team empowerment with the goal of strengthening each reader's leadership instincts and effectiveness.

Changes from the previous edition include the addition of a chapter on harassment prevention and the inclusion of workplace security issues and employee wellness with the discussion of workplace safety. Three previous chapters specific to performance evaluation, grievances, and coaching/counseling/mentoring have been integrated into two chapters focused on accountability and performance evaluation. Strategic planning is more thoroughly explored in Chapter 4 and is aligned with goal setting for individuals as presented in the evaluating performance discussion of Chapter 11. The topic of ethics has been moved toward the front of the book as a foundational subject. Most chapters have been significantly revised for this fifth edition of *Effective Supervisory Practices.*

How to put this publication to good use

This book and its accompanying study guide, *Effective Supervisory Skill Building,* may be used in a variety of ways to support the range of organizational resources available in small towns or large cities and counties. Taken together, the book and study guide provide an effective curriculum for an internal training course, convenient resource for a book club, or self-guided development program and reference tool for an individual leader.

Training Program If your organization has a training professional on staff, or funding for consultant support, *Effective Supervisory Practices* serves as a convenient training textbook designed specifically for local government supervisors. The study guide provides the instructor and students alike with a full program of study, complete with exercises and an action plan for future learning and professional development, including an action strategies worksheet.

Book Club For organizations with limited resources, one of the simplest ways to deploy *Effective Supervisory Practices* to your supervisors quickly and economically is to form a book club. Consider assigning the chapters to senior managers who will take turns leading chapter discussions with supervisors from other departments as well as their own. Each chapter concludes with two or three case studies to support a group discussion. More ambitious discussion leaders will find additional ideas for exercises or supplemental information in the study guide. The book club format provides senior leaders with refresher training to strengthen their leadership habits and align their current management practices with the guidance introduced to employees in the text.

Self-Guided Development Absent a training program, *Effective Supervisory Practices* is a valuable resource for local government supervisors. Any employee reading the book on his or her own will find helpful guidance for management and leadership responsibilities in every chapter. The study guide offers optional “homework” to reinforce the learning in the primary text.

Reference Book Every local government supervisor should consider retaining a copy of *Effective Supervisory Practices* on his or her shelf to consult on an ongoing basis. Each chapter opens with a snapshot and closes with a checklist to allow a quick scan for helpful tips when confronted with the management challenges that arise with day-to-day supervision. In addition, the list of recommended resources at the back of the book provides the titles of leading articles and books with more information to support the topic of each chapter, as well as related websites with helpful information.

Thank you to the team of contributors

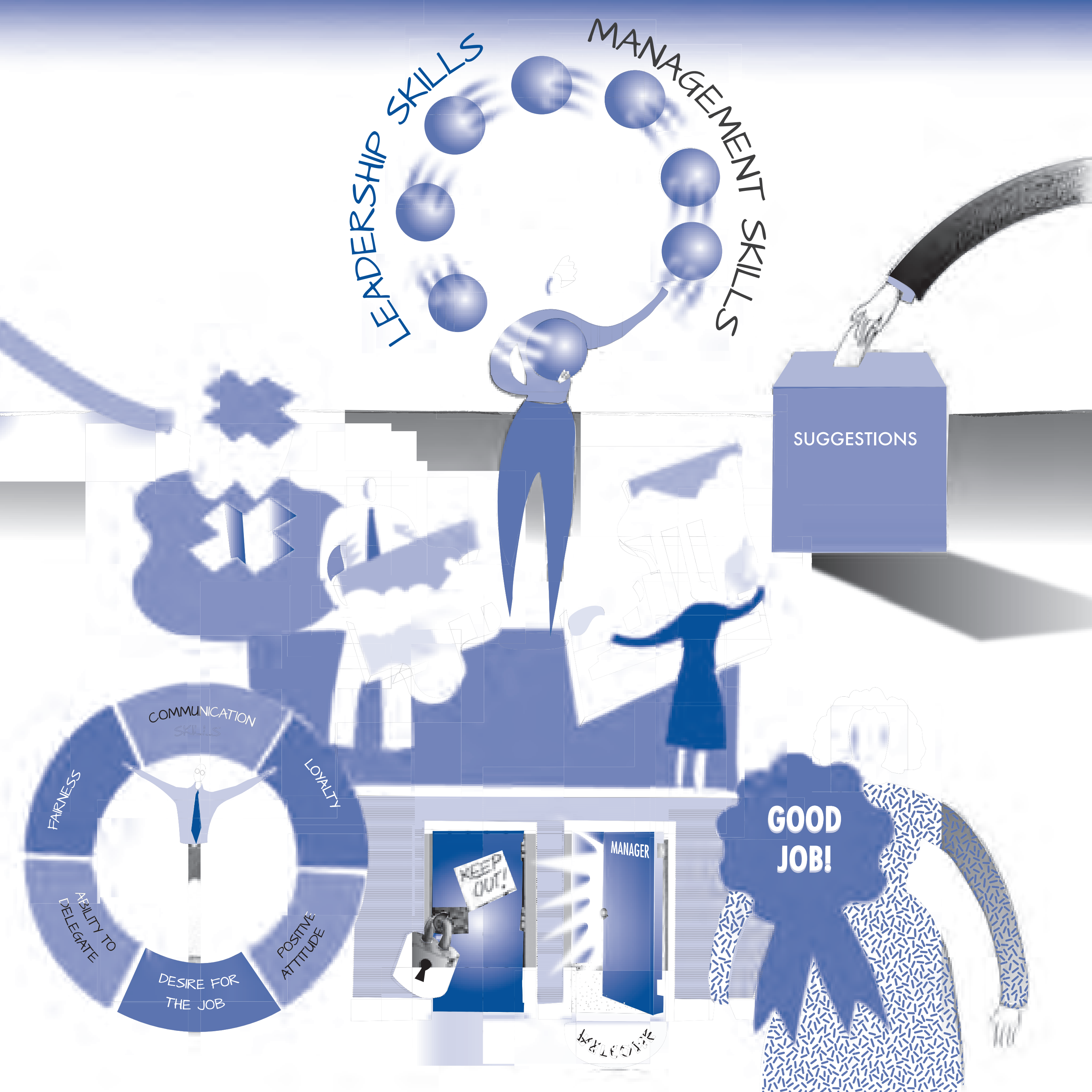
Special thanks are extended to the extraordinary authors who contributed revised chapters, and in some instances entirely new chapters, for the fifth edition of *Effective Supervisory Practices.* You'll find the contributors list at the end of the book, with a brief biography of each author and a link to their respective websites.

From ICMA Press I'd like to thank former Acquisitions Editor Jessica Kemp, who launched the project and helped shape its vision; former Creative Services Director Valerie Hepler and senior graphic designer Charles Mountain, who reshaped and modernized the look and feel of the book; Executive Assistant Nedra James and Copy Editor Janelle Julien, who provided ongoing support; and Publications Director Ann Mahoney, who managed the project and made the fifth edition possible. Graphic artist Gloria Marconi brought concepts to life through illustrations. Christine Becker, President, Christine Becker Associates, was particularly instrumental as the substantive editor of this edition and lead author of the accompanying study guide.

Discovering your potential

Effective Supervisory Practices was designed to serve not only as an effective reference tool and development guide but also as a source of support and inspiration. Every supervisor is faced with complex challenges that only human beings can present, and every supervisor has the capacity to be a great leader. The information and guidance provided in this text is dedicated to cultivating the potential of all readers to achieve great success with and through the teams they lead.

Michelle Poché Flaherty


LEADERSHIP SKILLS
MANAGEMENT SKILLS
SUGGESTIONS
COMMUNICATION SKILLS
LOYALTY
FAIRNESS
ABILITY TO DELEGATE
DESIRE FOR THE JOB
POSITIVE ATTITUDE
KEEP OUT!
MANAGER
GOOD JOB!

1

ROLES OF A SUPERVISOR

Laura H. Chalkley

Excellence is not an accomplishment.
It is a spirit, a never-ending process.

Lawrence M. Miller, author and leadership and management consultant

SNAPSHOT

This chapter provides a broad overview of the role of a supervisor in today's environment. Chapter objectives are to

- Introduce key challenges that today's public sector supervisors face
- Highlight major supervisory practices that provide a framework for understanding your roles as a supervisor
- Set the stage for the detailed information on effective supervisory practices that this book covers.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- What are the major responsibilities of a supervisor?
- What is the difference between leading and managing?
- For new supervisors, how do you move from peer to leader?
- How can you become an effective delegator?
- What are the characteristics of a successful supervisor?

The role of today's supervisor involves much more than getting the work of your unit done with and through your immediate team. As a supervisor, you are

- A *vital link* between the organization's vision and the day-to-day activities that contribute to making that vision a reality
- The *connection* between the leaders who establish strategic goals for the organization and the "boots on the ground" who implement those goals
- The *glue* that holds your team and your projects together, so that the work keeps moving regardless of political changes, tight budgets, changing priorities, staff reductions, and new demands from citizens.

Author Laura Chalkley appreciatively recognizes the contribution of Scot Wrighton, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

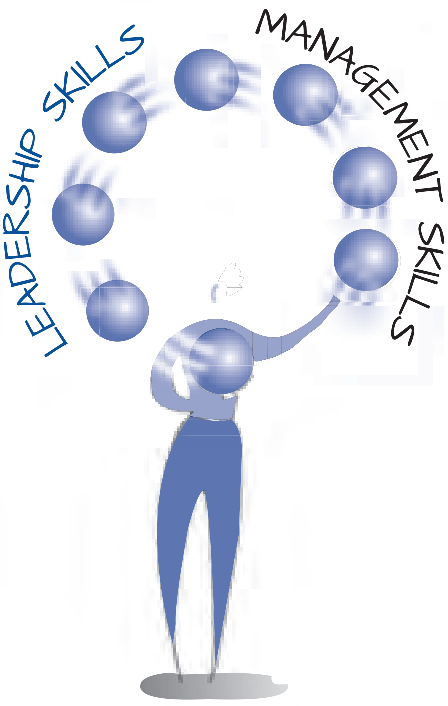
It is a tough and demanding job that requires a blend of technical, management, and people skills to achieve agreed-upon outcomes. Whether you are a veteran supervisor or fairly new to the job, you must leverage the expertise that helped you get the promotion in the first place while developing and refining new skills to get work done with and through a high-performing team.

Among the challenges that today's public sector supervisors face are

- A growing workload with shrinking resources
- Frequently changing priorities and needs
- A diverse and multicultural workforce that creates new dynamics and leadership responsibilities
- High expectations from citizens seeking the best return on their tax dollars.

This book provides a roadmap to guide you through the twists and turns of being an effective supervisor. It focuses on the broad dimensions of your job and the skills you will need to be successful. Your supervisory responsibilities include

- Ensuring your team produces high-quality work and delivers exceptional customer service
- Leading, developing, supporting, coaching, and motivating your team
- Holding team members accountable for both outcomes and behavior
- Being a constant and consistent model of ethical, responsible, and respectful behavior
- Communicating regularly both inside and outside the organization
- Setting the direction for your work unit and for individual team members to carry out the organization's mission, vision, and strategic goals
- Managing workloads—both your own and those of your team—to deliver on-time and on-budget outcomes



SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Think about these questions as you prepare to embark on the process to become a more effective supervisor:

1. What are your leadership and management strengths?
2. What areas of your leadership and management capacity do you think need further development?
3. How do your unit's mission, vision, and values connect to the organization's mission, vision, and values?
4. Do your team members understand clearly the organization's goals, the unit's goals, and their individual goals?
5. How do you support your team?
6. Do you include other teams in decision-making processes? How?
7. What is the biggest challenge you face right now as a supervisor?

- Creating and sustaining a safe, secure, healthy, and respectful organization
- Managing change and being ready for the challenges that lie ahead.

Your roles and tasks as a supervisor will vary greatly depending on the culture and climate of your organization, the functions for which you are responsible, the degree of autonomy you are granted, and your awareness of your strengths and areas needing development. The following supervisory practices are keys to your success:

- Understanding the difference between leading and managing
- Moving from being a peer to being a supervisor
- Building and sustaining a team
- Involving employees in decision making
- Delegating effectively
- Identifying and resolving problems
- Making jobs more interesting and rewarding
- Building relationships.

These skills and competencies will give you a firm foundation for meeting the challenges of your job. Later chapters provide more detailed information on how to put these essential skills to work.

Understanding the difference between leading and managing

Leading focuses on establishing direction, aligning employees based on the direction, and motivating and inspiring employees to succeed. Leading produces change, with an emphasis on achieving long-term outcomes. *Managing* focuses on short-term results. Managing involves planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, and control and problem-solving functions.[1]

Management keeps things running—that is, the day-to-day operations of an organization—and leadership looks to the future. Effective supervisors use both leadership and management skills.

In many organizations, the management responsibilities of supervisors are communicated by senior managers or through established processes. For example, all supervisors in your organization may be required to submit budget information by a certain deadline or use a specific form or system for keeping track of employee work schedules and time off.

Your leadership responsibilities are sometimes less obvious. Often, it is only when challenges arise that supervisors begin—out of necessity—to develop the leadership skills required to overcome those challenges. For example, small disagreements in a work group can grow into large interpersonal conflicts that may interfere with getting the work done. The immediate challenge may make it clear that you need to improve teamwork in your group for the sake of long-term effectiveness.

The intent of this book is to help you become the kind of leader who will build teamwork from the outset, so that conflicts are less likely to arise. Helping you develop leadership skills in communicating, team building, motivating employees, and inspiring continuous improvement are all part of the chapters that follow. You'll also learn more about the practical management skills and techniques for organizing, monitoring, and evaluating the work of your team.

When you develop your leadership skills along with your management skills, you become a leader, not a boss. This is a key distinction for supervisors of high-performing teams.

Moving from being a peer to being a supervisor

One of the toughest professional challenges you'll face if you are a new supervisor is becoming a boss to your former co-workers and friends. In the past, you may have commiserated occasionally with your peers about organizational changes or decisions. Now, your leadership responsibilities include making or explaining decisions, even when they are unpopular. While it is okay to disagree in private with your manager, once a decision is made you must support it. That means not saying, "Oh, well, senior management made the decision so I have no other choice but to implement it." Instead, if your employees raise concerns, you should listen carefully and support the decision, saying "I understand your feelings, but this decision has been made based on certain facts, and we need to support it." You will likely find your employees respect you more, not less, as a result of this kind of leadership.

If you were part of the team before becoming the supervisor and have close relationships within the group, you need to be open about how those relationships have changed. It can be difficult to separate friendship from work, and you need to be self-conscious about how you manage those relationships. For example, if you went to lunch every week with a colleague that you now supervise, continuing those regular lunches could be viewed as favoritism by other team members.

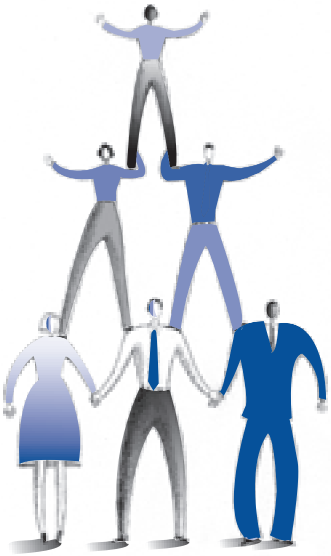
Becoming a successful supervisor requires making changes in your operating style to adapt to your new role and responsibilities. That includes

- Rethinking your relationships with work *friends* who are now your *subordinates*
- Letting go of the tasks you used to do and trusting your team to get those tasks done
- Keeping an eye on the big picture and longer-term goals.

You don't necessarily need to change your entire circle of friends. You do need to make sure personal friendships don't interfere with your supervisory responsibilities, which include the possibility of disciplining a good friend someday.

STEPS FOR MAKING A SMOOTH TRANSITION FROM PEER TO SUPERVISOR

1. Meet with your entire team soon after promotion.
2. Meet individually with each employee to discuss any concerns.
3. Ask how you can best support your employees during this transition.
4. Communicate clearly how much you respect the team members and look forward to working with each one as the team supervisor.
5. Take your time—and give your employees time—to grow accustomed to new roles.
6. Be consistent in how you deal with your team in your new role.



Building and sustaining a team

A team that reaches a high level of functioning is a group of people who respect and trust each other and know that they can rely on each other. When it comes to getting the job done, team members share the same goals, attitudes, and values. Team spirit grows out of a sense of pride and belonging. But a team must be built—and, once built, it must be maintained. The more effective you are in leading your team, the more successful you and your group will be in meeting unit and individual goals.

Leading a team can be a very rewarding experience, especially when you focus on building the skills needed to empower the team. With empowerment comes accountability. That means defining measures for team performance. Successful team leaders discuss what accountability and empowerment mean and then guide their teams through the work with a clear understanding of expected results.

Involving employees in decision making

Accomplishing work with and through other people requires engaging those people in decisions that contribute to team effectiveness. You should rely on your employees for their expertise and their ideas on how to get the job done effectively and efficiently. When employees are involved in making decisions, they are more likely to embrace those decisions and be committed to implementing them.

Effective supervisors encourage team members to participate in many decisions, including planning, goal setting, scheduling, and allocating resources. However, you are ultimately responsible for making decisions and for ensuring that your employees have the skills needed to make informed decisions.

Delegating effectively

A supervisor who delegates authority and accepts employees' decisions about how best to do their jobs is the leader of a team, rather than the boss of a work group. Delegating is essential to your supervisory success because it

- Helps employees feel valued
- Encourages creative and innovative problem solving
- Motivates employees to take full responsibility for their work
- Increases productivity and ensures that the work gets done
- Helps you manage your supervisory workload.

Delegation can improve performance by requiring the mastery of new skills by your employees. Some supervisors are reluctant to delegate, either because they are afraid that the person might make a mistake or because they are unwilling to let go of

ARE YOU AN EFFECTIVE DELEGATOR?

Test your delegation skills by answering *true* or *false* to the following statements:

1. It's easier if I just do it myself because it takes too long to explain to someone else how to do it.
2. I know how to get this task done better than anyone else.
3. If I delegate the task, that person will get credit, and my manager may think my employee is more qualified than I am.
4. My employees will think I'm lazy.
5. It's really my work so I shouldn't delegate it and make my boss mad.

If you answered *true* to one or more of these statements, think about your supervisory responsibilities to develop staff and get the work done through other people. Are you behaving like a supervisor if you are reluctant to delegate?

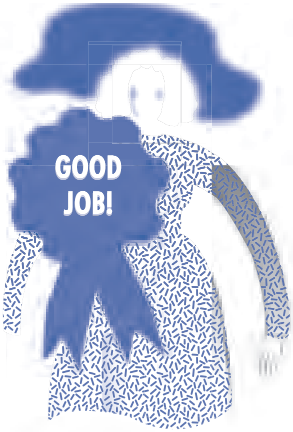
work they see as their own. To be an effective supervisor, you must focus on helping employees to reach their full potential—even if that means encouraging team members to become more skilled in some areas than you are.

There are four parts to successful delegation: *responsibility*, *authority*, *instruction,* and *accountability*.

- ***Responsibility*** You should give the employee full responsibility for the specific task you are delegating and clear goals to help him or her complete the task. However, even when you delegate responsibility for the task, you remain responsible for making sure the work is completed as required.
- ***Authority*** The employee must have sufficient authority to complete the task, and other team members should know that the employee has that authority. Giving responsibility without authority undermines the effective completion of work.
- ***Instruction*** To be successful, your employee needs specific instructions on the expectations and work processes and regular feedback to ensure successful completion. As part of the instruction process, you should welcome suggestions on new or more efficient ways of completing the task that might be different from how you would have done it.
- ***Accountability*** Finally, the team member must be held accountable for completing the task and achieving the desired outcome. Delegation gives employees a chance to learn new skills and improve their performance. This will not happen if there is no accountability for completing the task.

The following guidelines will help increase the effectiveness of your delegation:

- Be clear about what you want done. Communicate the goal, the deadline, and any rules and procedures. Be sure that the employee understands the instructions.
- Choose the right person for the right task. Remember that what you delegate is supposed to be challenging but not impossible.



- Give the team member time and space to complete the assignment. Don't hover, but make yourself available for course corrections along the way.
- Maintain open communication and check on progress, but do not try to rescue the person. Delegating work to your employees doesn't mean doing it for them.
- Hold team members accountable for their assigned tasks, and give them the necessary authority to complete them.
- Recognize the person's accomplishments.[2]

Successful delegation requires you to be creative and clear and to trust your employees. What they accomplish may astound you.

Identifying and resolving problems

Being able to identify and resolve problems that may interfere with successful achievement of unit goals is an essential supervisory skill. Your success as a problem solver requires that you be

- ***Approachable*** so that employees and colleagues are willing to talk to you when they need help or are facing unexpected obstacles
- ***Connected*** to work progress so that you can constantly evaluate successes, concerns, and potential risks within the context of your team's mission, goals, and outcomes
- ***Alert*** to potential issues and risks so that you can coach employees through bumps before they grow into serious problems
- ***Open*** to changes in work processes or strategies so that you can manage challenges
- ***Aware*** of trends or patterns that may indicate a potential problem.

Making jobs more interesting and rewarding

Effective supervisors are willing to redesign jobs to make them more interesting and challenging. Although it is often assumed that what workers want most from their jobs is more money, studies have shown that employees also want more control over their work.[3]

Factors that make jobs more interesting and lead to employee satisfaction include

- Opportunities to develop in visible and desirable ways, including taking on more responsibility and new challenges
- A strong fit that matches job responsibilities with the employee's strongest skills and personal interests
- Job variety that keeps employees interested in their work and makes them feel important
- The opportunity to work independently with minimal supervision
- Access to the latest technology—both to increase job productivity and to develop new skills
- A healthy work-life balance, including flexible work schedules whenever possible.[4]

Putting time and effort into enriching or redesigning employees' jobs and helping employees balance life goals with job expectations is likely to be rewarded with higher morale, increased productivity, better work quality, lower turnover, and less absenteeism.

Many local governments offer alternative work schedules—telecommuting, flexible hours, and compressed work weeks—to meet the diverse needs of employees. You should be aware of these opportunities and support employee preferences when they can be accommodated without reducing productivity.

Building relationships

Building a broad base of support among key stakeholders to achieve desired outcomes and working collaboratively within and across organizational boundaries enables you to better support your employees and achieve division goals. While it can seem daunting to try to connect all interested parties to your work, building relationships is an important part of your supervisory job. Incorporate relationship building into your daily work. In the long run, investing in relationships both inside and outside the organization will usually produce better outcomes.

For example, when you are responsible for implementing a new process, you might pull together a group of internal staff from other affected departments to discuss options and approaches. Depending on the scope of the process and your

authority, you also might reach out to a sample of citizens to seek their ideas. Getting input before something is implemented can save time, money, and frustration.

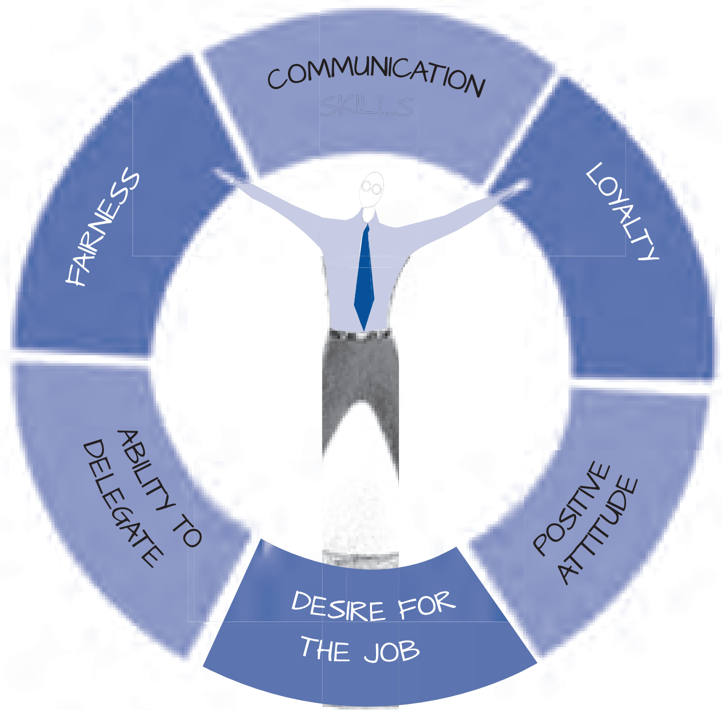
Broaden your reach and build strong, productive relationships with these strategies and opportunities:

- Listen closely to informal comments from supervisors from other departments who offer suggestions on how to improve a work process based on their experience.
- Keep an open-door policy for your staff so that they feel comfortable suggesting new ways of delivering services.
- Follow-up with people you meet in other settings who make interesting presentations at meetings, offer innovative ideas, or seem interested in or knowledgeable about areas that are similar to your responsibilities.
- Get to know supervisors in surrounding jurisdictions who oversee similar service areas so that you can compare notes and share ideas.

Today's supervisor handles a wide range of management responsibilities, including representing your team to senior management, to other departments with whom you may share resources, and to outside groups and individuals whose participation in the work of the local government is essential for success.

Consequently, you often function as a *broker* who must balance competing interests to achieve broad goals. To be an effective broker, you must

- Stay in touch with the needs and views of your work unit
- Maintain a steady focus on defined goals
- Be familiar with important external resources who may influence outcomes
- Model working across department lines and with outside organizations to achieve team success.



Adapted with permission from Samuel C. Certo, *Supervision: Concepts and Skill-Building*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010, 17). ©2010 McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Summary

Effective supervision requires you to be clear about work expectations and to have a strong understanding of what it takes to be successful in managing a diverse work team. It also depends on constructive, positive, and continuous interaction with your employees. Continuous, two-way communication makes it easier for you to identify roadblocks that may interfere with achieving the work unit's objectives, provides opportunities for coaching, makes better use of resources, quickly mediates conflict, and allows for changes in course direction if necessary. Helping employees grow and develop professionally by taking the time to listen, observe, and coach them is key to your shared success. It can be one of the most rewarding aspects of supervision.

Even more than that, effective supervision

- Ensures public confidence in the government by demonstrating and fostering the highest ethical standards in personal conduct and in the work environment
- Stretches and ultimately eliminates boundaries that limit creativity and risk taking to produce better results
- Models and fosters the courage to do the right thing.


CONTINUING
EDUCATION

2

SUPERVISORY LEADERSHIP

Laura H. Chalkley

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.

John Quincy Adams, sixth president of the United States

SNAPSHOT

This chapter examines leadership—what it is, why it matters, and how to become an effective leader. Chapter objectives are to

- Provide a perspective on leadership that is based on mission and values
- Offer practical advice to help supervisors become more successful leaders
- Stress the importance of continuing professional development to deepen leadership capacity.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- What is leadership?
- What are the primary sources of a leader's influence?
- What are the characteristics of influential supervisory leadership?
- How can supervisors develop and improve their leadership skills?

Leadership is a constant area of research, discussion, scrutiny, and attention. Are leaders born? Can leadership skills be taught? What are the essential competencies for all leaders? Authors have long been in search of excellence, greatness, and reinvention, and have produced volumes to document their findings. Perhaps the most important results of this constant quest for answers about leadership are that there are no clear answers, no universal competencies, and no best way to be an effective leader.

What is leadership?

Many of today's supervisors began their careers in organizations where power and authority flowed from position. But as organizational theorist Peter Senge observes, "…those in positions of authority are not the source of authority."[1] At a practical level, this means that the power of position is not required to exert influence in the organization. Leaders emerge at all levels of the organization.

Author Laura Chalkley appreciatively recognizes the contributions of James Stephens, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

The real source of authority is the legitimacy of the guiding principles by which the organization lives. Supervisors and other emerging leaders cannot lead effectively without a deep understanding of the mission of the organization. In local government, genuine authority flows from the principle of public service. Leadership expert Frances Hesselbein has observed that “people want to be a part of something that makes a difference, that transcends the ordinary: they want a star to steer by.”[2] That’s why it is essential for leaders to communicate and advocate for a vision that inspires the efforts of those they lead.

Robert Rosen in his book *Leading People* defines new leadership this way: “First off, it is not a status....Leaders inspire rather than intimidate, motivate rather than monitor, mobilize rather than manage. And these activities don’t require the totems of rank and position. Rather than a status, leadership is an activity…it *does* something. It enables a group of people to pursue a shared vision and create extraordinary results.”[3]

From a practical perspective, leadership is a partnership that requires shared commitment and consent from those who choose to follow the leader. Consent comes through the development of respect, trust, and commitment. It occurs in the context of formal and informal relationships in all types and sizes of organizations.

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

- Provides continuous, constructive feedback and coaching
- Mentors, recognizes, and rewards staff
- Develops highly effective relationships with customers
- Fosters a climate of openness, dialogue, and creative problem solving
- Models self-motivation and pursues opportunities to master new knowledge
- Stands up for the right, though unpopular, decision
- Demonstrates and models a high level of commitment to public service
- Expertly fosters a climate of innovation and creativity.

Source: Department of Human Resources, Arlington County, Virginia (2006)

Situational leadership, as originally developed by Ken Blanchard, suggests that there is no best style of leadership, and that successful leaders adapt their style to the situation at hand. While it is important to focus on consistency and equity when dealing with your employees, it is equally important to recognize and build on your employees' unique strengths to help them thrive and succeed.[4]

Sources of influence

As a supervisor, you have three primary sources of influence: role, reputation, and behavior.

Role

The power and authority that comes with your role as a supervisor provides one source of influence. By virtue of your position, you are in charge of both specific outcomes and the people who report to you to achieve those outcomes. However, the more you rely on the power of role to influence people and get the job done, the less successful you may be as a leader.

Leaders who use power to intimidate their employees rarely achieve the highest levels of productivity. For example, when you draw primarily on your authority as the boss to get the job done, employees may feel that you are constantly looking over their shoulders. As a result, little work may get done unless you are constantly hovering over employees. At that point, you are coercing more than leading, and employee motivation is reduced in the long term.

Effective leaders do not rely solely on the authority vested in their role or title.

Reputation

Your reputation as a supervisor is your second major source of influence. Reputation is the story that peers, subordinates, and others tell about you. Comments like "she's always looking out for her employees," rather than "you can't trust her," say something about you as a leader. Over time, these statements create an image that either adds to or detracts from your ability to exert positive influence. The good news is that a reputation can be changed because you control the most important aspect of the story—your behavior as a supervisor.

Effective leaders earn a positive reputation by building trust with those they lead.

POCKETS OF GREATNESS

In his monograph *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, Jim Collins talks about maximizing performance by matching people, skills, and organizational needs. That process can be challenging in local governments where civil service requirements may reduce or limit flexibility and where performance issues may have been neglected for years. Collins suggests that leaders can build pockets of greatness throughout the organization by getting

- The right people on the bus
- The wrong people off the bus
- The right people into the right seats.

By taking the time to assess employees' skills, provide constructive feedback, coach, and identify strengths, you can get the right people in the right seats and begin to build pockets of greatness one step at a time. The bigger challenge in this process is having the difficult conversations about performance and/or behavioral issues. Getting the wrong people off the bus requires constructive feedback and coaching in addition to documenting issues and conversations.

Adapted from Jim Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sector: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great (Boulder, Colo.: Jim Collins, 2005), 14.*

Behavior

Regardless of role and reputation, direct interaction with your employees will have a powerful effect on their view of you. While a position gives you the authority to get the job done, your behavior earns the respect of colleagues. You've probably met people who had particular reputations or occupied significant roles, only to find in person that they were very different than their reputations or roles would have predicted.

The key to influential leadership is in your behavior as a leader.

Behavior, not traits

The myth of the natural-born leader is based on the assumption that certain traits will make an individual a successful leader. This is rarely the case. Many studies have shown that behavior is a better predictor of effective leadership than personal traits.

Knowing that a person is intelligent and charismatic does not give you a reliable indicator of leadership skill. Better predicators of leadership success are specific behaviors such as

- Making sure the work group has reliable information to achieve its goals
- Treating subordinates as equals
- Allowing, encouraging, and seeking employee input
- Giving employees control over their own work
- Frequently giving credit for a job well done.

When leadership is defined as behaviors rather than traits, it becomes clear that you can learn to do what it takes to become a successful leader. Leadership is not contained in a gene any more, or any less, than other abilities.

Improving your leadership capacity

Learning to do what it takes to be an effective leader requires ongoing training to increase both your knowledge and skills. Effective leadership training begins on the front end of your supervisory role and should continue over the course of your career. Knowing yourself and how you respond to situations and behave is a critical first step in leadership development.

Leadership practices

The following practices will help you improve your leadership capacity and further enhance your skills as a successful leader.

THE FIVE PRACTICES AND TEN COMMITMENTS OF EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP

1. MODEL the Way	1. **CLARIFY VALUES** by finding your voice and affirming shared ideals. 2. **SET THE EXAMPLE** by aligning actions with shared values.
2. INSPIRE a Shared Vision	3. **ENVISION THE FUTURE** by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities 4. **ENLIST OTHERS** in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.
3. CHALLENGE the Process	5. **SEARCH FOR OPPORTUNITIES** by seizing the initiative and by looking outward for innovative ways to improve. 6. **EXPERIMENT AND TAKE RISKS** by constantly generating small wins and learning from experience.
4. ENABLE Others to Act	7. **FOSTER COLLABORATION** by building trust and facilitating relationships. 8. **STRENGTHEN OTHERS** by increasing self-determination and developing competence.
5. ENCOURAGE the Heart	9. **RECOGNIZE CONTRIBUTIONS** by showing appreciation for individual excellence. 10. **CELEBRATE THE VALUES AND VICTORIES** by creating a spirit of community.

Adapted with permission from James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, *Fourth Edition* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 15. ©Wiley & Sons.

SUPERVISORY TIP: MAXIMIZE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Take every opportunity to participate in leadership training events, especially those that offer opportunities for self-assessment, including learning about your personality type. Continually work on improving your leadership skills by learning about new ideas, concepts, and techniques. Above all, believe in your own ability to grow and develop as a leader regardless of your age or experience. Many local governments now provide leadership development training internally as well as opportunities for external development programs.

Develop a strong commitment to public service ethics Having the courage of your convictions is vital to your effectiveness and credibility as a leader. As a local government leader, you are a steward of the public trust and public funds; this makes your ethical convictions and confidence even more important. Being confident about what is right in the face of adversity takes tremendous courage.

Find worthy models and mentors Individuals in your work life who personify successful leadership can become valuable mentors as you develop your leadership skills. Try to identify what makes your chosen mentors successful leaders and what you admire or respect about their approach to leadership. If possible, interview successful leaders and ask them how they developed as leaders. You should approach every situation as an opportunity to learn something new, even if it is how not to lead.

Become a lifelong learner Continue your pursuit of learning as a regular component of your supervisory job including looking for books, newspapers, magazines, and online resources. By modeling the behavior of a learner, you also set the stage for your employees to grow and develop. If you are new to the role of leadership, this chapter can be a springboard to deeper knowledge and enhanced understanding of leadership behavior.

Find the challenges that are right for you Some supervisory work requires less emphasis on leadership and more emphasis on management and administration. While this work is necessary and important, it doesn't mean that you can't be a leader, too. Being a leader involves establishing relationships, building trust, coaching, and empowering employees to succeed. Taking on these leadership challenges helps the organization achieve its goals and will be personally and professionally rewarding.

Whatever your aspirations, if you wish to exert positive influence in larger circles within your organization, consider seeking projects that will test your leadership capacity and stretch your leadership skills. You may also choose to develop leadership skills outside your place of employment such as through community leadership. Local chambers of commerce, schools, religious groups, the local chapter of your professional association, and all types of volunteer organizations are always looking for effective leaders.

Develop a plan to improve your leadership skills and capacity After gathering information and feedback about your leadership behavior, develop a simple but powerful plan for becoming a stronger leader. Begin by focusing on a few leadership behaviors that you want to address first, work on those, and then seek feedback about the impact of your efforts.

Feedback for self-awareness

Researchers have yet to agree on any single group of qualities that characterize all leaders, nor have they found any one leadership style that characterizes all effective leaders. These findings support the idea that whatever your personality or style, you can become an effective and successful leader. That's why knowing who you are and being aware of your strengths and areas needing development are critical to leading others.

One way to increase self-awareness is to gather information about others' perceptions of your leadership style. Ask superiors, colleagues, and employees what they see as

your most effective and least effective behaviors. Be receptive to their feedback. Your employees, given anonymity, will give more valid and realistic descriptions of your leadership behavior than either you or your boss will. Your peers and direct reports—those who are the consumers of your leadership skills—tend to have the most useful perceptions of your leadership behavior. Be sure to look for recurring themes rather than focusing on isolated comments that don't match the rest of the feedback.

Your leadership influence and success are directly related to two factors:

- How your colleagues and subordinates perceive your leadership behavior
- How your leadership behavior directly affects them.

So becoming more self-aware is an important step in improving your ability to influence members of your team.

SUPERVISORY TIP: GETTING FEEDBACK FROM AN ADMIRED LEADER

Have a discussion with someone you admire as a good leader. Ask that person to observe you in a meeting with your staff and provide feedback on your interaction with employees. Then ask for coaching on how you could improve.

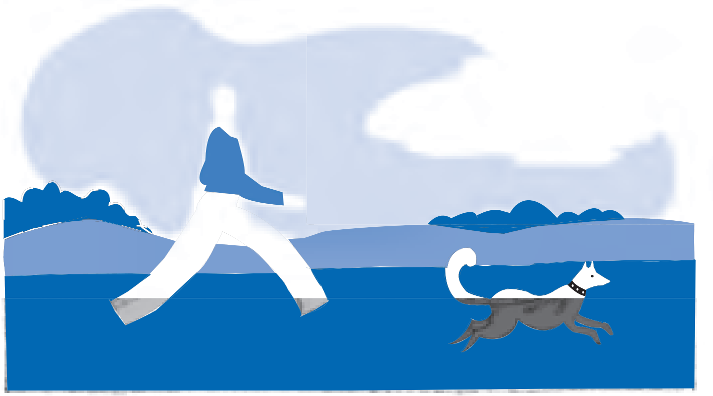
Self-care and personal development

If you fit the typical career pattern for supervisors, you probably didn't start out with supervisory responsibilities. You were probably promoted because of your technical ability and now have to sort through what it means to lead others. In an ideal world, you would have had a chance to prepare for your leadership role or gone through intensive training when you were first promoted. However, it is more likely that much of your background for this new responsibility comes from on-the-job experience.

Leadership self-care has three dimensions: physical, intellectual, and emotional. By assessing your capacity in each dimension, you can find ways to strengthen your leadership ability.

Physical fitness

Being in a leadership role is often physically demanding. You are probably working longer hours and face more stress because of your organizational responsibilities. Maintaining your physical well-being and managing your stress are important to leadership effectiveness. Whether the approach is simple (daily walks) or more complex (regular exercise, weight lifting, or yoga), you should make an effort to increase physical activity to support a healthy lifestyle. Being physically active will also help you be a more energetic leader.

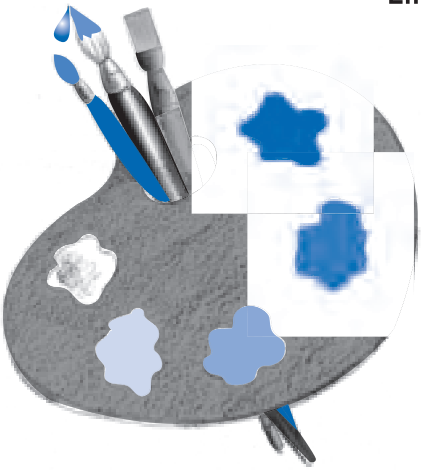


SUPERVISORY TIP: ON-THE-JOB EXERCISE

What about a "walking meeting?" It gets you and your employees out of the office and away from interruptions and stressors. The meeting walk encourages creative thinking and action while giving the entire team a valuable exercise break.

Intellectual fitness

Staying current with emerging trends in your field, pursuing opportunities to gain new knowledge, being up-to-date on current events that affect your customers or the services you deliver, and being recognized as a technical expert and organizational resource are all indicators of intellectual fitness. Your ability to share your knowledge and technical competence with your team and the customers you serve will contribute to your capacity and stature as an effective leader.



Emotional fitness

It can be difficult to get your work done when you arrive at the office with your emotional bags packed. If there are stresses and strains in your life, pay attention to them. Take some time off, relax, do activities you enjoy, and accept that ignoring your emotional health may lead to bigger problems.

If you find yourself struggling with emotional issues, seek professional help. Most organizations have an employee assistance program (EAP) that can help you deal with emotional challenges or refer you to an appropriate resource. Your ability to lead and supervise is directly related to your ability to maintain your emotional fitness.

Self-care takes many forms. Look inward to find what works for you, whether it is yoga, meditation, spiritual or religious practice, artistic expression, or relaxing with a good book. Knowing what you value determines the choices you make on a daily basis. Find an approach that supports your spirit and recharges your batteries.

WHAT'S YOUR EQ?

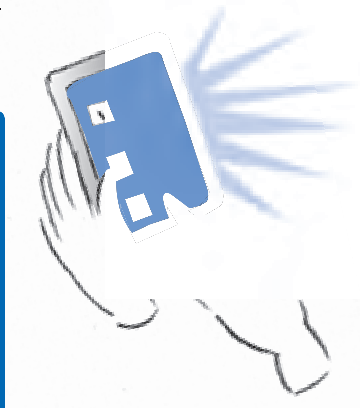
Your emotional intelligence, or EQ, is as important in the workplace as your IQ. Daniel Goleman describes a four-part model for emotional intelligence.

1. **Self-awareness:** The ability to read your own emotions, know your strengths and limitations, and recognize how your moods affect others.
2. **Self-management:** The ability to control your emotions and act with honesty and integrity in reliable and adaptable ways.
3. **Social awareness:** The ability to sense other people's emotions and show you care by changing your words and actions when their impact on others is negative.
4. **Relationship management:** The ability to communicate clearly and convincingly, disarm conflicts, and build strong personal bonds, often with humor and kindness.

Adapted from Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, "Primal Leadership: The Hidden Driver of Great Performance," *Harvard Business Review* (Product No. 8296), December 2001, 49.

A lifelong journey

Becoming an effective and successful leader is a lifelong journey. There isn't one path to leadership enlightenment or one specific set of skills that will guarantee success. While some people may be born with a predisposition toward leadership, everyone has a degree of leadership potential that is waiting to be tapped. Leading others, helping them to grow, and contributing to organizational and departmental success can be a remarkably rewarding professional experience. Recognize that it is a journey, and take the time to enjoy it.



CHECKLIST

- Be aware that the practice of leadership is a blend of concern for others and concern for task.
- Think of leadership as a lifelong learning journey.
- Practice the philosophy that anyone can be a leader; few leaders are born and leadership can be learned.
- Avoid relying on the power and authority associated with your position to lead and motivate.
- Earn the trust and respect of your employees; trust and respect make it possible to influence others without recourse to power or authority.
- Remember that leadership development begins and ends with a fundamental understanding of how others perceive your behavior and how your behavior affects others.
- Recognize that leadership self-care will contribute to your success as a leader.
- Stay focused on learning about leadership, including consulting the list of recommended resources at the back of this book.

Endnotes

1 Peter M. Senge, "The Practice of Innovation," in *Leader to Leader*, Frances Hesselbein and Paul M. Cohen, editors (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 18–22.

2 Frances Hesselbein, "Introduction" in *Leader to Leader*, Frances Hesselbein and Paul M. Cohen, editors (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999).

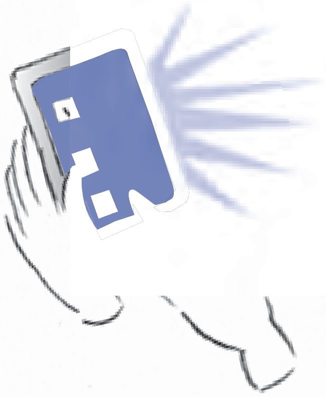
3 Robert Rosen, *Leading People* (New York: Viking Press, 1995), 15.

4 Ken Blanchard, *Leading at a Higher Level* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2007), 87-88.

5 James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Leadership Practices Inventory Leadership Development Planner* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pfeiffer, 1997), 5.

CHECKLIST

- Recognize the broad role you play in achieving organizational goals and the need to hone your technical, management, and people skills.
- Be a leader, not a boss.
- Focus on the difference between leading and managing, and develop your skills in each.
- If you are a new supervisor, adjust your relationships with former peers to adapt to your new role and responsibilities.
- Involve employees in decision making to draw on their expertise and to gain their commitment.
- Invest in building and sustaining a team made up of people who trust and rely on each other.
- Provide opportunities for employee growth and development.
- Delegate tasks and authority, but be available for guidance and direction.
- Strive to make jobs more interesting and challenging.
- Learn how to build relationships across organizational boundaries.
- Focus on employee strengths.
- Take the time and effort to identify problems before they get out of hand.



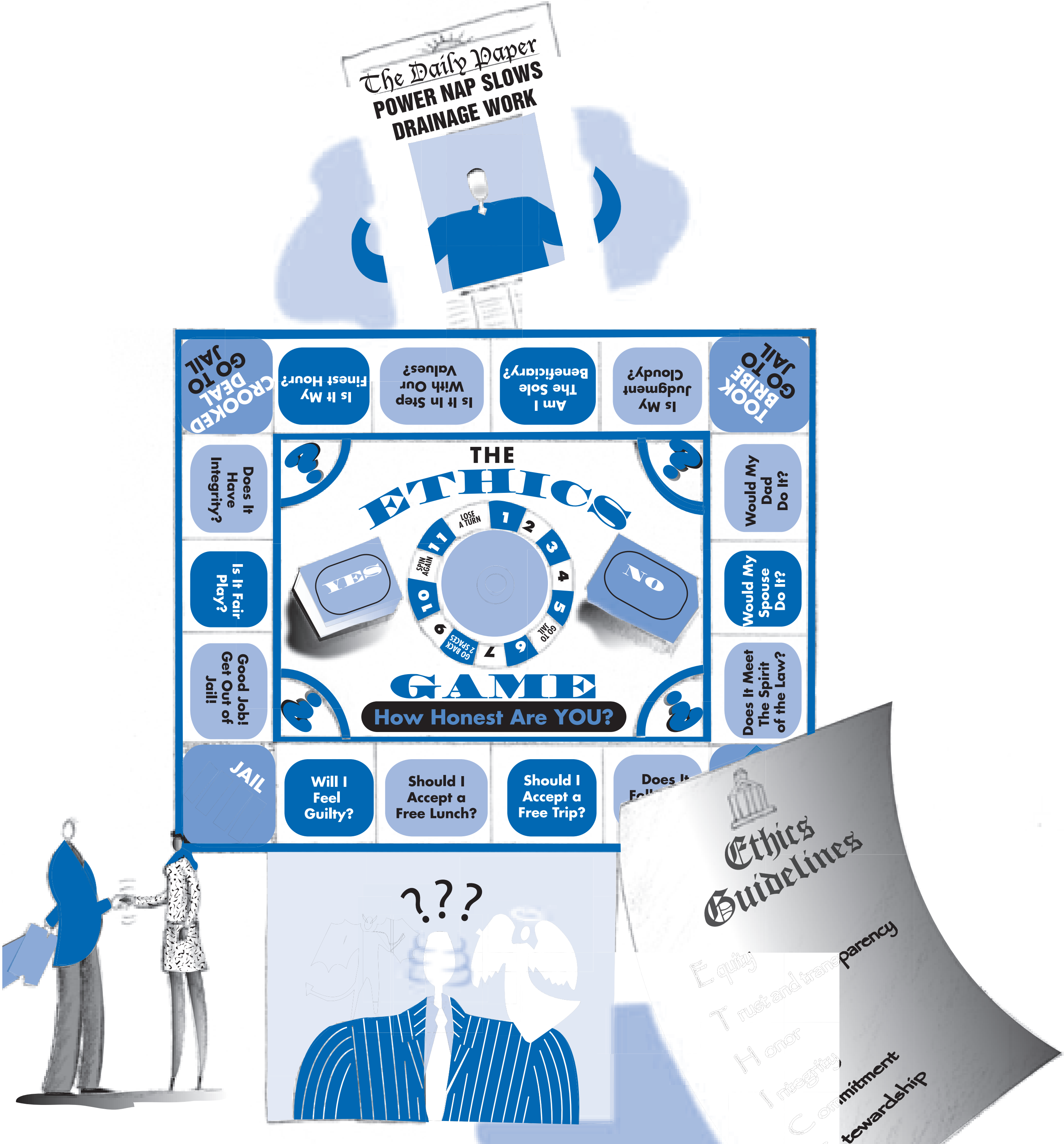
Endnotes

1 John Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 71.

2 Dick Grote, *The Performance Appraisal Questions and Answer Book* (New York: American Management Association, 2002).

3 Frederick Herzberg, Bernard Mausner, and Barbara Bloch Snyderman, *The Motivation to Work, 2nd ed.* (New York: Wiley, 1959).

4 *Managing Employees through Times of Economic Upheaval* (Arlington, VA: Corporate Executive Board, 2008).


The Daily Paper
POWER NAP SLOWS DRAINAGE WORK
CROOKED DEAL GO TO JAIL
Is It My Finest Hour?
Is It In Step With Our Values?
Am I The Sole Beneficiary?
Is My Judgment Cloudy?
TOOK BRIBE GO TO JAIL
Does It Have Integrity?
Is It Fair Play?
Good Job! Get Out of Jail!
Would My Dad Do It?
Would My Spouse Do It?
Does It Meet The Spirit of the Law?
THE ETHICS GAME
How Honest Are YOU?
YES
NO
LOSE A TURN
SPIN AGAIN
GO TO JAIL
GO BACK 2 SPACES
JAIL
Will I Feel Guilty?
Should I Accept a Free Lunch?
Should I Accept a Free Trip?
? ? ?
Ethics Guidelines
Equity
Trust and transparency
Honor
Integrity
Commitment
Stewardship

3

ETHICS

Larry "Nick" Nicholson

Have the courage to say no. Have the courage to face the truth. Do the right thing because it is right. These are the magic keys to living your life with integrity.

W. Clement Stone, businessman, philanthropist, author

SNAPSHOT

This chapter covers ethics in public service including high ethical standards citizens set for public employees. Chapter objectives are to

- Emphasize the importance of constant attention to ethical behavior and performance in public service
- Highlight the role of supervisors in modeling ethical behavior and coaching and leading employees to ethical performance
- Provide practical tools to support ethical behavior and performance.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- What is ethics?
- What are the characteristics of an ethical role model?
- Who is responsible for ethical behavior?
- What are the various tools for ethical decision making?
- What types of ethical challenges are employees likely to face?

Ethical behavior matters in public service. Citizen trust in government is based on the behavior and performance of the people who represent the government—from the chief elected official to every employee. When one government employee behaves in an unethical way, it reflects on every government employee. That's why it is so important to create an environment in which all employees understand what ethics is and what it means to carry out their jobs in an ethical way.

As a supervisor, you are responsible for your own ethical behavior, plus you must ensure your employees are aware of their ethical responsibilities, that they take advantage of resources provided by the organization to create and sustain an ethical culture, and that they behave ethically.

Author Nick Nicholson appreciatively recognizes the contribution of Sherri K. Lawless, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

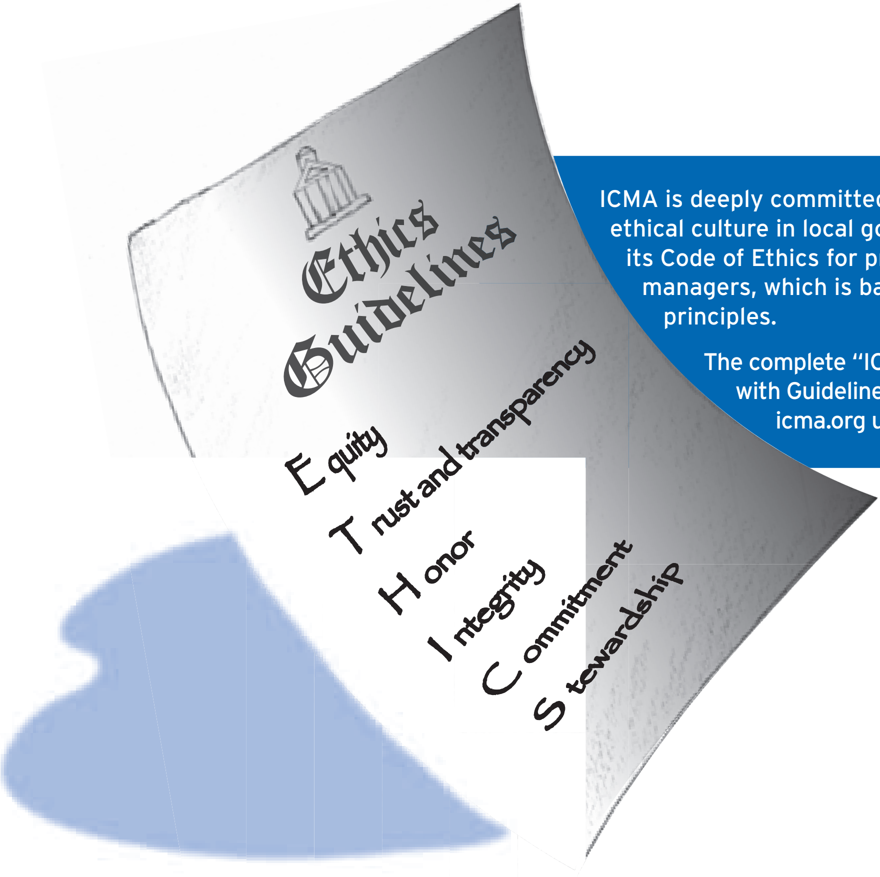
What is ethics?

Ethics is a standard of conduct for professional and personal behavior based on shared values.[1] Most local governments have an ethics policy or code of conduct that describes behavior that is expected of all employees. Some governments also have value statements that outline the beliefs underlying the ethics policy or code. And many have a designated ethics advisor or counselor to help employees deal with ethical challenges.

The most useful local government ethics policies are practical, easy to embrace, and based on organizational values. They define, in language that makes good sense and that is easily translated into action, what is expected of employees in their day-to-day work. For example, Mountain View, California, brought together 150 employees from all city departments to craft a code of ethics. The result of their work was a statement of personal commitment to "prudent judgment and personal responsibility" based on these five ethical principles:

1. I will uphold the city's policies in a transparent and consistent manner at all times.
2. I will make unbiased decisions and use my authority fairly and responsibly.
3. I will act with honesty and be an advocate for an environment that promotes public trust.
4. I will not use city resources or my position for personal gain.
5. I will be mindful of how my actions may be perceived by others and avoid conflicts of interest.[2]

If you mention the word ethics, most people think of fairly clear-cut choices between right and wrong: no one would argue, for example, that it is right to steal supplies or to use government equipment for your small business. But ethical choices are not always that simple. The toughest choices you will make as a supervisor are not choices between right and wrong but between right and right. Those are the decisions that will put your ethical skills to the test.



ICMA is deeply committed to promoting an ethical culture in local government through its Code of Ethics for professional managers, which is based on these six principles.

The complete "ICMA Code of Ethics with Guidelines" is available at icma.org under the Ethics tab.

Ethics in action

Ethics principles and guidelines are just a beginning. What really matters is not what a local government *says* in its principles and guidelines, but what it *does.* What type of behavior and performance get rewarded? Which is the preferred guiding principle—*doing the right thing* or *getting the job done at any cost*? Your local government may have a code of ethics that it posts on bulletin boards or on its website, hoping that employees read and follow it. Ultimately, however, the strongest influence on employee behavior is the behavior of managers and supervisors.

Ethical behavior is an on-going process. It involves understanding the government's principles and guidelines, living those principles daily, and making decisions based on those principles. These three *A*s help to define ethics in action:

- ***Accountability*** Public employees are accountable to their supervisors, government leaders, and the community. This accountability also extends to their private lives.
- ***Awareness*** Public employees must be familiar with the standards they are expected to uphold. They must participate in continuous learning opportunities to ensure their knowledge of ethical standards and guiding regulations is current.
- ***Authenticity*** Public employees must be genuine in character and willing to do the right thing even when no one is watching.

These guiding principles not only help you carry out your supervisory responsibilities, but also provide a framework to guide your employees on ethical behavior. Being familiar with the ethics policy of your organization and making sure you and your employees follow it in the decisions you make, the work you do, and the way you interact with each other and the citizens you serve is an important component of your supervisory job.

Modeling ethical behavior

The movie *Remember the Titans* focuses on the process of creating cohesion and unity among players on the first racially integrated football team at a Virginia high school. In one scene, Julius, the African-American captain of the defense, confronts Gary, the white captain of the offense, about his failure to discipline a white player who wasn't holding his own on the offensive line. Julius tells Gary "attitude reflects leadership."[3]

Ethical behavior in your unit begins with you. It is part of your leadership role and is driven by the right attitude about ethics.

In practical terms, having professional ethics means striving to do your best as a supervisor, including

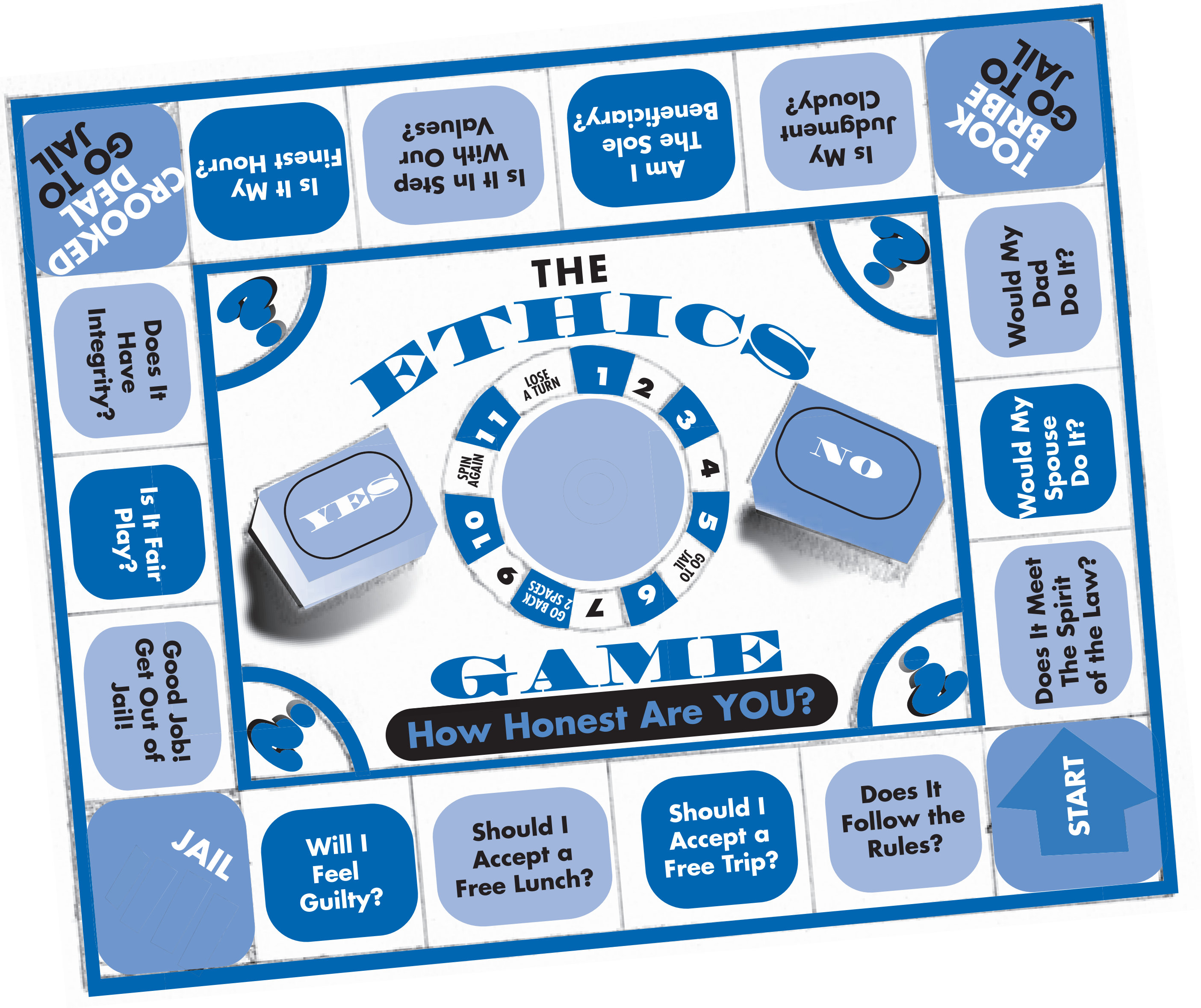
- Using consistent and supportive communication practices
- Genuinely listening to your employees and colleagues
- Making your expectations of employees clear
- Providing fair and consistent feedback on performance.

It also means that you publicly support the decisions made at all levels of your government organization regardless of whether you participated directly in the decision-making process. Simply repeating the "party line" is not enough; your actions as well as your words should show support. It is an unavoidable fact of organizational life that, at times, you will disagree with an approved policy or practice. When this happens, you can work behind the scenes for change, but your behavior and attitude should show that you support the organization's decisions.

The following guidelines will help you model ethical behavior:

- ***Know the rules*** As a role model, you should have a good working knowledge of the local policies governing ethical behavior. Failure to know these policies is not acceptable. Your role as a supervisor carries responsibilities far beyond the technical knowledge required to perform the work.
- ***Walk the talk*** You must demonstrate the policies in your daily actions. If you don't follow the policies and operate in an ethical way, it sends conflicting messages such as "Well I guess the policy doesn't apply to everyone" or "If they can violate the policy, I guess I can too."
- ***Teach the way*** Coaching your employees on expected behavior, including helping them solve ethical dilemmas and ensuring that they participate in any organization training programs, will contribute to an environment that promotes and supports ethical behavior.
- ***Hold the line*** As a supervisor, you are responsible for recognizing what may be unethical actions and dealing with them accordingly. You should also recognize and acknowledge when employees do the right thing and make good choices. Recognizing behaviors that others should emulate and disciplining employees who violate ethical standards are equally important parts of your job.

In the public sector, the community sets a high ethical bar for all local government leaders and employees. You will be held to these standards on a 24/7 basis, and your activities away from the workplace may come under scrutiny.


THE
ETHICS
GAME
How Honest Are YOU?
YES
NO
LOSE A TURN
1
2
3
4
5
GO TO JAIL
6
7
GO BACK 2 SPACES
9
10
SPIN AGAIN
11
START
Does It Follow the Rules?
Should I Accept a Free Trip?
Should I Accept a Free Lunch?
Will I Feel Guilty?
JAIL
Good Job! Get Out of Jail!
Is It Fair Play?
Does It Have Integrity?
CROOKED DEAL GO TO JAIL
Is It My Finest Hour?
Is It In Step With Our Values?
Am I The Sole Beneficiary?
Is My Judgment Cloudy?
TOOK BRIBE GO TO JAIL
Would My Dad Do It?
Would My Spouse Do It?
Does It Meet The Spirit of the Law?

Coaching employees to ethical behavior

As a supervisor, coaching is a daily responsibility designed to

- Help employees with personal and professional development
- Improve current work performance
- Increase performance results.

While most of your coaching will focus on job knowledge, skills, and performance, ethical behavior is a particularly important area for which you need to provide guidance, coaching, and feedback. A self-evaluation behavioral model developed and used in training by Keilty, Goldsmith and Company (Milford, Connecticut) and entitled "The Behavioral Model: Steps in the Process" offers eight actions (ask, listen, think, thank, respond, involve, change, and follow up) that supervisors can use as an eight-step process to coach employees on all aspects of their behavior, including ethics. The steps presented here are adapted from the model by permission of Keilty, Goldsmith and Company.

- ***Ask*** your employees what ethics means to them and where they would go to find an answer to an ethical dilemma.
- ***Listen*** to what they say without evaluating.
- ***Think*** about what they said and comparing it with established ethical standards.
- ***Thank*** them for their thoughts regarding ethics and feedback.
- ***Respond*** to their comments by identifying any points that are consistent with existing ethical standards and responding to questions about the standards.
- ***Involve*** employees in identifying and potentially changing any ambiguous ethical standards, as well as asking them to help promote ethics in the organization.
- ***Make changes*** that were identified through the process such as clarifying ethics policies or providing training on specific areas of concern.
- ***Follow up*** to see if the changes were effective and if employees' behavior is improving.

As a supervisor, you are responsible for creating a strong ethical environment in your unit by modeling ethical behavior, making ethically sound decisions, and helping your employees solve their ethical challenges. When you are confronted with a decision that may have ethical implications, don't hesitate to ask your supervisor or department head for guidance, just as you expect your employees to come to you when they are struggling with an ethical issue.

Tools for ethical decision making

Because you and your employees approach issues and challenges in the work place in different ways, you will need diverse tools to deal with your own ethical challenges and to support your employees' efforts to meet ethical standards.

This section provides several tools for decision making that can be applied to handling ethical challenges both in your supervisory role and in guiding employees.

A Guide to Ethical Decision Making

You can use these six questions (which comprise ICMA's "Guide to Ethical Decision Making") to assess whether a possible action is ethical.

1. ***The Law*** Is it legal? Does it meet the spirit of the law?
2. ***Policy*** Am I violating a regulation or policy or breaking a rule that everyone else must follow?
3. ***Integrity*** Am I breaking my word, a trust, a promise, or a value?
4. ***Appearances*** Do I have a conflict of interest in fact or appearance? Am I the only or prime beneficiary of an offer or service?
5. ***Clear Thinking*** Is emotion or bias clouding my judgment?
6. ***Perspective*** When I look back on this situation, will I be proud of my conduct? Is it my finest hour or one I might regret?

Notice that the first question is whether the action is legal. If the action being considered by you or an employee is illegal, then you don't need to go further with the questions: an illegal action is unethical. But, when you are trying to make ethical choices, acting within the law is simply a good start. If the answer to the first question is *yes*, proceed with the remaining questions. If you find yourself struggling with the responses, you should not follow through on the choice you are considering.

ETHICAL DECISION TREE

Use this decision tree as a guide to help you decide whether a course of action is correct when you cannot otherwise find the answer or are unsure of the decision.

Is it legal?

GO **Yes.** Now ask yourself

STOP **No/not sure.** Do not proceed; contact supervisor for guidance.

Would I be happy explaining what I did to my co-workers, family, and friends without shame or embarrassment?

GO **Yes.** Now ask yourself

STOP **No/not sure.** Do not proceed; obtain guidance if required.

Is it generally the right thing to do?

GO **Yes.** Now ask yourself

STOP **No/not sure.** Do not proceed; obtain guidance if required.

Would the city approve if what I do is in the news?

GO **Yes.** Now ask yourself

STOP **No/not sure.** Do not proceed; obtain guidance if required.

Is my judgment free from bias or emotion?

GO **Yes.** Now ask yourself

STOP **No/not sure.** Do not proceed; obtain guidance if required.

Am I free from being the only person who would benefit/ gain from this decision?

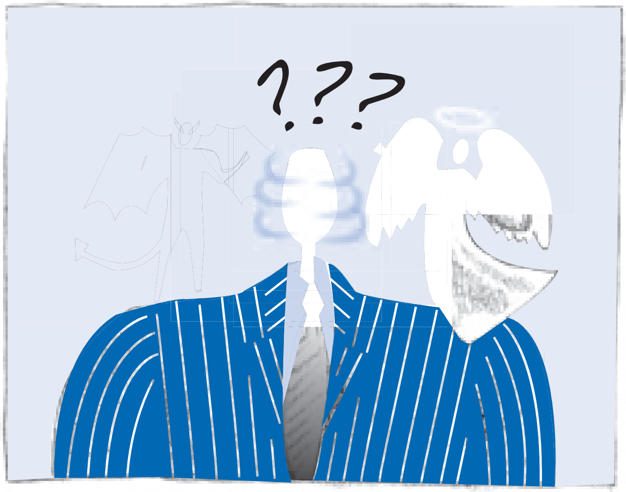
GO **Yes.** Now ask yourself

STOP **No/not sure.** Do not proceed; obtain guidance if required.

If the answers to all the questions is **YES**, it is most likely an ethical decision or action. If you are still unsure, request guidance from your supervisor.

Adapted with permission from *It's a Question of Ethics.* © Borealis Group: www.borealisropu.com/ethics.

Other decision-making tools



Four other useful tools for ethical decisions are the role model test, the parent or child on your shoulder test, the newspaper headline test, and the golden rule test. Each of these tests asks one question to help you or your employees assess the choice you are facing.

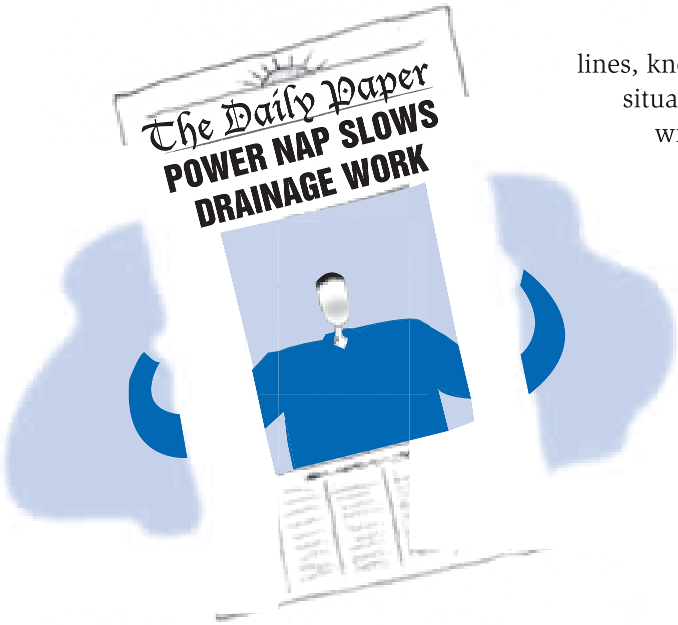
The ***role model test*** asks, "What would my role model or mentor think or do in the same situation?" The role model or mentor should be someone who represents principles of honesty, trustworthiness, and integrity. If the choice doesn't seem like something a respected role model would do, then think carefully about whether to proceed.

The ***parent or child on your shoulder test*** asks, "What would I say to my children or to the person who brought me up about the action I'm about to take? " If the thought of what you would say makes you uncomfortable, don't do it. For example, if you are thinking about "borrowing" lunch money from the petty cash and replacing it tomorrow, how would you explain this action to your child?

The ***newspaper headline test*** asks, "How would you feel if the headline in tomorrow's newspaper announced what you are thinking about doing?" For example, if you're thinking about catching a few winks in the truck at the end of a long day at the work site before returning to the shop, how would you feel if the next day's newspaper featured a large photo of you sleeping in the truck with the headline, "Power Nap Slows Drainage Work."

The ***golden rule test*** asks, "Would I want to be treated in the way I am considering treating someone else?" For example, you happen to walk by as a colleague is leaving the office of the employee assistance counselor. You wonder if you should tell the employee's co-workers to go easy on him because he's having personal problems. Even though your intention is to be supportive, is this the right way to handle confidential information? Would you want a private matter of yours discussed with others?

In addition to these tests, you should weigh your decision against organizational guidelines and training that you have received in support of the code of ethics. Ongoing training is essential to ensure that all employees understand ethical guide-



The newspaper headline test helps you assess the choice you are facing

lines, know how to use tools and tests to assess challenging situations, and have an opportunity to discuss tough issues with colleagues and staff who have experience in ethical decision making.

Leading your employees toward ethical behavior

Most public employees are honest, hardworking people who want to do a good job. While there may be occasional incidents of unethical or even criminal behavior such as lying, stealing, or accepting a bribe, typical ethical challenges are more subtle. Examples include getting extra help from a vendor when researching a new product area, letting a vendor with whom you might do business pay for lunch, using a government computer to answer personal e-mails or do personal research, or using sick leave to take a few extra vacation days.

An essential part of your job is to lead your employees toward ethical behavior. If your government has ethics guidelines, be sure that your employees understand and adhere to them. As a supervisor, you can help your employees avoid falling into ethical traps by creating an environment where employees are comfortable talking to you and willing to share their concerns.

You can lead your employees toward ethical behavior by

- Making ethics a part of daily life in your work unit
- Using staff meetings as an opportunity to talk about the values of your organization and to discuss ethical challenges
- Sharing with your employees tools for helping them make ethical decisions
- Offering simple reminders once a week to keep employees thinking about ethical behavior
- Encouraging and supporting employee participation in both required and optional training sessions related to values and ethics.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH VENDORS

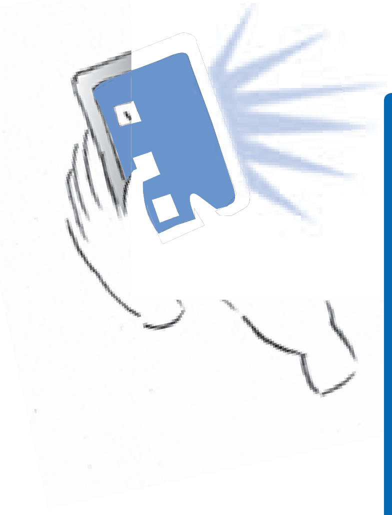
Relationships with vendors can pose ethical challenges for some employees. Local governments usually have very specific policies that are designed to ensure fair, competitive, and objective purchasing. As a supervisor, you should be familiar with purchasing policies and procedures and ensure that any employees who work with vendors understand the procedures.

Cordial relationships with vendors make sense; there is no reason that conducting business can't be a pleasant experience. However, vendors are always interested in furthering their business and don't have to be concerned with the local government's rules—that's your job. For example, it is acceptable for a vendor to assist you when you are gathering product information, but not to prepare bid specifications for you. And that assistance shouldn't be factored into your decision about who to hire. Nor should you be swayed by the fact that a particular vendor gave you the best deal the last time or did a favor for you or your work unit. Your goal is always to get the highest quality equipment, product, or service for the best price, regardless of your relationship with a given vendor.

Summary

Most local governments today have employee codes of conduct and guidelines for ethical practice and behavior. But codes and guidelines don't guarantee ethical performance or good government. Supervisory guidance, regular training and reinforcement, and constant modeling of ethical practices are equally or even more important. Because you have the most regular contact with employees who are directly involved in providing public services, you are a vital resource for maintaining high ethical standards and high performance.

A deep understanding of what ethics is, of your ethical obligations as a public employee, of your local government code of conduct, and of what constitutes ethical decision making are important resources in your supervisory tool kit.



CHECKLIST

- Pay constant attention to your role as model for ethical behavior.
- Treat everyone you encounter with openness, fairness, and integrity.
- Remember that public employees are held to a high standard because citizens depend on government to provide essential services and a safe environment in which to work, live, and play.
- Use ethics tests to determine whether or not what you or employees are about to do is ethically sound.
- Ensure that employees learn about and understand the organization's code of ethics and participate in on-going training that supports the code.
- Investigate any violations of the code of conduct, report the findings as required, and take appropriate action.
- Avoid inappropriate relationships that could reflect negatively on the government and the community you serve.
- Supervise employees in a fair and unbiased way, avoiding gossip, discrimination, and favoritism.
- Create an environment in which employees feel safe talking about ethical questions or concerns.
- Be a continuous learner and develop your leadership skills to be a more effective leader and ethical role model for others.

Endnotes

1 *Code of Ethics* (Peoria, AZ: August 2010), 5.

2 Kevin Duggan and Kevin Woodhouse, "A Code of Ethics That Packs a Punch," *PM* (*Public Management*) 93 (November 2011): 6–10.

3 *Remember the Titans*, Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2000.

Supervisory situation 3–1

You are a public works supervisor with several employees reporting to you. Tom is a team lead on one of the street crews and has come to you concerning the lack of equipment to do the job. He complains that his people are having a difficult time keeping the equipment running and that he's becoming extremely frustrated and wants you to take some action. You explain to him that there isn't enough money in the division's budget to carry out the repairs at this time, and that you will report the situation to the department head.

Not satisfied with your answer, Tom says that he will go to his brother who is a member of the city council to get his support. In the past, Tom has always been very careful about not using his personal connection with the council to deal with department issues. You know that Tom believes other divisions in the city have far more funds than your unit and that he will try to get his brother to reallocate money to your division.

1. Is Tom violating any ethics standards?
2. Are you responsible for counseling Tom on his proposed action?
3. What values are in conflict in this situation?
4. What is the right thing to do?

Supervisory situation 3-2

is a records clerk in the county's human resource department who was recently overheard discussing another county employee's records with her friend, Janet, who works for you. Janet has brought the situation to your attention. She said that Cindy told her the name of an employee who is undergoing treatment for alcohol abuse and the name of the facility where she is being treated. Janet said that she talked to Cindy about confidentiality when it comes to employee issues, but Cindy said "Not to worry, we will keep this just between the two of us." Janet has felt uncomfortable since Cindy told her about the employee. She has come to you for advice.

1. Did Janet take the appropriate action in coming to you rather than keeping the information secret as requested by Cindy?
2. Did Cindy violate any ethical standards?
3. Since Cindy is not your employee do you have any obligation to act on Janet's concerns?
4. What is the right thing to do?

Supervisory situation 3–3

The city's information technology (IT) supervisor comes to you with information concerning one of your direct reports. He says that a monthly review of IT records revealed that Tim Olsen has been spending considerable time on the Internet looking at real estate and investment sites. The amount of time this past month exceeded 30 hours. In addition to the sites mentioned, he also says there was some activity on questionable sites as listed in the organization's code of conduct.

You are aware that Tim has sought and received permission for outside employment as long as it does not interfere with his assigned work duties. Tim has been and continues to be a productive employee.

1. Has Tim violated any code of conduct standards?
2. Is the amount of time Tim spends on the Internet excessive?
3. In your mind, what types of sites would be considered "questionable" for the work environment?
4. What is the right thing to do?


MAY
1 4 5 6
7 8 10 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28 29 30 31
PUBLIC WORKS
SUPERVISOR

4

STRATEGIC PLANNING, MANAGEMENT, AND EVALUATION

Barbara Flynn Buehler

There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.

Peter Drucker, writer and management and leadership consultant

SNAPSHOT

This chapter explores the supervisor's role in creating strategic goals to motivate employees and support the organization's overall vision and strategic goals. Chapter objectives are to

- Establish the importance of strategic and operational *planning* as a fundamental supervisory responsibility
- Provide a framework for setting clear, challenging, and measurable team goals
- Introduce the plan-do-check-act cycle as a resource for achieving high performance.

This chapter will help you answer these questions:

- Are you communicating your vision throughout your department or division?
- How do you set strategic goals for your unit?
- What is continuous improvement?
- What strategic and operational issues should you address to monitor progress and evaluate effectiveness?

Before you became a supervisor, you were responsible only for your own work. Now you are responsible for taking your organization's vision and strategic goals and turning them into action through the work of your employees. Carrying out that supervisory role begins with understanding your organization's strategic plan and then connecting it to your division's day-to-day work.

Many local government organizations have a formally adopted strategic plan that includes a vision, mission, values, and goals to guide the organization for several years. The governing body and chief administrative officer (CAO) usually work together to develop the strategic plan, sometimes with input from the community. Goals, objectives, and tactics are often developed each year in conjunction with the annual budget process to provide operating guidance for all departments.

Author Barbara Flynn Buehler appreciatively recognizes the contribution of E. Gordon Maner, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENTS

Vision: What the organization strives to be; a statement of a desirable future

Mission: What the organization does to move toward the vision

Values: What the organization stands for, believes in; guiding principles for service delivery

Goals: Specific outcomes to be achieved by departments, divisions, and individuals

Tactics: Specific short-term steps to help achieve the goals; a strategic to-do list

Measures: quantitative or qualitative indicators of progress.

If your organization has a strategic plan, one of your first actions should be to review the plan. Focus particularly on the mission and vision statement. The most effective mission and vision statements are clear, easy to understand, and motivating. They provide the basis for action in departments and divisions and encourage unity of purpose among local leaders and employees.

As a supervisor, your challenge is to translate the organization vision and mission into a set of measurable goals and objectives for your unit. Those goals and objectives are best developed in partnership with your employees so you can create an overall vision for your work team. Ultimately, each employee should develop performance goals that define individual contributions toward achieving team goals.

Start with vision

A local government's vision starts at the top of the organization and cascades down though each level until it reaches every individual. Each department must decide how it will contribute to that vision.

For example, your organization's vision may be to make your community the safest area to live. The police department may contribute to that vision by having an officer in every neighborhood. The public works department may contribute by placing street lights on every corner. The fire department may contribute by conducting fire inspections in every home and business. Because the vision has been communicated to all departments, each department can contribute to the desired outcome.

Creating strategic goals

Goal setting is a powerful tool for motivating a work team. A goal is a target that defines an outcome to be achieved. Effective supervisors must be able to guide their work units in developing clear goals that support the organizational mission. The most useful goals are clear, challenging, and measureable. The clearer the vision (for all parties involved), the more inspiring that vision is; the more specific the goals are, the more successful your team will be in achieving desired results both collectively and individually. Employees who share an inspirational vision fully understand what they are expected to do and are more likely to get the work done right.

Two useful tools for working with employees to set strategic goals are VISTA[1] and SMART[2]. Both are acronyms that define typical components of successful goals.

VISTA Goals	SMART Goals
Visualized	**S**pecific
Inspirational	**M**easureable
Specific	**A**ttainable
Time Bound	**R**elevant
Assessable	**T**imely

The following section summarizes how you can use the VISTA model with your team to develop successful strategic goals.

Visualized

The first step in creating goals is to *visualize t*he outcome. What is the mental picture of success, whether the outcome is repaving fifty miles of streets or constructing a spreadsheet to keep track of completed building inspections? Once employees have this picture in mind, they'll be better able to describe specific objectives and outcomes. When a work team collaborates to create a shared mental picture of desired goals, team members become committed to working toward the same outcome.

Inspirational

The second step is to make the visualized outcome *inspirational.* An inspirational leader talks about the importance of the work. Why is the outcome important to your organization, your managers, and the community? You can help your employees understand the "why" behind their work and periodically remind them about it and the added value they provide.

Specific

The third step is to make the visualized and inspirational outcome *specific* by adding details about what is expected. For example, if improved customer service is a goal, define who the customers are, what constitutes improvement, and how you will know that service to the target audience is better than it was before.

Time bound

The fourth step is to set a *deadline* for achieving your outcome. This will help you create a detailed schedule to meet that deadline. You may need a rough sketch of your schedule at this stage in order to estimate a finish date. It's important to be realistic when estimating deadlines so that you don't overpromise or underdeliver.

Assessable

The final step is to establish measures to gauge progress toward the outcome. A goal that includes something you can count is *assessable*. Examples of assessable goals include: collect $10 million in fees, resurface five miles of pavement, or receive ratings of good or excellent from 80 percent of customers.

Your goal-setting process will help you and your team answer these questions:

- Are we focusing on the right activities to reach the desired vision?
- Are resources being spent on activities that will accomplish the desired outcome?
- Are deadlines being met?

Linking measurement to division and individual goals helps employees understand how their performance will be assessed. It also gives you objective data for monitoring progress. When employees realize that there is a clear link between their daily job responsibilities and how their performance will be measured, they feel more in control of their work life and are inspired to contribute to the organization's vision.

Developing a procedures manual

For routine work procedures, a manual that outlines in detail the standard operating procedures for major activities of your work unit can be a helpful tool. The manual can provide a basis for goal setting, planning and scheduling jobs, and monitoring and evaluating work performance. By explicitly laying out job standards, as well as the methods to be used to achieve them, a manual can also help you to evaluate both procedures and standards.

A good manual

- Identifies the goals and standards that have been established for specific jobs within an organizational unit or function
- Breaks down work processes into tasks and activities, and presents those tasks and activities in the order in which they should be performed
- Outlines the steps that are necessary to perform a job productively and safely.

You may want to involve your work unit in the development of the procedures manual to give employees a sense of ownership and allow them to make process improvements in the course of developing the manual. If you already have a procedures manual, ask your employees to review current work procedures to identify processes that could be made more efficient, more customer oriented, or safer. Existing procedures manuals should be reviewed on a regular basis to make sure they reflect the actual work and to identify improvements to current processes.

Planning the work and working the plan

Once you have a vision, clear goals for your work, and clear processes in place for how to accomplish the work, it is your job to guide your team to achieve results. Even the most motivated and responsible employees benefit from regular guidance in achieving their goals. Your responsibility as a supervisor is to provide structure and order to your team's work.

One approach to providing structure is the "plan–do–check–act cycle" for continuous improvement. Also called the Deming Wheel, the plan–do–check–act cycle was created by Dr. W. Edwards Deming to ensure quality control and high performance in the workplace. The following sections show how this approach can be used to help you manage, monitor, and evaluate work.

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Step 1: Plan

High-performing work teams see their supervisors as very good planners. When you take on supervisory responsibilities, planning becomes more important than ever before. You have to look ahead to plan activities and schedule events not only for yourself, but also for your team. As a supervisor, you are responsible for strategic planning, operational planning, and individual planning with each employee you supervise.

Strategic planning involves setting priorities in relation to the organization's vision. For supervisors, strategic planning means asking these questions:

- What activities or projects contribute to the organization's vision?
- What work will support the team's goals?
- Which activities are most important?
- When must each component of the work be completed?
- What management support, resources, and equipment or materials are needed to complete the project?
- Which team members will work on which projects or activities?

Operational planning involves breaking a strategic plan into the specific steps required to accomplish the work. Breaking plans down into bite-size pieces will make the activities more manageable for you and your staff. Depending on the nature of your team's work, operational planning may be done on a monthly, weekly, or even daily basis. Operational plans involve

- A clear statement of the specific work goals to be accomplished
- A description of ways to measure progress and results
- A step-by-step description of the tasks requiring completion
- The order in which tasks should be completed to accomplish the goals
- Time schedules for all employees and required equipment or other resources needed to get the job done

- Materials needed to get the job done
- Data required to measure whether you are meeting your goals.

Some supervisors do their planning in their heads and tell their employees about the plans in group meetings or by talking to individuals. This may work well for some situations, especially if the planning is simple and the job is small. In most cases, however, written plans work better. Team members can review the plans whenever they need to and use them to check on work progress. Most important, a written work plan can be consulted when you aren't available.

Planning is a habit you can and should develop. The clearer your picture is of what you are trying to do, the more likely it is to get done.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Continuous improvement is an ongoing effort to improve products, services, or processes. Here are some questions you may want to ask yourself and your employees to streamline work processes:

- Are there any work activities that can be combined to save time, effort, materials, or space?
- Can we improve efficiency by changing the way work is done? For example, can we upgrade equipment or develop more useful forms to improve efficiency over the long run?
- Can we eliminate or simplify parts of jobs without lowering work or service quality?

These are also questions you may want to ask your customers, both internal and external, because they have a different perspective on your work than you and your team.

Many local governments have specific forms or online project management tools that supervisors can use to plan their work. If yours does not, you can create your own using common spreadsheet software or even something as simple as a piece of graph paper and a pen. Start by listing the major tasks to be accomplished and estimate how long it will take to complete each task.

SAMPLE PLANNING FORM

Office Remodel Plan	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Move furniture/boxes out of office area	■			
Remodel office		■	■	
Move furniture/boxes back in				■

Once you have developed this plan of action, you will need to schedule the time to use the needed resources (people, equipment, materials, money, and space) to get the work done. The most important aspect of this job is scheduling time for the employees who will be doing the work. You must make sure that your employees are not expected to be in more than one place at a time, and that the workload is divided fairly. While you cannot always avoid conflicts with employees' personal plans (vacations, medical appointments, kids' soccer matches), you can talk to each employee before scheduling his or her time so that conflicts are minimized. While you can try to resolve conflicts, your first responsibility is to ensure that the team gets the work done.

SAMPLE EMPLOYEE SCHEDULE: WHO WILL DO WHAT BY WHEN

Office Remodel Plan	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Move furniture/boxes out of office area	Sally Harry			
Remodel office		Paint: Tom Carpet: Dick Trim: Harry		
Move furniture/boxes back in				Sally Harry

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

No matter how carefully you plan, unexpected things happen. There may be a blizzard, a flu epidemic, an equipment breakdown, or a new project from your supervisor that demands immediate attention. So you need to expect the unexpected by setting aside a day or two in your project and work schedules for unforeseen delays. You should have enough contingency days to take care of the unexpected, but not so many that your unit becomes inefficient.

For some emergencies, such as natural disasters, you may need more than a few contingency days in your schedule. You should know in advance what you and your team must do in case of a major emergency, especially those that are most likely to occur in your area. Train your employees to always be prepared. Indeed, they should be able to handle all emergencies whether you are there or not. A work team that is always prepared is one indication of effective supervision.

Step 2: Do

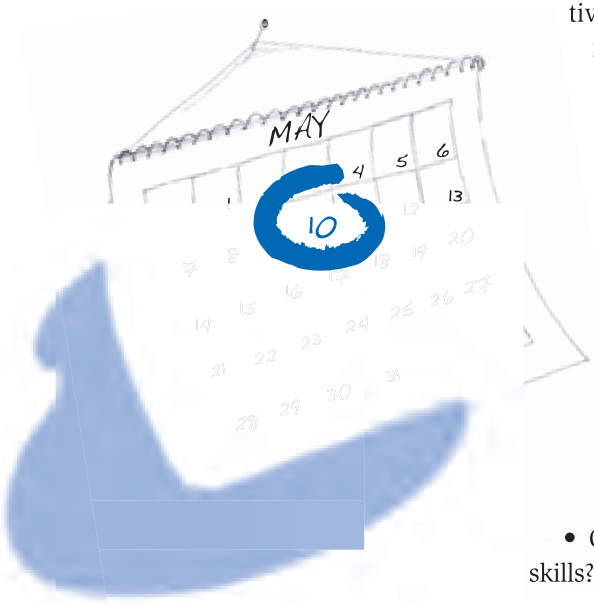
Most of the operational tasks in your work unit should be completed by your employees, not you. Your responsibilities as a supervisor demand more attention to overall management and strategic leadership duties, and less time on technical work.

Delegation helps you get the work done by empowering your employees. It gives team members more opportunities to learn and grow, and it can make their jobs more challenging and interesting. Instead of doing the work, you will spend more time coaching employees to ensure that they are successful.

Encouraging employees to stretch their abilities boosts morale as you demonstrate your trust in them. It also presents opportunities for new ideas, improved operations, and professional growth.

Step 3: Check

Checking involves monitoring progress, evaluating effectiveness, and rethinking approaches to getting the work done based on initial results. It's not enough to simply "do" the work; an effec-



tive supervisor regularly monitors the work and evaluates the results to make sure the team stays on track. You can use your strategic and operational plans to monitor progress on goals and constantly assess whether the team's work is on time, within budget, adequately staffed, and producing high-quality results. At any time, effective supervisors know exactly how much progress has been made on the work for which they are responsible.

Good supervisors regularly ask *strategic* questions to monitor progress and evaluate effectiveness:

- Are we on schedule?
- Is the work being done correctly?
- Are we achieving expected quality and service levels?
- Can we improve on our processes as the work continues?
- Could any part of the operation be improved by teaching new skills?

Good supervisors also ask *operational* questions more frequently to monitor short-term programs and make interim adjustments:

- Has all work scheduled for today been completed?
- What work must be carried over?
- How will this affect tomorrow's work?
- Why does work have to be carried over? What caused the delay?
- What changes can we make to avoid future delays?
- Will I need to change tomorrow's work schedule in order to get today's unfinished work done?
- Is all equipment operating properly?
- Did all supplies come in as scheduled?
- Are there any absences this week that were not in the plan? How will those absences affect the work schedule?

- Have I done or checked on everything that I committed to do or check on today?
- What should I give special attention to tomorrow?
- Were there any objectives, tasks, or activities completed earlier than scheduled?
- What can we learn from the results that are ahead of schedule?

With practice, you'll find that you can zip through this operational list in a few minutes. When you finish running through your checklist, you will know whether the work is on track and you will be ready for the next day or the next week. Even if the work is not on track, you will know what's wrong and how to get back on track.

Effective supervisors regularly assess work progress and quality. That means checking on your employees' performance in the context of the work's progress and quality rather than checking up on the employees themselves. If you are going to earn your employees' respect as a team leader, they should feel that you trust them.

Step 4: Act

The findings that arise from the "check" step determine the "act" step. For example, if you discover that the work has fallen behind schedule, an employee is having difficulty with a particular task, or an unintended consequence has developed, you must act on that new information. You might decide to revise the schedule, provide additional coaching or training for your struggling employee, or meet with your team and/or your manager to develop a strategy to respond to the new, unintended consequence you discovered. This step provides an opportunity to revise plans, improve work processes, and adjust schedules based on the strategic and operational reviews you have conducted. Step 4 ensures that you follow through on executing necessary adjustments to ensure a successful outcome.

The lessons learned through this cycle can then be used to return to Step 1 to revise, update, and improve your plans. Continuous improvement helps achieve continued high performance.

Plan–do–check–act with employees

You can also use the plan–do–check–act cycle to manage individual employee performance.

Plan

Start by challenging your employees to plan their own work using these questions:

- What are you going to do to carry out your assigned tasks?
- Why and for what purpose?
- How can you use this task to make progress on our goals?
- How will you do it?
- Who should be involved or kept informed?
- What will you do if something goes wrong or something unexpected happens?

Planning the operational work of your employees should be refined on a daily basis. Taking five minutes at the start of each employee's day to review these questions will enable you to become more involved with your employees without intruding on their work. Your daily planning meetings can be quick and informal. In fact, some supervisors consciously stand when conducting daily check-ins to keep them brief and focused. If the employee is anticipating a problem or is unsure of plans for the day, you can move to a more formal setting for joint planning.

Do

If an employee is new or unfamiliar with a task, you can coach him or her at this stage to increase comfort and familiarity with the work. Make sure your employees have the information they need to succeed and are prepared to act on their own; this will allow you to delegate tasks more confidently.

Based on what you learn through coaching, you can decide whether to stay involved in the doing of the activity or to ask a co-worker to demonstrate a process or expectation while the new employee observes.

Check

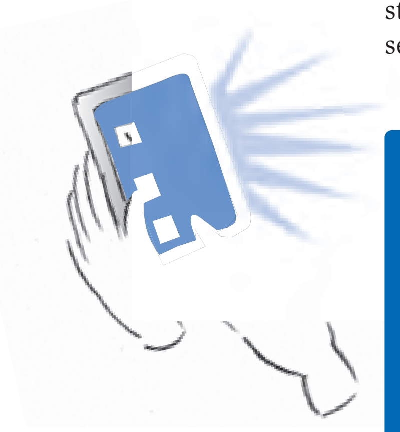
Checking involves focusing on performance outcomes rather than specific work processes or approaches. You may find it difficult to let go of a task that you know well or were responsible for in the past. Supervising means asking the right questions and coaching the employee to do that task as well as you once did it. Does the work meet quality and quantity standards? Is it on schedule? Is it achieving its intended goal and supporting the team and organization's larger vision? Invite your employees to be part of assessing how the work is going by asking what they think could be done differently to help achieve the goal.

Act

Good supervisors make feedback a regular practice for themselves and their team. You can give feedback in one-on-one meetings with employees or as part of regular staff meetings. Be sure to describe what you expect when you give this feedback. "Here's what we learned. Next time let's do it this way." It is important to review all work regardless of the outcome of the task. You are probably more likely to zero in on less-than-satisfactory work; that's human nature. Successes, however, provide valuable lessons that can apply to other tasks or help achieve continued high performance. When employees get regular feedback, both correction and praise, they are more willing to accept additional responsibility and participate in improvement efforts and activities.

Summary

Success for a supervisor is not getting everything done, but getting the *right* things done well. Developing effective goals, planning work carefully, monitoring progress regularly, making necessary adjustments to plans and work processes, and providing regular feedback to all employees will help you guide and develop your staff to produce desired results. As a supervisor, you must be able to help employees understand their work and its importance, gain satisfaction from doing it well, and build self-esteem to achieve immediate goals and further their professional development.



CHECKLIST

- Remember that effective supervisors spend much more time planning than do less effective supervisors.
- Start with a vision for your unit that supports the organization's vision and mission.
- Create goals that are clear, challenging, and measureable.
- Make sure your employees fully understand what they are expected to do.
- Create work schedules to implement your plans.
- Monitor progress and evaluate effectiveness regularly so that your team stays on track.
- Be willing to revise plans, improve work processes, and adjust schedules based on strategic and operational reviews.

Endnotes

1 Ross Page, *Everyone Agrees With TOM!* (London, United Kingdom: Ross Page, 2007).

2 George Doran, "There's a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management's Goals and Objectives," *Management Review* 70 (November 1981; AMA FORUM), 35–36. [According to Wikipedia, this is the first reference to S.M.A.R.T. goals.]


RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
PLANNING & PREPARATION
EVALUATING WORK FOR QUALITY & PRIORITY
TASKS
IMPORTANT & NOT URGENT
DELEGATE IT
FRED
LORETTA
DENISE
ANN
TONY
LEE
TO DO LATER
DONE
DONE

5

ORGANIZING YOUR WORK AND TIME

Barbara Flynn Buehler

The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot.

Michael Altshuler, entrepreneur and motivational speaker

SNAPSHOT

Your success as a supervisor depends on your ability to organize your work and to help your employees organize their time to achieve agreed-upon outcomes. This chapter provides practical tools for organizing work and time. Chapter objectives are to

- Make supervisors aware of the importance of effective planning and the value of setting priorities
- Provide tools and techniques for setting priorities, scheduling work, and managing assignments, paperwork, and e-mail
- Offer strategies for making the best use of meeting time.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- How can you best manage your own time?
- How can you plan work and time to keep stress out of the work day?
- What tools can you use to set priorities and stay focused on your most pressing responsibilities?
- How do you avoid or overcome procrastination?
- What are your responsibilities in running effective meetings?

When you take on supervisory responsibilities, planning becomes more important than ever before. Good planning will

- Help you stay on top of work responsibilities
- Make sure that you put time and resources into activities that the organization has identified as essential to accomplishing its vision
- Allow you to assess progress toward desired outcomes and next steps to take to produce better results
- Give you time to do the activities that you must do and want to do
- Reduce stress.

Author Barbara Flynn Buehler appreciatively recognizes the contribution of E. Gordon Maner, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

Your brain can juggle a number of thoughts at one time. But just like a juggler, if you have too many balls in the air, you're likely to drop some. Have you ever reminded yourself to pick up something at the store all day long, and when you got to the store, forgotten what you came for? Your brain has dropped a ball.

When you try to do your planning in your head, it is inevitable that you will forget something. So, is planning just making lists of things to do? Will you be successful when everything is crossed off your list? Not if what is on that list doesn't help you to accomplish your organization's vision! You must prioritize your work.

Use the Eisenhower Matrix to Prioritize

General Dwight D. Eisenhower developed a fairly simple system to prioritize the many competing demands he faced as president of the United States. He recognized that tasks have not only importance but also urgency. Importance is based on an activity's value to the vision of the organization and how it contributes to the organization's mission, leadership's priorities, and your work goals. Urgency may not have anything to do with the organization's vision or accomplishing results. Urgency

The Eisenhower Matrix

Spend more time in Box B to reduce the demands and stress of Boxes A and C. Try to avoid Box D by organizing your to-do list so that you always know what's next when you have time available.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	**Box A** Crises Deadlines A few phone calls	**Box B** Planning and preparation Evaluating work for quality and priority Relationship building
Not Important	**Box C** Interruptions Some phone calls Some drop-ins	**Box D** Time wasters Trivial distractions Idle chit-chat Internet surfing

means a task requires immediate attention. Some phone calls are urgent, in part because most people can't ignore a ringing phone. Urgent matters insist on action. But they are not always important. The reason someone calls is often not as important as what you were working on before the telephone interruption. If you don't have a clear idea of the importance of a task, it is easy to be driven by the urgent.

If you are spending too much time putting out fires, you are responding to the urgent, not the important. You can change this pattern by spending more time planning to help you identify what is really important. With a good plan in place, you're more able to complete tasks before they become crises or problems. Putting out fires produces stress and is an inefficient use of the organization's resources. A steady diet of stress has been shown to cause employee turnover and health problems. Spending 80 percent of your time on what has importance (your goals and objectives), rather than on what just has urgency (telephone calls and e-mails), will make you and your team high performers. It pays to plan.

Prioritize your tasks

Your first step in organizing your work is to put your strategic goals where you will see them while planning your daily work. How can you decide what is a priority and what can wait if you don't have your goals and objectives in mind when making those decisions? Your highest strategic priorities are the tasks that support your vision. Your most urgent priorities are the tasks with approaching deadlines. You must make time for both.

The most common way to organize tasks is to create a to-do list. Some people try to keep a number of task lists separately: one for home, one for work, and one for professional and social organizations. Unfortunately, when you have more than one task list, you never have the one you need when you need it. Many productivity experts suggest organizing all tasks collectively on one list so that you can easily see the demands on your time.

ABC-123 is a popular method for prioritizing to-do lists. Here's how it works:

1. Review your list and write an *A* next to every high-priority item, a *C* next to every low-priority item, and a *B* next to every item that deserves medium priority.
2. Then, review the *A* items and put a *1* next to the item you must complete first, a *2* next to the second highest priority among the *A*s, and so on.
3. Next, mark the highest-priority *B* item with a *1*, the next highest *B* with a 2, and so on.

When you're finished, every item on your list will be coded so that you can attack your list in priority order: *A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3, C1, C2*, and *C3*. As soon as you finish one task you know where to turn your attention next.

Schedule your work

Once you've established a prioritized to-do list, move your tasks onto your calendar to schedule the time needed to complete your tasks. It doesn't help to have great lists if you don't have time to complete the tasks on those lists.

You can block out sections of time to work on strategic responsibilities like planning and evaluation. Avoid phone calls, e-mails, and other distractions while you work on these important but not urgent priorities. When you finish focusing on strategic work, you can check your messages and handle the most pressing issues quickly, the same way you would after a long meeting. Without blocking out segments of uninterrupted time for strategic work, you are unlikely to ever get it done. The urgent work will take precedence.

Organizing your calendar is easier thanks to today's technology. Mobile devices can be synchronized with the calendar on your desktop or one that lives in an Internet-based environment. You can add tasks or schedule time to complete those tasks from anywhere. When you set up calendars to be shared, you can schedule meetings and easily find a time when all the participants can attend without sending multiple e-mails or making dozens of phone calls. If you aren't sure how to take advantage of the functionality of the technology available to you, seek training or some coaching from a co-worker who is familiar with these tools. Because managing your time is so important to your success as a supervisor, it is worth it to find and learn how to use the best tools available.

Managing assignments, paperwork, and e-mail

Supervisors often leave a management meeting with a list of new assignments, while other tasks come in writing, by e-mail, or through personal conversations. As the demands pile up, you need to focus on collecting all these tasks in a single place. You then can set priorities and organize your work quickly to coordinate new assignments with existing responsibilities. The following sections provide some tools for managing assignments, paperwork, and e-mails.

Separating information from action

In reviewing memos, e-mails, telephone messages, and meeting action lists, separate information provided to you as a courtesy from action requests. Information provided to you as a courtesy may be sorted into four categories:

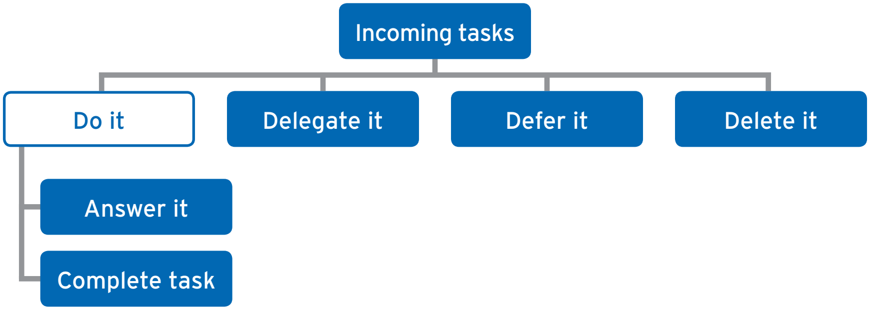
1. Read it and file it away
2. If it takes more than a couple of minutes to read, move it to a folder to read later (defer it)
3. Pass it along to someone else (delegate it)
4. Delete it or throw it away.

You'll be more productive if you select the appropriate category the first time you look at something. Avoid wasting time figuring out what to do with the information.

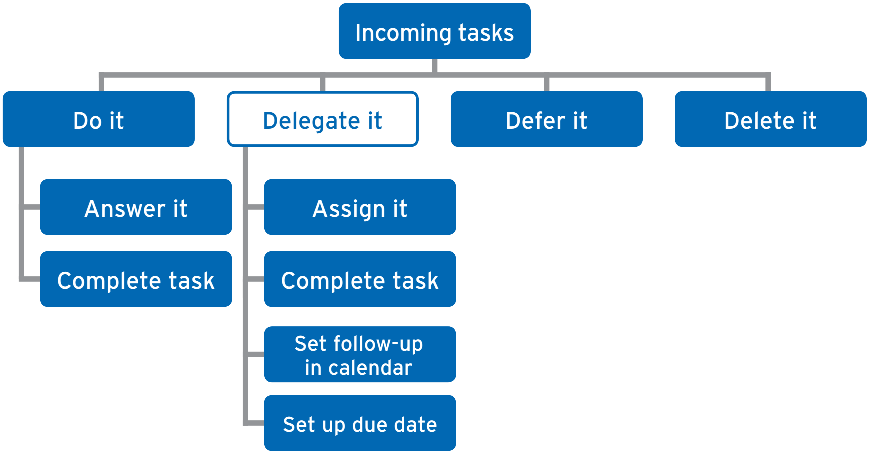
Action requests can be categorized similarly in these four categories:

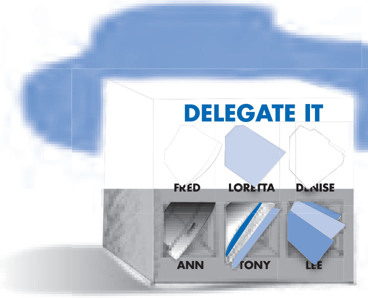
1. Do it
2. Delegate it
3. Defer it
4. Delete it.

If completing the task will only take a minute or two, then just do it! It will take you longer to come back to it later than to take care of it now.



If the task can or should be assigned to someone else, forward the e-mail or route the paperwork with the assignment to the appropriate person. Whenever you delegate, be sure to clarify your expectations and give a firm due date. You should also give an immediate deadline for the person to confirm to you that he or she received the assignment and is working on it. Also, set interim deadline dates for status reports, particularly if it is a longer-term assignment. Make a note of these deadlines in your own calendar to monitor that they are met on time.

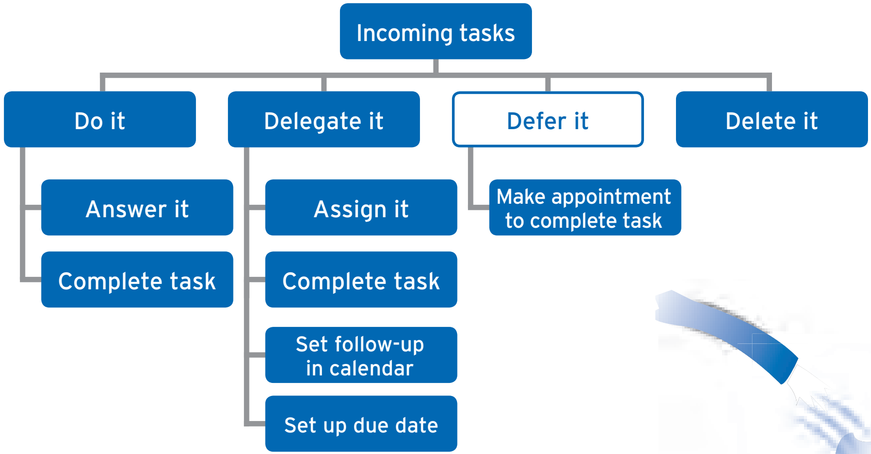




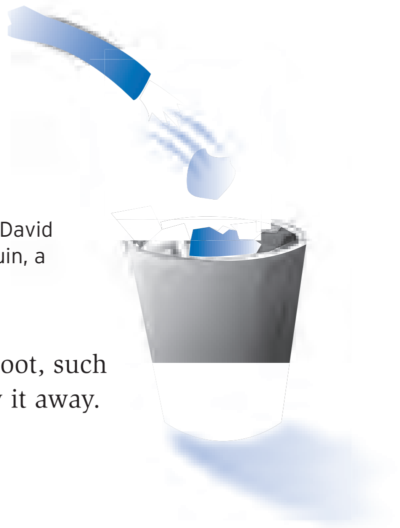
SUPERVISORY TIP: DELEGATE MORE!

One of the most common management mistakes is not delegating enough. Your employees are on your team to do the work. Let them do it. Delegation frees you from focusing too much on technical work at the expense of the strategic management and leadership responsibilities that are essential to your supervisory role.

If the task cannot be completed in a few minutes or delegated, you should defer it. The best way to defer a task is to set up a specific time in your schedule to complete the task. Make an appointment with yourself to get the task done. In most e-mail systems, you can connect an e-mail to an appointment, so that when you go to complete the task all the information you need is connected to that appointment.



"Workflow Diagram – Processing," from Getting Things Done by David Allen, ©2001 by David Allen. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.



Finally, if the request requires no action or has become moot, such as an e-mail that is more than a month old, delete it or throw it away.

Using folders to organize action

Creating a system of paper and electronic folders will help you manage the huge volume of information that you have acted on or need for future action. When you have taken action on an e-mail or piece of paper, you can move it to an e-mail or paper file folder to maintain the information while minimizing the clutter. Examples of electronic and paper folders that will help you organize information for action include

- Your top objectives or special projects numbered in priority order
- Your employees by name and their top priorities
- Administrative information to support your work.

The advantage of using the same structure for both electronic and paper filing is that you only have to learn one system. You are more likely to be able to find what you are looking for if you arrange both systems in the same order. You also don't have to maintain paper duplicates of electronic copies.

If possible, you should set aside time each day to read e-mail, sort paperwork, and return phone calls. Usually two or three times a day is enough for checking e-mail. If you were in a meeting that lasted several hours, your e-mail wouldn't get answered while you were in that meeting. Use the same standard for setting aside time for management responsibilities like planning and evaluation.

SUPERVISORY TIP: DON'T GET TEMPTED BY E-MAIL

E-mail is both a remarkable tool for instant communication and a frequent time waster. Don't let e-mail become a constant interruption: turn off e-mail alerts that tell you a new e-mail is in your inbox. Hearing an alert will tempt you to interrupt current work to check the new e-mail. Studies show that if you check e-mail immediately upon receiving an alert, you will consume more than twenty-three minutes before returning to what you are working on. More than 61 percent of alert checkers never return to what they were working on before the interruption.

Conquer procrastination

Procrastination is delaying action items that should be done now. If you're a procrastinator, you might be tempted to defer your most important tasks even though you have a clearly prioritized task list. Some people are motivated by tight deadlines so they wait until the last minute to start working on a project. Others may be intimidated by a particularly tough assignment so they put it off in favor of easier or more familiar tasks. And, others are paralyzed by the perfectionism that interferes with getting the job started or finished. Whatever the reason, procrastination often produces personal stress and anxiety. These feelings can promote further procrastination, leading to a spiraling loss of productivity, and failure to meet important deadlines or successfully complete job responsibilities.

You can overcome procrastination! The key is to identify your reasons for procrastinating and eliminate or minimize obstacles to making progress on your responsibilities within agreed-upon deadlines.

Procrastination is a habit that you can choose to change. The organization systems described in this chapter will help you tackle this challenge.

Managing meetings

As a supervisor, you will spend significant time in meetings. There are four basic types of meetings:

1. **Daily check-in** This meeting is generally brief and covers only a single subject. An example might be when you meet with your team to give employees assignments for the day. Another use might be when team members get together to report on their activities for that day. It should last no longer than five minutes and can be conducted standing up. The purpose of the *daily check-in* is to help team members avoid confusion about how priorities are translated into action each day and to make sure nothing falls through the cracks on a given day. It is a powerful tool that eliminates unnecessary and time-consuming e-mail chains to coordinate schedules and avoids duplication of effort.
2. **Staff tactical meeting** This meeting focuses on tactical issues and is likely to last from forty-five to ninety minutes. It should start with team members

Causes of Procrastination	Tips for Tackling Procrastination
Dislike the task	• Make a game of it • Set an artificial deadline for yourself • Visualize the relief you'll feel when it's done • Reward yourself with the promise of a fun task once it's done
Bored	• Work for a fixed period of time on the task • Where possible, trade tasks with someone else • Take a short break, then come back to it
Too tired	• Get up and walk around • Focus on a simpler task for a set period of time • Set aside a specific time to get the tough task done when you have more energy • Get plenty of rest leading up to a big project • Drink water and eat nutritious foods to keep your brain fueled
Afraid of failing	• Set clear goals and expectations • List potential obstacles and ideas to resolve them • Consider your strengths and how you can use them • Make a list of who could help you and ask them for help • Take small steps and keep going
Competing commitments	• Understand your choices among tasks • Seek clarification from authority figures to prioritize competing tasks they have assigned to you • Commit as much to your own necessary tasks as you commit to satisfying requests from others • Explain conflicts to others and talk through possible solutions
Don't know where to start	• Break the task into smaller subtasks • Prioritize the subtasks with deadlines • Talk it through with someone who likes organizing things • Establish rewards for meeting subtask deadlines
Resentment of an imposed task	• Identify the cause of the resentment • Discuss issues if another person is involved • Consider whether it might be fair within your commitments and responsibilities, even if you don't like it • Create a plan for change • Just get it done to be able to move on

providing brief reports on the two or three highest-priority activities they have worked on for a specific period. After each team member has reported, the group should review progress on the measurements they have identified on each of the team's goals. This process should take no more than five to ten minutes. Avoid lengthy discussions of obstacles. Devote the rest of the agenda to tactical issues that must be addressed in order to meet the team's objectives.

Topics you might want to cover at *staff tactical meetings* include follow-up from any outstanding business from the previous meeting and recognition of group or individual accomplishments since the last meeting. Are you covering the most important issues at these regular meetings? Check with participants at the end of the meeting to identify issues they feel should be discussed at the next tactical meeting.

3. **Monthly strategic meeting** Strategic meetings are used to analyze and make decisions on critical issues that will affect the department or organization in fundamental ways. The meeting allows team members to explore a topic in depth without the distraction of deadlines and tactical concerns. Prepare and distribute an agenda in advance so team members can come to the meeting prepared to make decisions. Meetings of this type generally take up to two hours per topic. Plan to have drinks and/or snacks available if the meetings last longer than an hour and a half. Energy levels can drop drastically when working over an extended time period. An example of the type of issue best discussed in a strategic meeting is reorganizing a department.
4. **Quarterly review** A quarterly review is used to look at the organization as a whole and may involve staff beyond your immediate team. Participants from different departments share their perspectives on major strategic issues. Hold these meetings periodically to allow strategic changes to be made based on current trends.

Some meetings feel like time wasters. The best way to maximize meeting time is to plan and lead better meetings. Here's how to maximize your time in meetings.

Step 1: Create an agenda

The top of the agenda should indicate the name of the group that is meeting (e.g., engineering division); the type of meeting (e.g., biweekly staff meeting); and the date, start and end times, and location of the meeting. The agenda should then list each topic of discussion for the meeting and the estimated amount of time for each topic. If appropriate, identify who will make presentations or take the lead on each topic. For example, if you are inviting people to share the status of key projects and/or progress toward strategic goals, they should be told in advance so they will be prepared. You may want to allow time for a "lightning round" during which employees share what they have worked on in one- to two-minute presentations.

If you don't have any topics to place on an agenda, consider canceling the meeting even if it is considered a "regular" meeting.

Step 2: Distribute the agenda

Always distribute the agenda at least one day in advance of the meeting so team members come prepared to discuss the identified topics. If you want to review a long document or other information, distribute that information in advance to allow time for review and thinking before the meeting. You might need to remind participants to bring their copy of the information to the meeting.

Step 3: Chair the meeting

As meeting chair, you should manage both the time and the topics covered to make for a more successful outcome. A key to being a good meeting chair is to respect people's time by starting and ending on time. When you build a reputation for running a time-sensitive meeting, your team and other meeting participants will respond to your expectations by arriving on time. You can manage the time spent in the meeting by keeping the discussion focused on the agenda topics. If the conversation begins to stray to another issue, bring the discussion back to today's topics while also writing the unrelated topic on a list of issues to be put on a future agenda. Commit to revisiting the unrelated topic at the next meeting or shortly thereafter, and take responsibility for putting it on a future agenda.

Step 4: Listen

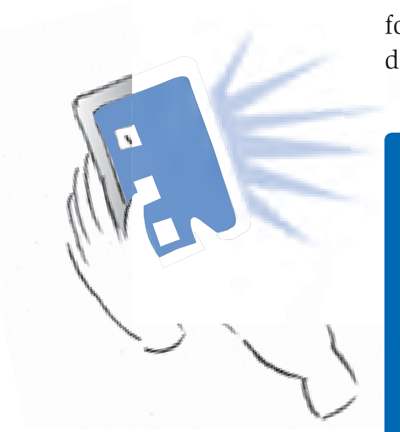
A successful meeting chair makes sure everyone has an opportunity to participate and be heard. If one or two participants dominate the conversation, invite a quieter member of the team to comment. If there are people who have not participated at all, ask them for their opinions. Once the subject is talked out, move on.

Step 5: Summarize outcomes, actions, and responsibilities

Wrap up each meeting by summarizing key points and follow-up action items. Identify lead responsibilities and deadlines. For the sake of clarity and closure, allow time for final questions or issues that need to be addressed. Ask if there are any requests or suggestions for topics for the next meeting. Set the date and time for the next meeting, thank everyone for their time, and adjourn the meeting.

Step 6: Prepare for your next meeting

Whenever possible, review your notes right after the meeting when the discussion is still fresh in your mind and begin drafting the next agenda. Keep all meeting notes for the same group filed together so that you can refer back to previous topics and discussions when necessary.



CHECKLIST

- Focus on planning to get the results you want.
- Identify your top priority and accomplish that first.
- Use "do it, delegate it, defer it, delete it" to manage incoming tasks.
- Decide with your team what must be done, where, and when.
- Manage your time by putting more of it into planning activities that will meet personal and organizational goals.
- Delegate.
- Make your meetings more productive by choosing the correct type of meeting and planning it.
- Don't procrastinate.

Supervisory situation 5-1

Joan, a supervisor in the personnel office, has more than 3,000 e-mails in her inbox. Joan can never find anything when she needs it and often misses deadlines.

1. What suggestions can you make to help Joan manage her inbox?
2. What categories would you expect Joan to use to set up her e-mail folders?

3. What would you do with the following items in her inbox:
   a. Memo from her immediate supervisor with today's date
   b. Memo from the chief administrative officer from more than three months ago
   c. Newsletter from a human resources organization
   d. Request for reclassification of a clerk in the finance department that is a month old
   e. An inappropriate e-mail from fellow supervisor
   f. Memo from a vendor regarding a contract renewal that is one week old
   g. Memo on a conference that Joan is unable to attend
   h. Request from another department head for list of employees who have been laid off
   i. Status report from an employee on a project that he is leading
   j. A work assignment from Joan's supervisor that Joan must complete within thirty days.

Supervisory situation 5-2

Time spent in meetings can be maximized by selecting the right kind of meeting to accomplish the desired outcomes. There are four basic types of meetings: daily check-in, staff tactical meeting, monthly strategic meeting, and quarterly review. Discuss what type of meeting you would use to accomplish the following outcomes:

a. Discuss consolidating two departments
b. Give a team a new project
c. Make sure that the streets are cleaned in a certain neighborhood
d. Balance an ongoing budget deficit for your department
e. Find out where your team members are on certain projects
f. Make a decision on where to put a new highway that goes through your town
g. Set goals for your department.

Supervisory situation 4-1

The stormwater drainage department has had the city's poorest safety record and the highest incidence of citizen complaints about appearance, attitude, and performance. The new department head recently called the first-line supervisors together to present the following challenge:

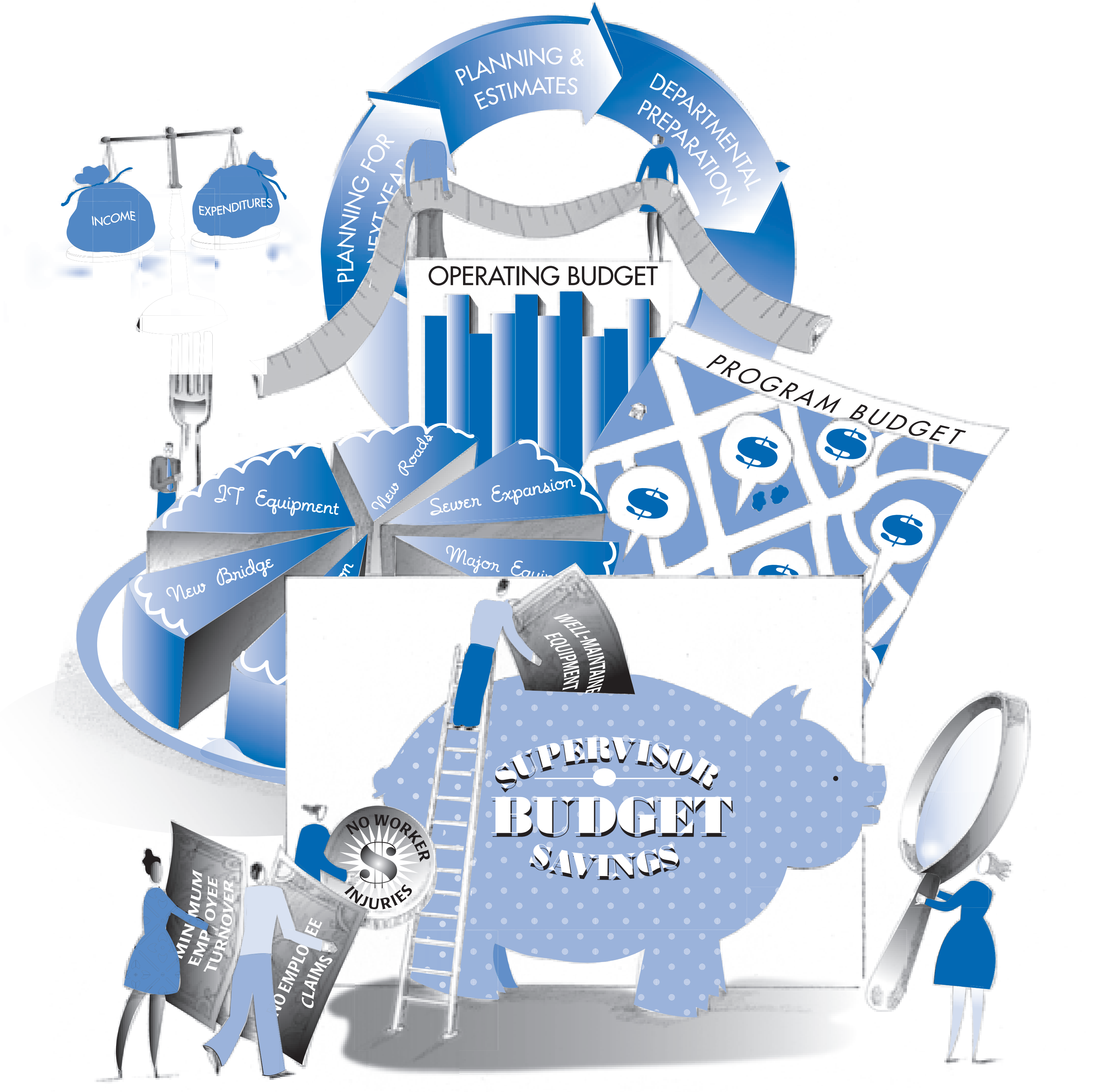
"We've got to do something about our department. I understand many of you have expressed concerns that you don't believe you're being paid enough, but it's difficult to justify a request for salary increases with our record of complaints and reputation for poor performance results. What would our department be like if things were better? I know we're capable of better performance. I want you to get together and write a vision statement for our department. After you write that vision statement, I would like you to develop three goals for your teams":

1. What would your vision statement be?
2. As a supervisor in the stormwater drainage department, what three goals would you write for yourself or for your team?
3. Would you talk to the employees to get their ideas and suggestions? What might be the benefit of talking with employees?

Supervisory situation 4-2

You are a supervisor in the Plainville Parks and Recreation Department. You head the Forestry Team. The vision of the city of Plainville is "the safest city in the state."

1. What would your vision statement be for your team?
2. Write three goals for your team that would contribute to the vision of the city.
3. What questions would you ask your employees on a daily basis to measure the achievement of these goals?



PLANNING & ESTIMATES
DEPARTMENTAL PREPARATION
PLANNING FOR
INCOME
EXPENDITURES
OPERATING BUDGET
PROGRAM BUDGET
IT Equipment
New Roads
Sewer Expansion
New Bridge
EQUIPMENT
SUPERVISOR
BUDGET
SAVINGS
NO WORKER INJURIES
CLAIMS

6

WORKING WITH THE BUDGET

Barbara Flynn Buehler

The American people deserve a budget that invests in the future, protects the most vulnerable among us, and helps to create jobs and economic security.

Carl Levin, United States senator

SNAPSHOT

This chapter covers what Mayor Henry Maier of Milwaukee once called the "world series of municipal government"—the budget. Chapter objectives are to

- Provide a comprehensive overview of local government budgeting, from initial development through planning for the next budget cycle
- Increase understanding of your role as a supervisor in all aspects of the budget process
- Examine how the local government budget affects day-to-day operations
- Increase your confidence in carrying out budgetary responsibilities.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- Why is a working knowledge of the budget important to your supervisory success?
- What is the difference between the operating budget and the capital budget?
- What is your responsibility in budget planning?
- What budget format does your local government use, and what are its benefits?
- How can you get the budget allocation needed to carry out division and program work goals?
- How can you have an impact on the overall direction of the budget?

An annual budget is a local government's single most important financial responsibility. It establishes plans and priorities for service delivery and communicates them to all stakeholders. The budget is where an organization allocates its resources to accomplish its vision and carry out agreed-upon strategic priorities. And, in most local governments, the budget ultimately determines the level of taxation.

The budget is an important resource for you as a local government supervisor. It gives you the authority to operate and provides clear guidelines and boundaries for your day-to-day activities. That's why it is important for you to understand every dimension of your local government budget and your role in preparing and

Author Barbara Flynn Buehler appreciatively recognizes the contribution of Sabrina Wiley Cape, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

implementing it each fiscal year. *Fiscal year* is the term used to describe the annual (twelve-month) budget cycle; sometimes it coincides with the calendar year, but just as often it does not. Preparation for any fiscal year budget can begin as much as five to eight months prior to the onset of the fiscal year.

Functions of the budget

The local government budget serves three important functions:

- Control
- Management
- Planning.

THE BUDGET: A MULTIPURPOSE DOCUMENT

The annual budget is

- A statement of priorities for the community
- A management blueprint for providing services
- The document that translates policies into action
- The legal authority for local government officials to raise revenue and spend money
- A tool for protecting the local government's long-term financial health
- A communication document for citizens that outlines services they can expect and how their tax dollars will be spent
- A guiding document for local employees to deliver agreed-upon services within established financial boundaries.

Leading Your Community: A Guide for Local Elected Leaders (Washington, DC: ICMA and the National League of Cities, 2008), 20. ©2008 ICMA and the National League of Cities.

Control tool

A local government budget is a legal document that defines how much money can be spent for day-to-day operations. Generally, state law defines the steps for approving an annual balanced budget so that expenditures don't exceed revenues for the fiscal year. Once the governing body approves the annual budget, it binds you and other government officials to work within the established financial framework. That means that unless you have approval, you may spend only the allocation in the budget for your department or division. During the fiscal year, expenditures will be monitored carefully to make sure all departments spend funds in accordance with the adopted budget. For example, if the budget calls for you to buy a new police car, you can't decide to hire a new police officer instead without a clear justification and approval from your department head, chief administrative officer (CAO), or the governing body.

Operating within approved budget parameters is an important supervisory responsibility. Because the programs and services for which you are responsible are supported by public tax dollars, it makes sense for you to be held accountable for spending decisions that you make while managing the resources entrusted to you. In addition, closely monitoring expenses during the year helps you make adjustments as needed to meet agreed-upon targets and provides valuable data for planning future budgets.

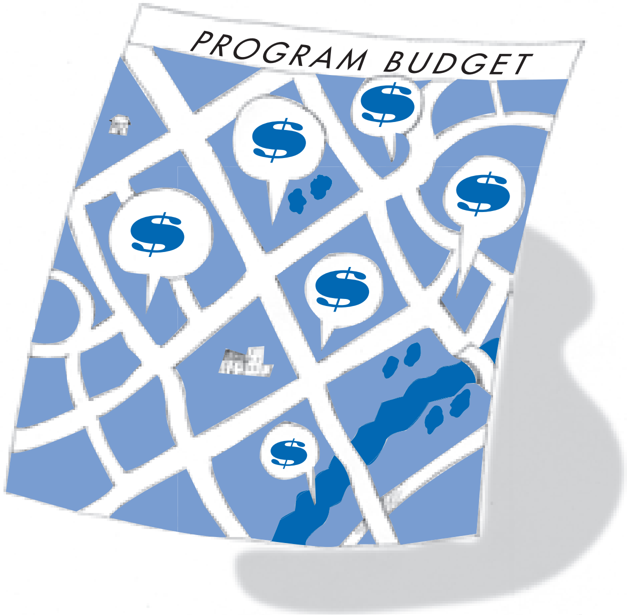
Management tool

The budget defines what your department plans to accomplish during the coming year. One of your budget responsibilities is to help your department head educate the CAO and elected officials about what you need in order to do the job they want you to do. Once the budget is set, your role is to constantly examine service delivery methods to ensure that they are as efficient as possible. For example, you may determine that the funds budgeted for the parks and recreation department can be spent most efficiently if large parks are maintained by municipal crews and small traffic medians by private contractors. Understanding your operating budget and the costs for services for which you are responsible will help you make wise decisions and use tax dollars effectively.

Planning tool

The budget

- priorities for the fiscal year
- Provides a roadmap for carrying out program and policy objectives set by elected officials
- Serves as a resource for planning outcomes in future years.
- A well-designed and carefully administered annual budget helps local government leaders think about how to make the best use of limited dollars. Some local governments prepare multiyear budgets to show how expenditures in the current year will affect future resource allocation. This maximizes the planning component of the annual budget.



Types of budgets

Most local governments have two separate budgets:

- The *operating budget* covers revenue estimates and planned expenditures for the year for all ongoing government activities.
- The *capital budget* covers revenue sources and planned expenditures for nonrecurring, multiyear items such as construction, equipment acquisition, or improvement of public facilities.

These two budgets are sometimes combined into a single budget document for the current fiscal year to show all current expenditures, but they are generally developed separately and considered as two distinct budgets by elected officials.

Operating budget

The operating budget is the local government's plan for allocating resources for personnel, supplies, equipment, and the operation of facilities during a fiscal year. Local governments use several kinds of operating budget formats. The most frequently used budget formats are line-item, program, and performance.

A **line-item budget** organizes financial information into categories of expenditure for each department, division, or agency. Generally, there are two broad expenditure categories: salaries and other expenses. A line-item budget provides a clear explanation of what will be purchased with tax revenues, offers strong central control over departmental expenditures, and helps elected officials compare the new budget with previous budgets. It is the most traditional budget format and is often used by smaller local governments.

A **program budget** presents financial information according to services to be provided, such as solid-waste collection, street sweeping, vehicle repair, public safety, and recreation. It shows the purposes for which money will be spent, focusing on program goals and outcomes rather than expense categories such as salaries and supplies. Program budgets often include some line-item detail in order to identify and control the cost factors for each program. Many large- and medium-size local governments use program budgets to connect major outcomes to expenditures. In addition, grant-funded activities that cross departmental lines are best presented in a program format.

A **performance budget** carries a program budget one step further by describing the amount of services to be provided for money spent. For example, a performance budget will list the number of miles of streets to be swept in a year and the cost per mile. Its focus is on what the local government will do during the fiscal year rather than what it will buy. This format is easier and more feasible to use than in the past because technology has improved the capacity to manage and monitor performance costs. Many local governments use a combination of formats, including program outcomes, performance measures, and line items in their annual budgets. This provides a broad picture of how public revenue will be used to deliver public services.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Performance measurement involves collecting data in a systematic and objective way to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. A well-designed performance measurement system provides data to support decision making, justify budget requests, improve overall performance, communicate progress, and provide accountability. Performance measures generally fall into these categories:

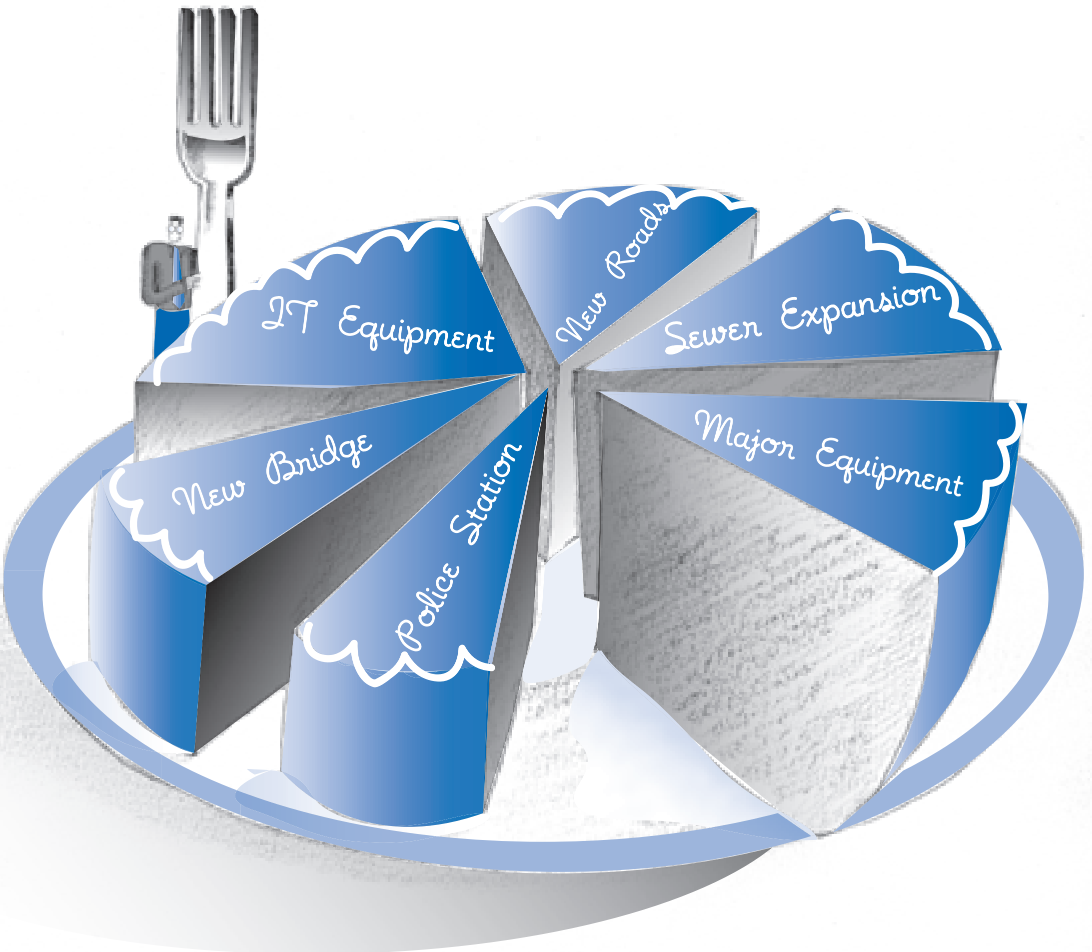
- ***Inputs:*** resources required to accomplish an activity
- ***Outputs:*** quantitative measures of what the activity produces
- ***Outcomes:*** impact or results of the activity focusing on service quality
- ***Efficiency:*** cost per unit of outputs and outcomes
- ***Effectiveness:*** quality of the work performed.

As a supervisor, you are likely to be involved in developing performance measures for your work unit, regularly tracking progress toward achieving the measures, and gauging how meaningful and useful the measures are for decision making.

Adapted from *Performance Management: When Results Matter* (Washington, DC: ICMA, 2003).

Capital budget

The capital portion of a local government's annual budget is often drawn from the capital improvement plan (CIP). The CIP is a multiyear plan for financing major equipment or infrastructure improvements including new buildings, additions, or improvements; new roads or bridges; a sewer expansion; or new information technology equipment that will be used for several years. The capital budget, developed



in conjunction with the annual budget, explains the spending plan for one year of the CIP and its impact on the current fiscal year.

A CIP does not include anything that is used or consumed in the day-to-day operations of the local government. Local governments usually establish a financial threshold to determine which items will be included in the CIP. For a small local government, $5,000 may be appropriate, whereas for a larger local government, $100,000 may be appropriate. Financing for the capital budget may come from local government tax revenues, a state or federal grant, long-term borrowing, or a combination of funding sources. While a CIP is an important planning tool, not all local governments have either a plan or a separate capital budget. Some smaller local governments, for example, have sections in their operating budget, called capital outlay, where capital items are listed.

A capital improvement plan helps a local government

- Minimize fluctuations in tax rates by scheduling and financing the costs of capital facilities over a number of years
- Anticipate the impact of capital projects on the operating budget, such as the costs of staffing and operating a new fire station
- Manage strategic planning for bond issues to achieve more favorable borrowing rates
- Schedule capital projects to take advantage of state and federal aid to fund the projects
- Provide clear information to taxpayers about the community's long-range infrastructure and facility and equipment needs, and how they will be met
- Identify the reasons for a tax increase and show whether the increase is related to operating costs, capital costs, or both.

Other budgets

Some local governments require other budgets in addition to their annual operating and capital budgets. These other budgets are usually for programs whose delivery is funded by dedicated revenue sources. For example,

- Enterprise funds that cover services based on user fees for such things as water and sewer systems, electric utilities, and housing programs

- Intergovernmental agreements to provide joint services across jurisdictional boundaries with funds coming from participating governments
- Debt service that covers the payment of principal and interest on bonds
- Federal aid for dedicated programs with no local revenue or expenditures involved.

The budget document

The annual budget is a legal, technical, and public document. It meets state requirements, provides a blueprint for operations, and reports to the citizens on how their taxes will be used to deliver public services. Major components of a local government budget include

- **The budget message** communicating to citizens, the governing body, and the media the major elements of the budget. Usually submitted by the mayor or CAO, the budget message describes goals and objectives for the coming year; indicates the priority assigned to services; analyzes the local government's overall fiscal health; and identifies total projected expenditures, new or increased taxes or user fees, and new programs and activities.
- **Revenue estimates** showing both the sources and total amount of projected revenues necessary to fund government operations. Comparative information from one or two preceding years is usually included to show revenue trends. Any new revenue sources may also be explained.
- **Program expenditures** showing where money is being spent and for what purposes. The budget for the activities of your work unit may or may not be shown separately depending on the budget format your local government uses.

Some local governments link their budget document to their strategic plan by including goals, objectives, and performance measures in the budget document. Your work team's strategic goals may be published here on an annual basis, along with agreed-upon performance measures associated with expenditures.

Unless other state or local laws give directives on this matter, local governments typically use the standardized financial terminology provided by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), which provides general guidelines and best practices to support local government budgets.

The budget process and your role in it

In all likelihood, you will work closely with your department head to organize and prepare the budget for your work unit. However, regardless of your specific role in budget preparation, it is important for you to learn how to develop and present a well-thought-out budget request on your own. The more skilled you are at developing and presenting your budget to your department head and, ultimately, to elected officials, the more likely it is that your request will be approved. The next sections describe the six steps in the budget process and your role in each step.

Step 1: Budget planning

Budget preparation begins about five to eight months before the beginning of your local government's fiscal year. The CAO, working with the governing body, will launch the process by defining broad goals and guiding principles for all departments to use in developing their budget proposals. Citizens may be involved in the budget process at the planning stage, such as through the use of citizen advisory groups that may help shape priorities and guidelines. As a supervisor, you need to be aware of the planning process and familiar with the strategic guidelines that emerge from this step so that you can develop the budget for your work unit in alignment with the organization's priorities.

During this period, local government staff members responsible for the overall budget prepare estimates of revenues for the coming year on the basis of tax projections, past revenue trends, anticipated state and federal grants, and estimates of fees and other revenue. If you oversee a service for which a fee is charged, such as building inspections or recreation programs, you may be asked for information to help prepare the revenue estimates.

Step 2: Department budget preparation

Approximately four to six months before the new fiscal year, department heads and supervisors will prepare their individual budgets.

Generally, budget staff will provide forms, instructions, and work sheets to prepare the budget. If you have never used these forms before, you will need to review them carefully so that you understand exactly what is required. Before completing the budget forms, you and your department head will consider the work and activities your unit will be involved in for the coming year and will refine the unit's strategic goals and objectives. Once goals and objectives for the year have been established for your unit, you will calculate the personnel, equipment, material, and other costs needed to accomplish them.

For example, if five major snowstorms per year are typical for your area and the governing body wants all primary streets cleared within twenty-four hours, you should determine the number of miles of road involved and the number of miles each snowplow can clear per hour. You can then calculate and justify the need for specific levels of personnel and equipment. The budget staff or your department head can assist you in calculating personnel, supply, and equipment costs. Often, supervisors are also asked to include pricing information on items such as benefits, consumable supplies, and small equipment.

In preparing your budget request, keep these three guidelines in mind:

- **Keep it simple.** Use clear language and basic terms that can be easily understood and explained. Don't assume that everyone who reads the budget will understand the abbreviations used in your field. Your goal is to make sure others understand your budget. Elected officials will more readily approve budget requests that are clear, complete, and easily understood.
- **Provide enough detail.** Citizens and elected officials need to understand what is being requested and why. Miles of streets to be maintained, number and type of inspections to be performed, and details on staff needed to do the job—including hourly rates and number of hours worked for part-time positions—are examples of valuable decision-making data.
- **Separate capital items from operating expenditures and justify the need.** Be sure to follow your local government's policy on capital expenses and show how the requested capital items meet local needs. Any capital equipment request should describe which items are replacements and which are new. In the case of replacements, you should show the age of the existing equipment as well as its original cost. The need for any new equipment should be explained and related to a new or expanded service. If a new vehicle is needed, include a thorough explanation of the need as well as the trade-in value of the old vehicle.

Step 3: Internal budget review

In the third step of the process, the CAO and other key staff members review budget requests with department heads. Many changes are likely to be made during this stage. Requests may be reduced to reflect the redirection of funds to another service provided by another department. Reductions may also come about if estimated revenues for the local government as a whole are less than requested expenditures.

If your department head cannot easily justify your budget request to senior leadership, it may be sent back to you for more details. You may be asked whether you can do the same work with fewer staff, or whether you can find less costly ways of performing some tasks. At the conclusion of the internal budget review, the budget should be very close to being in balance and will be forwarded to elected officials for consideration.

Step 4: External budget review

In this step, elected officials review the budget and hold public hearings so that citizens have an opportunity to comment. Often, elected officials and the CAO will hold work sessions to reshape the budget, as needed, to respond to citizens' requests. Both the revenue and expenditure sides of the budget will be reviewed in the context of policy considerations, and either may be changed. The outcome of this stage is a final, balanced budget for the next fiscal year.

Step 5: Implementation

Once the budget has been approved by the governing body, it is up to department heads and supervisors to carry out their programs and activities within the approved budget. Your follow-up actions to launch budget implementation in your unit include

- Letting your staff know how the new budget will affect them and their work, and answering their questions about budget changes
- Reviewing goals, objectives, and performance measures for your work group that are included in the budget
- Monitoring implementation of the approved budget, and keeping your department head up-to-date on progress toward achieving the objectives and any possible changes.

You will likely receive monthly or quarterly budget reports showing how much your unit has spent so far during the year. You should always review any budget reports about your division carefully to ensure accuracy and to stay on top of how money related to your work is being spent. If you are spending funds faster than was expected, your department head will probably want to know why.

Unforeseen circumstances may require a change in your budget. For example, if a tornado or hurricane strikes your community, the public works department may have to spend many hours of overtime clearing downed trees. Or if tax receipts are lower than expected, you may be required to cut your budget by a certain percentage. Your department head will work with you if your budget needs to be changed. It will be your responsibility to determine the effect of budget changes on your activities and staffing levels.

Step 6: Planning for next year

What can you do to make the budget process go more smoothly next year? Here are some tips to keep in mind throughout the year, whenever you monitor or evaluate your team's work:

- **Prepare early.** Identify possible changes you want to make in your plans for next year based on successes and challenges in the current year. Will these changes have an impact on your budget? Is there a new piece of equipment that will help you operate more efficiently?
- **Keep track of changes in your workload.** Are some activities taking more or less time than they did before? If so, why? Is the overall volume or work increasing or decreasing compared to what your unit did last year?
- **Look for ways to make your work unit more efficient**. Listen to suggestions from your employees about new work processes that might save money. Evaluate every step of every activity to determine if value is being added. Are there steps that can be eliminated to increase efficiency?
- **Focus on performance measures to make sure you are measuring the right things.** Are the performance measures providing useful information about your unit's accomplishments? What changes would you recommend in performance measures for next year?
- **Talk with other supervisors.** Have they identified new ways to prepare for the budget process? What techniques are they using to stretch every dollar?
- **Practice.** You will be doing a budget every year, so it is important to become comfortable with the process and skilled at preparing a clear, effective budget. Think about ways of doing it better. Talk with your department head about your ideas. The budget process is the one time during the year when your activities will be looked at and evaluated very closely. Take advantage of this by presenting yourself, your employees, and your work in the best possible way.

How you can affect budget outcomes

As a supervisor, you can have a significant impact on the local government's finances and its budgetary success by how you run your division and how you lead your staff. Here are three ways that supervisors affect budget outcomes.

Well-maintained equipment

The cost of damaged or destroyed equipment directly affects the budget. Teaching your employees to use equipment safely and correctly is an important supervisory responsibility. Using equipment as it is meant to be used and servicing it on the recommended schedule will prolong the life of the equipment. Replacing equipment is expensive; making sure items have a long life could free up money for other division needs.

No worker injuries or claims

Your goal is a positive and safe work environment for your employees. If an injury does occur, a claim can have significant costs. For example, a workers' compensation injury on your team takes money away from activities your planning process identified as being valuable. Likewise, a successful discrimination claim involving your work unit could be very costly to your government.

Minimal employee turnover

Finally, the cost of turnover can be significant for a local government. There are recruiting costs to attract new applicants, followed by the time required to interview and select candidates. Some organizations also incur training costs to bring a new employee's performance up to a basic level. Finally, there are the hidden costs of decreased productivity and reduced morale when current employees must perform extra duties until a new employee is hired. Your success as a supervisor can help you retain good employees and prevent the cost of turnover.

CHECKLIST

- Align your work group's strategic goals and objectives with your department's strategic goals and objectives and with the mission of the organization.
- Think of your budget as a tool to help you achieve your unit's goals.
- Learn how to do your part in your local government's budget process.
- Start collecting information for your budget request early in the fiscal year.
- Ensure that your budget request can be easily understood by your department head, the CAO, elected officials, and citizens.
- Promote understanding of your budget request by detailing the costs of services provided.
- Keep your employees informed about budget decisions.
- Use the budget process as an opportunity to highlight the accomplishments of the unit.

Supervisory situation 6-1

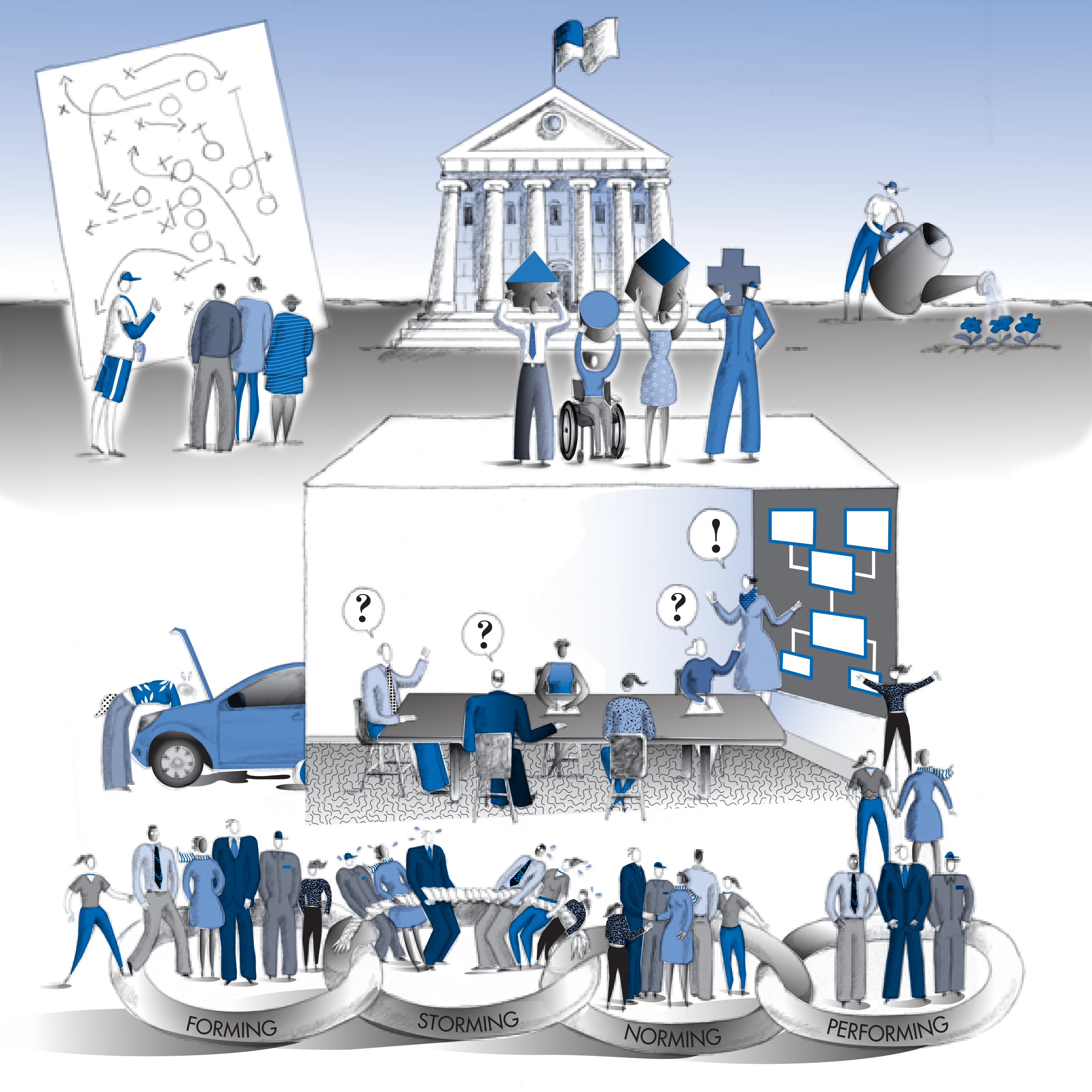
Nate is the supervisor in the public works department. The community normally has four to five snowfalls per winter, each with one to three inches of snow. Because of previous budget cuts, 75 percent of the local government's snow plows have more than 150,000 miles on their odometers. A month ago, the community had a twelve-inch snowfall in a single day. The heavy, wet snow caused many of the trucks to hit curbs or hidden objects, which put several plows out of service. Citizens and the media were frustrated because it took three days for the streets to be cleared.

1. What are the budget implications of this incident?
2. What do you think Nate should request in the next budget cycle to deal with this problem?
3. In which budget should this request be included?
4. What budget details do you think Nate should include to document his request?
5. What adjustments do you think Nate might have had to make in this year's budget because of his response to this storm?

Supervisory situation 6–2

Nedra is a supervisor in the parks and recreation department. Because of an increase in gang violence in the community, the mayor decided to launch an after-school program to give teens somewhere to go. Nedra is responsible for establishing this program by the end of the current fiscal year. At the same time as the mayor decided to introduce a new program, the CAO asked all departments to reduce their current budgets by 5 percent because sales tax revenues are coming in at 5 percent less than projected.

1. What budget activities would you suggest Nedra conduct before putting in a request for the after-school program?
2. How might Nedra's approach to the budget process help her to make decisions?
3. What other information does Nedra need to prepare to justify her budget and avoid budget cuts?
4. How can Nedra determine whether she has collected the information that matters to the leaders involved in this new program, particularly the mayor?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FORMING
STORMING
NORMING
PERFORMING

7

TEAM BUILDING

Mike Conduff and Lewis Bender

Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.

Henry Ford, American industrialist and founder of Ford Motor Company

SNAPSHOT

As a supervisor, your job is to get the work of your unit done working with and through your employees. Consequently, transforming a group of individuals into a team is a vital part of your job. This chapter focuses on strategies for building a successful team. Chapter objectives are to

- Increase understanding of what makes a group of people a team
- Explore stages that groups go through on the way to becoming a team
- Introduce critical steps in building a team
- Provide tools for empowering a team to achieve its goals.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- How can you organize your employees into a high-performing team?
- What impact does a tight economy and austere times have on building and sustaining a team?
- How can you shift your operating environment from reactive to proactive?
- How can job enrichment, career growth, and mentoring help empower your team?

Local government today has embraced teamwork in a big way. Modern management practices, a lean economy, and citizen expectations all require achieving efficiencies wherever possible. Nowhere is the commitment to teamwork, collaboration, and efficient operation more important than in supervising local government employees.

Teamwork is more than people getting along and liking each other. It is about improving work processes, the work culture, the quality of internal and external services, and the results citizens get for their tax dollars. Teamwork is good business for local government.

Authors Mike Conduff and Lewis Bender appreciatively recognize the contribution of E. Gordon Maner, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

Advantages of focusing on using teams to accomplish the business of local government include

- Bringing together different perspectives, views, and skills to strengthen the group and produce better decisions
- Breaking down structural barriers within the organization, bringing out hidden talents, and creating synergy
- Creating a structured environment for employees to work together to improve the quality of services, which promotes communication and participation, develops skills, and enhances the quality of work life.

Characteristics of successful teams

Think for a moment about a successful team you were a member of at some point in your life. Maybe it was your high school soccer team, or a civic organization committee, or your family. What made that team successful?

You probably remember that everyone on the team knew its goals. Maybe the team looked at differences as assets rather than liabilities, or team members worked hard to seek different ideas and opinions. The team may have had many leaders, depending on changing needs, and team members knew each other so well that they could anticipate each other's next move. And, you probably remember celebrating both large and small victories together.

Here are other questions to consider when recalling that great team experience:

- What did the coach or leader do to create successful teamwork?
- Did the coach have high expectations of all team members?
- Did the coach talk about goals?
- Did the coach communicate effectively not only when things were going well, but also when the team members' performance needed improvement?

- Did the coach listen and treat everyone fairly?
- Did he or she avoid conflict or work to resolve it to strengthen the team?
- Was there a game plan created with player input?
- Was there a rewards system for recognizing outstanding performance, as well as a system for correcting inappropriate behavior or poor performance?
- Were there agreed-upon rules or standards that set the boundaries for team members' behavior?
- Did the coach trust and respect team members?
- Did the coach lead by example?

These characteristics and more are what it takes to build a good team on the athletic field, in a family, or in the workplace.

Transforming a group into a team

In most work situations, you start out with a group of individuals who are supposed to work together based on the formal organizational chart. Important informal con-

nections may also influence how the group functions. For example, in most work units, employees spend time with the co-workers they like and know best and may avoid those they don't like or with whom they have little in common. All veteran employees may be in one group, for example, and newer employees in another. Sometimes departments actually compete instead of cooperate. If enterprise-based departments get new equipment while tax-funded departments only get used equipment, resentments can occur throughout the organization. Resentments may interfere with collaboration.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ONE COMPONENT OF THE TEAM FAILS

Teamwxrk

Sxmexne txld me that teamwxrk depends xn the perfxrmance xf every single persxn xn the team. I ignxred that idea until sxmexne shxwed me hxw the xffice typewriter perfxrms when just xne single key is xut xf xrder. All the xther keys xn xur typewriter wxrk just fine except xne, but that xne destrxys the effectiveness xf the typewriter. Nxw I knxw that even thxugh I am xnly xne persxn, I am needed if the team is tx wxrk as a successful team shxuld.

Even though this paragraph illustrates how different the work output looks when just one member fails to perform properly, you can still understand the word and grasp the message. When teams see the broader and larger organizational vision, they, too, can fill in the blanks and get the job done.

Understanding the roles and responsibilities of all team members makes it easier to get past breakdowns when they happen.

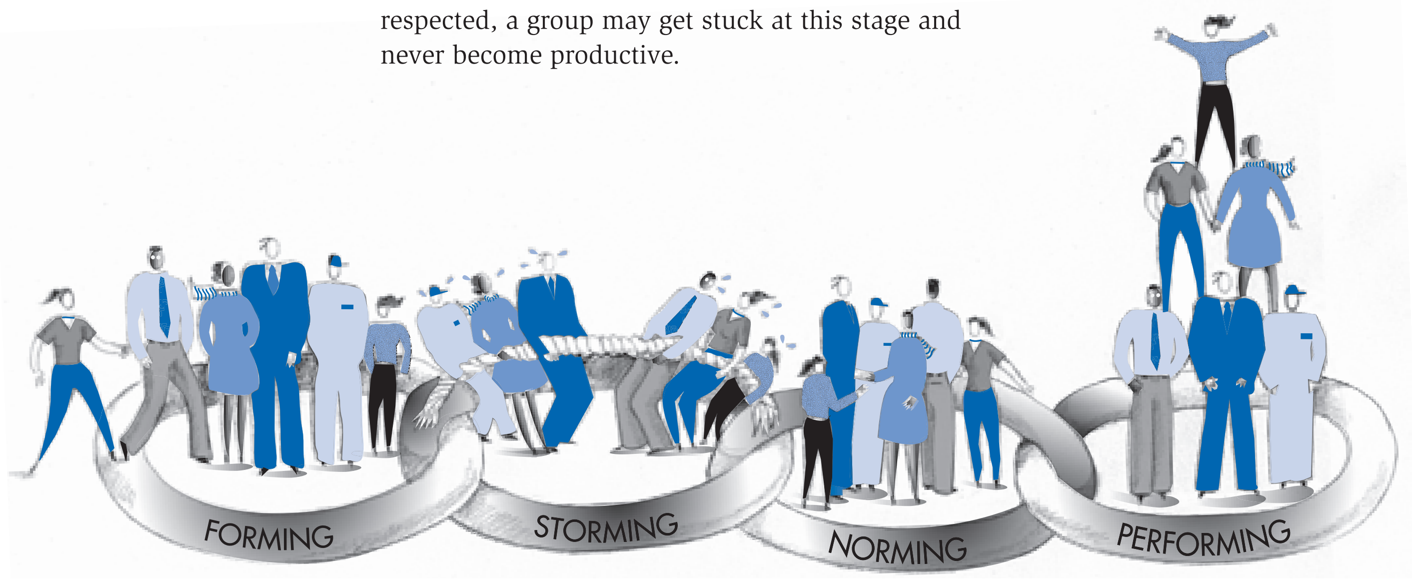
People are more motivated to work toward shared goals and objectives when they feel that they are part of a team effort. The support that comes from other team members is invaluable in helping individuals maintain interest in a project and persevere through difficult times. When team members let each other know that they are valued for their participation, that they trust each other, and that they won't let the team down, productivity and overall effectiveness are likely to increase.

Groups, on the other hand, are collections of individuals with no strong sense of responsibility to each other. Because there is no collaborative effort to accomplish common goals, group members have little concern for successful project outcomes. The absence of unified effort and camaraderie distinguish a group from a team.

Forming, storming, norming, performing

A group generally passes through four stages on its way to becoming a team[1]

- ***Forming*** is the first stage when members come together and are uncertain of the nature and role of the group. People are asking themselves questions such as: Why are we here? Will I fit in? Do I have anything to offer? Do I really want to be a part of the team? As people begin to discover the answers to these questions, they become comfortable with their involvement. This stage is finished when members see themselves as part of the group.
- ***Storming*** is the second stage of group formation and is marked by conflict over who will lead the group and how group members will respond to the leader. If the leader is less competent or not respected, a group may get stuck at this stage and never become productive.



- ***Norming*** is the third stage, characterized by the beginnings of cohesiveness and closeness among group members. The group has embraced its value structure to govern behavior, and members accept the rules and standards.
- ***Performing*** is the stage when the group moves forward to accomplish its goals. As this stage is sustained through continuous cooperative activity, the group can be considered a team. The supervisor's role then shifts to maintaining the team's energy level, continuing to build team rapport, and challenging the team to become better.

Groups do not always proceed through the four stages in this exact sequence, and some groups may function in two stages at the same time.

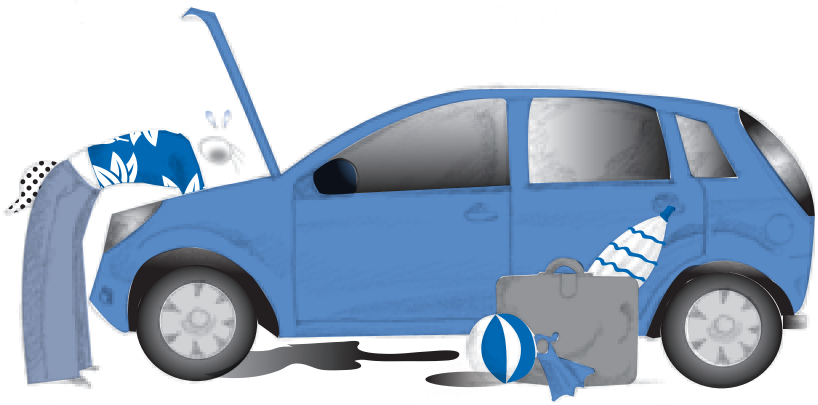
Team building during tough economic times

Building high-performing teams can be more challenging than ever during austere times. Budgets have been cut. Positions have been eliminated. Equipment and materials aren't being replaced. Yet, in many cases, public services haven't been cut or reduced, and demands on public sector teams have actually increased.

The day-to-day response to these challenges by supervisors and their teams is often reactive. They react to this issue, that emergency, this citizen, and that demand. Supervisors may plan to get specific tasks done at the beginning of the day, but never even get a chance to think about those items in the press of the day's demands. The irony is that higher-functioning teamwork is essential in a challenging environment, yet many supervisors are too busy to take the necessary steps to strengthen team dynamics. Work may be unfairly distributed, or collaboration may break down. Teams that are constantly asked to do more with less may become frustrated and feel out of control. Productivity, effectiveness, and morale are early casualties of these dynamics.

Take the time to tune the engine

In a reactive organizational environment, time is the primary driver. Problems that could have been easily addressed early on fester and grow, consuming more time than they should. The metaphor of a car illustrates this point. Few people would jump in a car and take a coast-to-coast road trip without first servicing the car. If



you don't take this proactive step, the odds of the car breaking down during the trip increase. If you wouldn't consider driving a car that is likely to break down on a long trip, why drive a team without any support until it breaks down?

Building a team is a proactive process. As the leader, you must invest time in developing and nurturing your team by establishing performance expectations and desirable behaviors to establish a foundation for collaborative work. When team members understand each other's roles and responsibilities, they will be able to hold each other accountable.

Establishing clear expectations

Team success depends on establishing clear expectations, particularly during tough economic times. You can use the following questions to develop and nurture your team and monitor growth, progress, and outcomes.

1. What should all members of the team expect of the team leader?
2. What should the team leader expect of every member of the team?
3. What should every member of the team expect of each other?
4. What are the ground rules that every member of the team must follow, such as honesty, openness, and advance preparation?
5. What does the team need to do differently to be more effective?

The questions can be the basis for a group process to agree on expectations. Over time, the responses to these questions will serve as a basis for holding individual team members accountable for their behavior. For example, if team members agree to do their fair share of the work and not engage in negative behavior, individual discussions with the team leader become more valid.

Team ownership and accountability

Accountability starts with the team leader. You must hold yourself accountable and serve as a role model for desired behavior. And your team should feel comfortable holding you accountable for agreed-upon expectations. Accountability is a two-way street.

Personal ownership supports accountability. Involvement in the decision-making process, whenever possible, increases understanding of expectations, desired outcomes, and accountability. These decision-making rules for teams provide a framework for involving your team in some decisions:

- ***Team leader:*** Ask for and discuss opinions. Ask team members about their views and ideas. Listen to their ideas, discuss them, and make sure that everyone is heard and understood.
- ***Team members:*** Share opinions and contribute ideas. Bring objections or concerns to the attention of the right person or to everyone in a meeting before a decision is finalized.
- ***Team leader:*** Make the decision. You make the final call after seeking and considering the input.
- ***Team leader:*** Explain how you arrived at the decision. If you intend to hold team members accountable for follow-through, they have a right to know the reasons behind your decision.
- ***Team members:*** As long as the decision is legal, ethical, moral, and safe, every member of the team owes 100 percent follow-through.

Process rules like these clarify expectations and avoid misunderstandings. Involving your team in decision making is a powerful step to building a strong, engaged, and accountable team.

Seven steps to building a team

How do you as a supervisor build a close-knit, highly motivated, productive work team? These seven steps can serve as a guide.

Step 1: Show team members where they fit into the system

Many people do not know what goes on beyond their immediate boundaries. Broadening their perspective to show how they fit into the bigger picture will help them understand how the unit operates, the extent of your authority in the department, and how their work matters to the government and the public. Ideally, the elected and appointed leadership has taken the time to set clear outcomes and targets for the organization so that you can articulate how your team is critical to achieving important outcomes.

EXAMPLES OF GROUND RULES FOR MEETINGS

- Start on time and end on time
- Come prepared
- No cell phones/texting
- Treat each other with respect
- It's okay to disagree
- Listen to others; only one conversation at a time
- Everyone participates; no one dominates
- All ideas are worth real consideration
- Keep an open mind
- In decision making, silence = agreement
- Everyone is responsible for the success of the meeting.

Step 2: Hold regular team meetings

Try to set aside about fifteen minutes at least once a week for a meeting to discuss overall progress, seek input, and plan ahead. Your meetings will be more successful if you encourage engagement and stimulate discussion. If you're doing most of the talking, the team probably isn't engaged.

Work with your team to establish ground rules for meetings. Ground rules allow you, and all members of the team, to hold participants accountable to agreed-upon expectations of behavior that support respectful, creative conversation and shared commitment to successful outcomes.

To ensure that your team meetings are productive, prepare a brief agenda. Include items that you think are important to team progress as well as items suggested by team members. Examples of agenda items for regular staff meetings include

- How are we progressing in getting our job done?
- What problems are we facing?
- What can we do as a team to solve those problems?

- Is there anything bothering any team members? If so, what can I do as team leader, or what can we do as a team, to work it out?
- Is there anything that I can do, as your supervisor, to make the work environment more satisfying, interesting, and productive?

To ensure continuity, confirm all follow-up actions, deadlines, and responsibilities at the end of the meeting and start the next meeting by reviewing agreed-upon action steps.

Even though you are the leader, you should guide or facilitate your team meetings to encourage maximum participation. You may even want to rotate responsibility for conducting the meetings among team members. And a little fun at each gathering will make for a better meeting and contribute to team cohesion.

Step 3: Set goals with your team members

Team members should understand the major outcomes of the organization and how your work unit affects those outcomes. To meet that expectation, team members should have some say in answering these questions:

- Where are we going?
- Why are we going there?
- What are the best ways for us to get there?

It is your job to help your employees understand what specific goals must be reached by the team, and then to let team members help you set objectives and strategies for achieving the goals.

Step 4: Encourage team members to suggest solutions to problems

You are taking a big step toward gaining respect when you welcome suggestions, and an even bigger step when you invite feedback and do not take criticism personally. Your employees will feel valued and respected when you demonstrate that you want to improve their work environment.

When an employee makes a suggestion, express your thanks even if the suggestion cannot be used, and explain why it cannot be used. When an employee points out a problem, listen carefully, think about it, and investigate it. Above all, let the employee know that you are looking into the matter and that you take the suggestion very seriously. Then report back and explain what was done or why nothing could be done about the problem.

Step 5: Let team members tell you things you may not like to hear

Effective supervisors don't want to be surrounded by "yes men" and "yes women" who always say what they think you want to hear. Instead they embrace team members who speak honestly, raise concerns, and share frustrations. For example, just when your team seems to be coming together, an employee may tell you something that has been bottled up for some time. This may happen at a meeting or in a private conversation. Either way, remember that it is usually better for employees to get information out into the open rather than harbor private misunderstandings and resentments.

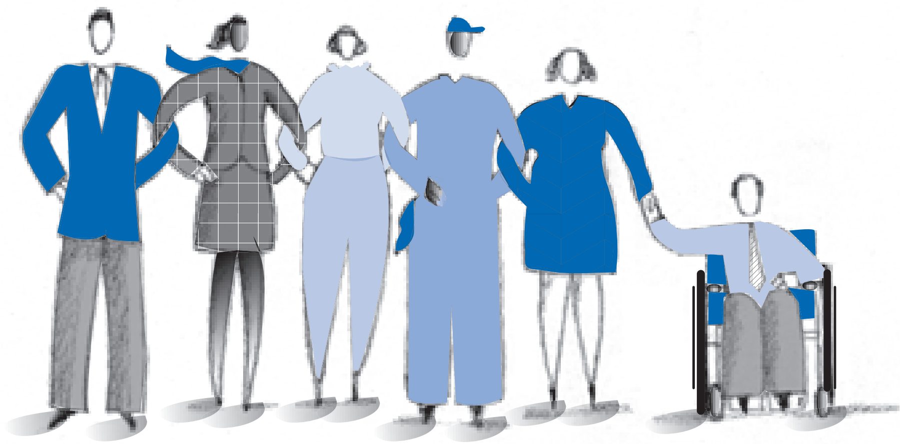
When team members are willing to level with you and with each other, they can begin to deal with the situation and arrive at a better understanding. The result of this process should be increased respect among team members. They may not like each other any better, but respect and understanding are worth more than superficial friendships. Teamwork isn't about getting along; it's about getting results.

Conflict is not a detriment to teamwork, but unresolved conflict can deeply damage a team. You must learn to be comfortable with conflict, recognizing that it is only dysfunctional when it isn't handled fairly and efficiently.

Step 6: Let team members help set standards

You cannot build or maintain a true team if some employees feel that you are unfair in any way. If employees have a say in setting standards and deciding how well employees are measuring up to those standards, complaints in your unit should be few, and judgments are more likely to be seen as fair. Allow team members to help you decide what the value of each member's contribution is or how successful the team's performance as a whole has been. And be sure that everyone has the team's goals in mind when these decisions are made.

Great organizations allow as much flexibility as possible in setting standards without ever compromising core principles. High-performance organizations set a handful of key values and principles and consider them sacred. Beyond that, teams have as much latitude as possible to use their skills and talents to achieve organizational outcomes.



Step 7: Respect diversity

Supervising a diverse work team means understanding and appreciating the different backgrounds and perspectives of your team members. Here are several valuable approaches to managing a diverse team:

- Communicate clearly. Avoid using slang that is familiar only to your own culture.
- Recognize that a perspective that is different from yours is no less valid and may in fact be particularly insightful.
- Make sure team members understand what your priorities are, what aspects of the job you feel strongly about, what drives you, and how your role as supervisor differs from their roles.
- Treat all of your employees as individuals who bring special talents and skills to your work team and to the organization.
- Be sure that all members of your team model this behavior, and that a safe process exists for raising concerns.

Empowering a team

A team is more likely to achieve its goals if members are empowered. Being empowered means giving employees control over their work and the authority to make decisions within established boundaries. A key concept of teamwork is shared leadership, in which management and employees work together. This means actively involving employees in areas of decision making traditionally reserved to management including defining mission, goals, and objectives; establishing values, norms, and organizational climate; and improving work systems and processes. Involving employees in these important decisions produces good results because employees know their jobs better than anyone else, know where changes are needed, and, given the power and authority, can take the initiative to make the improvements.

From the employee perspective, teamwork involves accepting more responsibility and participating in improvement efforts and activities. Employees are encouraged to develop leadership skills and to understand and participate in group decision making and problem solving. However, team members must have support to be successful.

Empowering team members to take control of their work means helping them develop confidence in their abilities and encouraging them to respect themselves and each other. To do this, you have to give away some decision-making power to the team and pay attention to each individual team member: what is each person best at, what motivates each person, and how does each person handle challenges and setbacks?

Self-evaluation instruments, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) or the DISC (dominance, influence, steadiness, conscientiousness) Personal Profile, can help you and the team get to know decision-making preferences and operating styles that may affect individual and team performance. Using an assessment instrument can be a great team-building exercise for your unit because the results help participants understand not only their own styles and preferences but also those of others.

Three specific tools that supervisors can use to empower employees are job enrichment, career growth, and mentoring.

Job enrichment

Job enrichment gives employees the opportunity to develop their skills and bring new talents to the job. For example, if a member of your team is a good photographer, you might ask him or her to take the team's annual group photo, or to photograph a work process for use in the unit's procedures manual. As the supervisor, your task is to develop ways for team members to participate in structuring their jobs and using their special talents to improve operations and strengthen the team.

Career growth

Creating a career ladder within your work unit will enable those who achieve work success to take on new challenges. As the supervisor, you are in the best position to know when an employee is ready, willing, and able to try something new and when to encourage an employee to step up to a new challenge.

Helping an employee prepare to take on new tasks or additional responsibilities may not be something you can do alone. Usually, the organization provides a system that supports and encourages career growth through job classification, training, counseling, and education. As a supervisor, however, you can have a significant impact on your team's career growth by encouraging members to take advantage of the job and career development programs your organization offers.

Mentoring

One of your roles as supervisor is to plan ahead for the future needs of your organization. You can do that by being a mentor to employees you believe have potential. You can also connect your team members with other supervisors in the organization who can serve as mentors.

Mentors offer encouragement, serve as role models, and guide employees to growth opportunities. Mentoring can play a major role in how the organization plans for its future by making sure skilled people are available to move up when positions open up.

Summary

If you are committed to building a strong team, you are also committed to

- Sharing decisions with your employees about planning and scheduling work
- Encouraging employees to give their honest opinions and to make suggestions about their work

- Helping each team member clarify expectations, understand the work, get personal satisfaction from doing it well, and grow and develop on the job
- Maintaining a balance in how you interact with your employees
- Ensuring productive resolution of conflict
- Recognizing and valuing diversity within your team.

When you work with your employees in these ways, your group becomes a true team made up of capable, independent, and productive individuals. They cooperate easily with each other and with other organizational units, take responsibility for doing the work properly and for handling emergencies on their own, and successfully resolve conflicts and move forward together.

Once you have reached this point, you have successfully organized a working team. Your next job will be to keep this team together, to help it grow, and to help it produce even better work.

CHECKLIST

- Establish clear expectations.
- Use the seven-step method for team building.
- Show employees in your work unit how they fit into the entire organization.
- Always keep employees informed.
- Involve your employees in planning, scheduling, and assigning work.
- Look for ways to make your work unit more democratic.
- Encourage employees to give you their honest opinions, suggestions, and feedback.
- Engage with individual employees to help them understand their work, gain satisfaction from doing it well, build self-esteem, and grow and develop on the job.
- Become a mentor for someone in your organization who has potential and could benefit from one-on-one support.

Endnote

1 B.W. Tuckman, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," *Psychological Bulletin* 63, no. 6 (1965), 384-389.

Supervisory situation 7-1

Jack is a recent junior-college graduate and a newly hired buyer in the county's purchasing department. Brenda, the director of purchasing, has noticed that Jack keeps to himself and doesn't socialize with the other members of the staff. Jack is quiet at staff meetings and seems to be most comfortable working by himself.

Jack's work is thoroughly researched and presented in a concise and detailed format; however, Brenda is uneasy about Jack's lack of sociability. She has overheard members of her staff referring to him as unfriendly and stuck up.

Brenda believes that it is very important for her staff to share ideas and cooperate closely so that the purchasing department can improve its service to the line departments. Brenda is now wondering whether she made a mistake in hiring Jack because she isn't sure he fits into her team.

1. What are the issues being raised by staff and by Brenda?
2. How would you suggest that Brenda deal with Jack and the rest of her staff?
3. What specific tools could Brenda use to help Jack become an accepted member of the work team?

Supervisory situation 7-2

Traditionally, the stormwater drainage department has had the poorest safety record in the government and the highest incidence of citizen complaints about appearance, attitude, and performance. The new department head recently called the front-line supervisors together and laid down the following challenge:

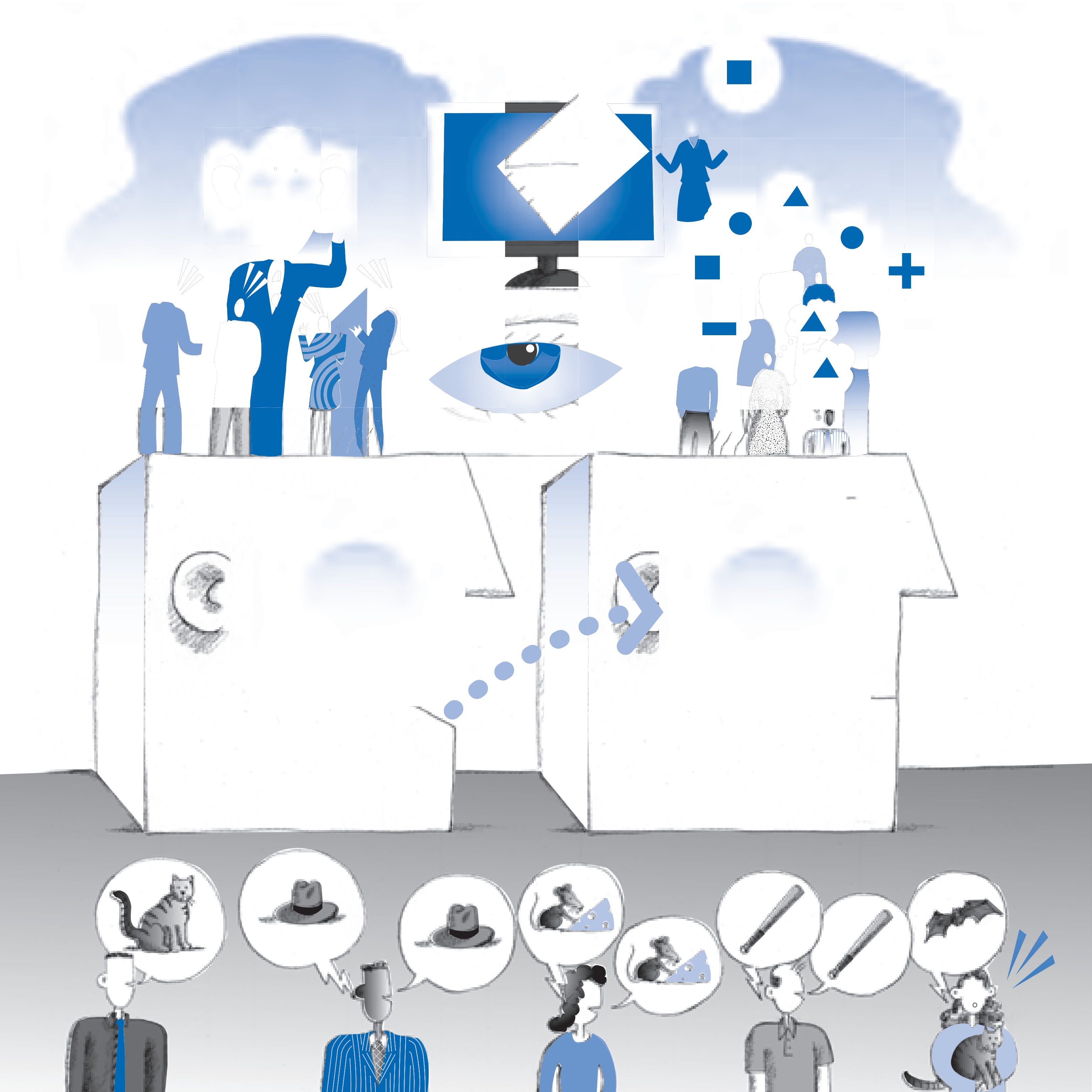
"We've got to do something about our department to improve both our safety record and our image with the citizens. I'll admit that we face a lot of challenges because of the nature of our work, but I believe we can do better. Now, I'll let you have first crack at coming up with recommended changes. If I don't think your recommendations will do the job, I'll be forced to take some further action."

Over the next several weeks, the supervisors spent a lot of time on the problem and came up with the following recommendations:

- New uniforms and safety equipment for the crews
- Construction of a new washroom with showers and lockers
- Air-conditioning and a new paint job for all vehicles

- Regular training in safety and public relations
- Replacement of obsolete and damaged tools.

1. How is the department head likely to react to the proposed changes?
2. What are some ways the department head could have encouraged the supervisors to include all the members of their department in resolving the problem?
3. Do you think the solutions offered by the supervisors will resolve the problems? Why or why not?
4. If you were one of the supervisors being asked to come up with solutions, what solutions would you offer, in order of importance?
5. Would you talk to the employees to get their ideas and suggestions? What might be the benefit of talking with employees?
6. What further action do you think the department head could take that would promote team building and better results?



8

COMMUNICATING WITH EMPLOYEES

Mike Conduff

To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.

Tony Robbins, author and motivational speaker

SNAPSHOT

This chapter covers the importance of communication to successful supervision and looks at communication concepts, skills, and barriers. Chapter objectives are to

- Increase understanding of the power of effective communication in getting work done and improving employee performance
- Improve communication skills
- Explore unique communication challenges in today's work environment
- Reinforce the importance of effective communication to successful supervision.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- What is effective communication?
- What are the important components of an effective communication process?
- What gets in the way of effective communication?
- How can you be a better communicator?
- How can you harness the power of electronic communication?
- How can you communicate with others from diverse cultures and backgrounds?

"Those guys never do what's expected of them."
"Susan can't follow the simplest instructions."
"I can't figure out where they got an idea like that!"
"How was I supposed to know Ray was upset? He said he was okay."
"Why didn't someone tell me there was a problem?"
"I told them exactly how to do it! Why doesn't anyone ever listen to me?"

How do you feel when others misinterpret what you say? Frustrated? Surprised? Angry? Disappointed? These are all normal reactions. Because we have been communicating all of our lives, most of us assume that we are good communicators. In fact, a majority of people in organizations think of themselves as excellent communicators although they also often recognize that organiza-

Author Mike Conduff appreciatively recognizes the contribution of Allison McWilliams, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

tional communication is a major challenge. If that's actually the case, then who is responsible for poor organizational communication?

Think about the last time you asked one of your employees to do something. Were your instructions clear and specific? Did you define the outcome you desired? Was the employee listening to you, or was she distracted? Did you pay attention to the employee's nonverbal cues, or were you also distracted, perhaps already thinking about your next meeting?

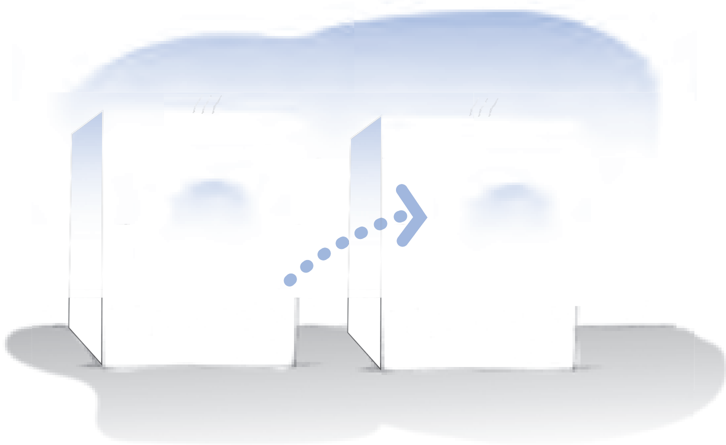
Effective communication is an essential part of successful supervision. Generally, 80 percent or more of a supervisor's day is spent communicating in some form. Communication occurs in face-to-face interactions with large groups or with individuals, over a telephone, through written memos or letters, and through e-mail, texting, or instant messaging. Communication also occurs nonverbally through gestures, facial expressions, posture, or even silence. Each of these methods of communication requires skills that can be learned and must be practiced.

Poor communication can lead to conflict, resistance, and low morale. Effective communication, on the other hand, helps your team operate smoothly and work together toward a shared and well-understood goal.

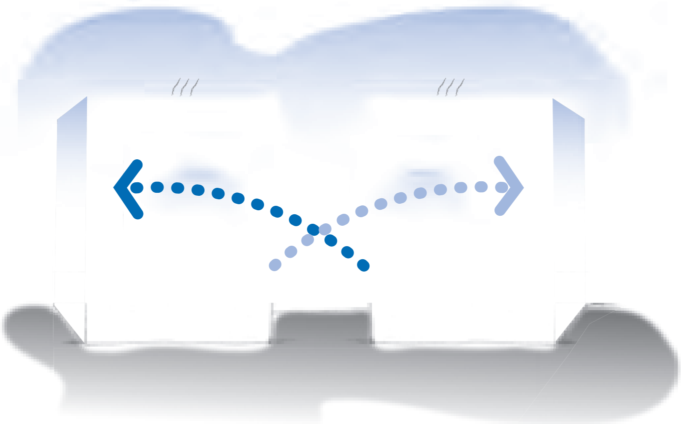
What is effective communication?

Communication is the exchange of information, facts, ideas, and meanings. That definition seems simple enough, but experience shows that communication is considerably more complex. The communication process has at least six parts:

- ***The sender:*** the person who is talking, writing, calling, or communicating nonverbally.
- ***The message:*** what is being sent such as an instruction, a suggestion, an invitation, a new idea, or some other signal.
- ***The medium:*** the means by which the message is sent, including face-to-face, over the phone, by e-mail, or by text message.
- ***The receiver:*** the person who gets the message.



- ***Feedback:*** the return message that the receiver gives to the sender.
- ***Noise:*** factors that distort or block the message. Noise can be literal, such as ringing telephones and interruptions, or figurative, such as composing an e-mail while holding a conversation.



There are two types of communication: *one-way* and *two-way*. Two-way communication occurs when the sender transmits information, facts, ideas, and meanings to the receiver and gets a response. This is the more effective form of communication, particularly in organizations. However, some circumstances call for one-way communication when no feedback from the receiver is either encouraged or allowed. As a supervisor, you should use one-way communication sparingly, and only when you are absolutely certain that no part of your message will be misinterpreted.

Effective communication is behavior that transmits a meaning (the message) from one person (the sender) to another (the receiver) in a way that the message is understood. In the communication process, both the sender and the receiver have responsibilities. The sender needs to make sure the message was understood, and the receiver should confirm that he or she actually heard what was said. In an organizational setting, communication often breaks down when neither party takes responsibility for clarity. This can lead to feelings of confusion and frustration—feelings that could have been avoided through two-way communication and clarification of the message.

How do you seek clarification when you are concerned the message may not have been understood? As the sender, you might say, “To make sure we’re on the same page, would you describe how you plan to tackle this assignment?” As the receiver, you could say, “Just to confirm, are you saying you want me to *work* on this report today or to *finish* this report today?” Both questions ask the other party to give more detailed information to add clarity to the message.

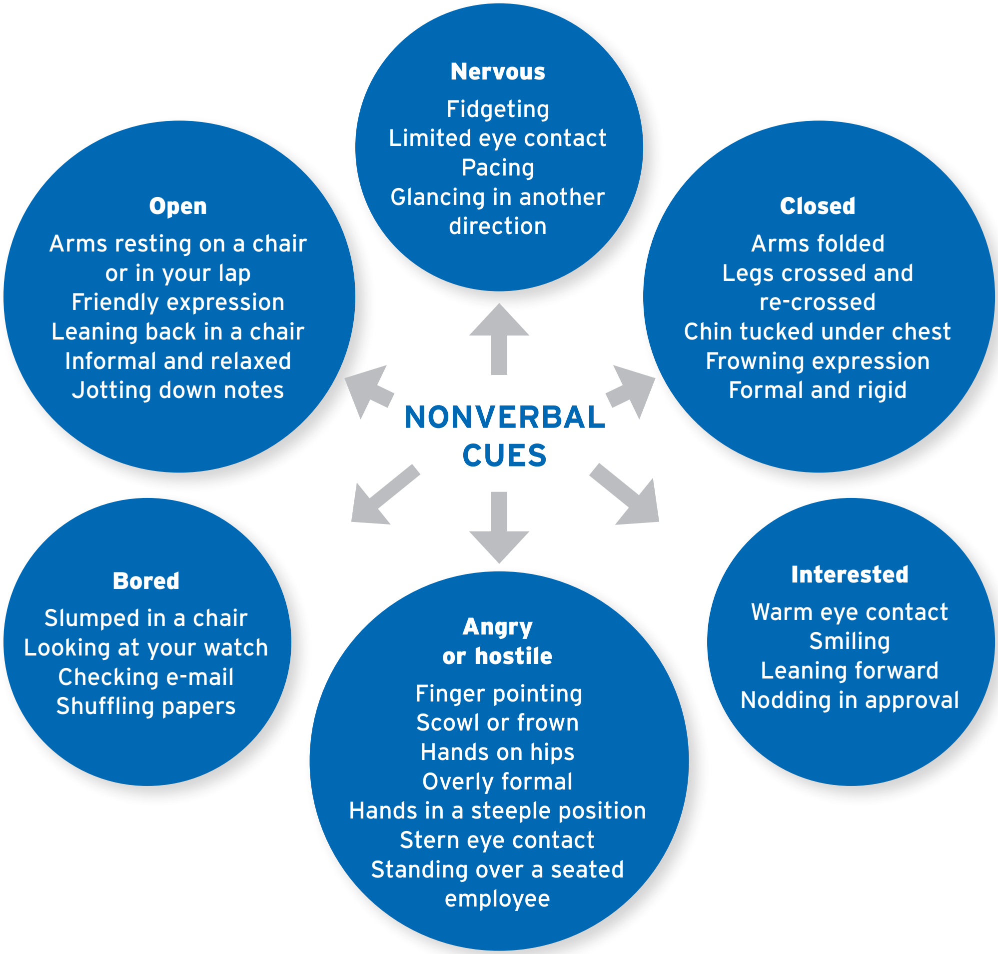
Another useful tool for seeking clarification is to accept responsibility for understanding by saying, “I’m not sure I communicated that very well. Can you tell me what you heard me say?” Acknowledging that you recognize your message may not have been clear eases the receiver’s feelings of uncertainty and allows for questions without fear of insulting you. It is always better to ask for and to give more information *now* than it is to be disappointed by the results *later*.

Nonverbal messages

Although you probably think you communicate verbally most often with your employees, much of your communication doesn’t involve words. Paralanguage, for example, includes the tone of voice, pitch, emphasis, speed, loudness, and pauses you use when speaking. It is closely related to verbal communication but concerns *how* something is said rather than *what* is said. Paralanguage can communicate meaning in ways that words alone cannot.

Body language involves the position or movement of the body such as posture, gestures, and facial expressions. Unintentionally, you may communicate a great deal to an employee through body language. A clenched fist may signal anger, worry, or tension. Eye contact may communicate honesty, attention, or interest. Playing with a pencil, tapping fingers on a desk, or gazing out the window when an employee is talking may communicate boredom or lack of interest. To be effective, you need to pay as much attention to *how* you are communicating as to *what* you are communicating.

How the sender treats the receiver’s personal space is another form of nonverbal communication. Everyone has a comfort zone; it is bigger for some than for others. When you move beyond someone’s comfort zone by getting too close, it sends a message that can be misinterpreted. For example, if you come into a co-worker’s office and touch items on the desk, your co-worker may experience this as an invasion of personal space. He or she may feel irritated or even angry, and may



then misinterpret or not even hear the verbal message that you are delivering. You need to be conscious of how you use personal space, and respect employees' space.

Finally, personal style is a form of nonverbal communication. As noted earlier, communication takes place through symbols. Your clothes, your way of carrying yourself, and the volume you typically use when speaking are all symbols that accompany your words. Your personal style, in turn, reflects who you are—including, for example, your age, your cultural background, and your life experiences. You can't change who you are, but you can become more aware of how your personal style affects your communication. You should also be sensitive to the variety of personal styles among your employees. There may be times when you will want to adjust your style to accommodate those with whom you are communicating.[1]

To enhance your communication skills, you must pay equal attention to non-verbal as well as verbal aspects of communication, such as intonation, inflection, gestures, and use of personal space.

Barriers to effective communication

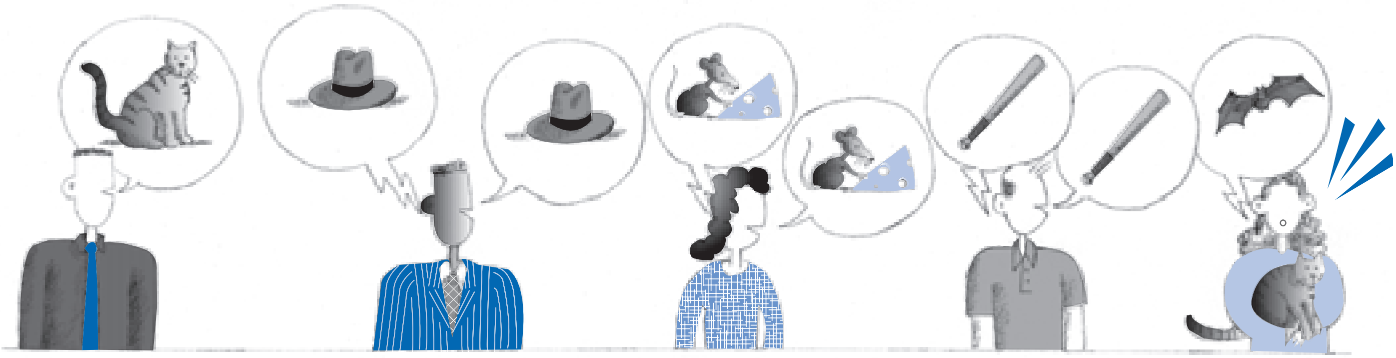
One metaphor for communication depicts it as a conveyor belt moving packages: a bundle transported along a conveyor belt from Point A to Point B arrives as the same package, unchanged. Unfortunately, communication is often more like the telephone game in which children sit in a circle and take turns whispering a message to the next person. What started out as "I'd like a lollipop" may end up as "I have stripes on my socks" at the end of the circle. The message you send to a receiver can easily become something entirely different when the receiver interprets the message.

Barriers to effective communication can occur anywhere in the communication process. When the barrier originates with the sender, it is often because the sender is not clear about the goal of the message or has failed to adapt the message to the intended receiver. For example, the sender may

- Incorrectly assume that the receiver has the knowledge necessary to understand the message
- Fail to consider different language, background, experiences, and attitudes that will shape understanding
- Choose a communication medium that is not suited to the message
- Use language that causes the receiver to stop receiving.

Other barriers to communication arise in the feedback loop. For example, the sender may fail to ask for feedback, may interpret feedback incorrectly, or may fail to clarify the message based on feedback from the receiver.

When the barrier originates with the receiver, it is often because the receiver misses or misinterprets part of the message. For example, inattention, distractions, or emotions may lead the receiver to jump to conclusions or to hear only what he or



she wants to hear. Sometimes a receiver may reject a message because it contradicts his or her beliefs and assumptions.

No matter what the barrier, either party in a two-way exchange can try to improve communication by asking for *feedback*. If you are not sure an employee has understood what you said, check for understanding by asking the employee to report what he or she heard. Feedback does not have to be given in the same medium as it was received. A spoken message delivered today may be one that you respond to tomorrow by e-mail. That is still feedback, although now there is the added noise of time and distance.

When you are the sender, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Think carefully about who the receiver is, including his or her emotional state.
- Know what your objective is in sending the message.
- If you are communicating face-to-face, take steps to ensure that the physical surroundings are as comfortable as possible and with minimal distractions for the receiver.
- Review the message in your head before you say it. Think about the meaning and clarity of the message from the point of view of the receiver.
- Use language and nonverbal cues that will be understandable to the receiver.
- Ask for feedback.
- If the receiver reacts negatively, try to figure out what's happening.[2]

Active listening

Listening is a key component of effective communication. True listening goes beyond merely hearing: it means understanding what the other person is saying.

Why is listening successfully so difficult? For starters, humans think much faster than they talk. The average rate of speech for most Americans is 125 to 150 words per minute; the brain can process information by as much as four to five times as fast. Instead of slowing down the brain to concentrate on what the person is saying, many people use that extra capacity to think about something else.

Noise, such as people talking in the hall, a radio playing in the background, or a ringing telephone, can also disrupt your concentration and keep you from listening to the message. Thoughts about the report you were working on before the other person walked into your office or worries about an overdue project create a different kind of noise that interferes with effective listening.

Becoming an active listener will improve your communication capacity. Active listening requires you to give your undivided attention to another person and to attempt to understand what is being communicated. As a supervisor, you can show that you are listening actively by:

- Looking directly at the speaker. Be aware of your body language: if your eyes move to the clock or around the room, the speaker will think you are bored or disinterested.
- Showing that you are following the conversation by using appropriate facial expressions, by nodding occasionally, or by saying, “I see.”
- Waiting patiently if the employee talks slowly or becomes silent. This gives the speaker time to collect his or her thoughts and to consider what has been said. It also demonstrates your respect for and interest in the conversation.
- Letting the speaker finish without interruptions such as finishing sentences, answering telephone calls, or checking text messages.

- Listening not only to what the person is saying but also to the feelings being expressed; take note of both verbal and nonverbal cues.

Feedback is an integral part of the active listening process: it lets your employees know that you are truly listening. Sometimes it's helpful to paraphrase the employee's message. You might start by saying, "What you seem to be telling me is..." or "It sounds like you're feeling..." or "What I think I hear you saying is…" and then asking for feedback.

Here are some basic guidelines for active listening:

- ***Listen to what the employee is saying without judging.*** Really listening requires discipline. You may want to share your own ideas before the other person has finished his or her thoughts or agree or disagree without fully processing the information. One technique for avoiding an early interruption is to allow for a thoughtful pause after the other person has stopped talking. This gives the person a chance to continue if he or she wants to add more, slows you down so that you don't interrupt, and demonstrates the value you place on the employee and the interaction.
- ***Try to identify and acknowledge the employee's feelings.*** First try to sense how the employee may be feeling and then say what you're thinking so you can verify your perception. This also helps your employee feel that he or she has been heard. Saying, "If that happened to me I might feel…" or "My impression is you are feeling…" gives the employee the space to clarify or affirm your impression.
- ***Paraphrase by using your own words to restate what you heard the employee say.*** Paraphrasing is a form of feedback that helps you demonstrate you have understood correctly and that gives employees the opportunity to make themselves clear.
- ***Ask open-ended questions.*** When you ask questions, you are trying to figure out exactly what your employee is saying. Open-ended questions such as, "In what way does this work procedure make the job safer?" will provide more useful information than close-ended questions such as, "Does this work procedure make the job safer?" Yes or no answers don't tell you much.

By listening actively, you can better appreciate your employees' concerns and may be able to help resolve them.

Consider the following situation: Avery says to his supervisor, "This job really depresses me. I no sooner finish one thing than they bring me something else to do. Sometimes I feel like I'm just a cog in a machine." A supervisor who considers only Avery's words might immediately try to help Avery do his job faster or might get a colleague to share some of Avery's work. But a supervisor who is listening for the feelings behind Avery's message may realize that he is bothered by more than the workload. He might be saying that his only reward for doing his work quickly is to receive more work. And he may be frustrated because his supervisor has not recognized his efforts with a word of praise or appreciation.

To discover what sparked Avery's comment, you could start by saying, "You know, Avery, we have been very busy lately. I can see how it would be frustrating to you, and I'm sorry that I haven't let you know how much I appreciate the good job you're doing." This approach opens the door for the employee to share what is really on his or her mind and gives you a chance to listen further.

Giving feedback

Feedback is the receiver's response to a message—an important part of the two-way communication process. There is another kind of feedback that is important in your role as a supervisor, and that is feedback on performance. Effective supervisors supply regular, unsolicited feedback to their employees.

You may find when you first start giving your employees regular feedback that you encounter resistance or even resentment. In general, it is difficult to take criticism, no matter how constructive it is. Draw on these guidelines when you are giving feedback on performance:

- ***Examine your own motives.*** Be sure your intention is to be helpful, not to show how perceptive you are.
- ***Consider the receiver's readiness to hear your feedback.*** Usually, feedback is most effective when people seek it. When possible, look for signs that an employee is ready to hear the feedback. It is also helpful to remove any external distractions by meeting in a private office or conference room.
- ***Give feedback promptly.*** Feedback given soon after an event or incident means the details remain clear. However, if the receiver is upset or otherwise not ready to listen, wait until emotions will interfere less with the information.

THE EIGHT ATTRIBUTES OF SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION

Example	Not
Congruent, not incongruent A focus on honest messages where verbal statements match thoughts and feelings.	
Example: "Your behavior really upset me."	*Not: "Do I seem upset? No, everything's fine."*
Descriptive, not evaluative A focus on describing an objective occurrence, describing your reaction to it, and offering a suggested alternative.	
Example: "Here is what happened; here is my reaction; here is a suggestion that would be more acceptable."	*Not: "You are wrong for doing what you did."*
Problem-oriented, not person-oriented A focus on problems and issues that can be changed rather than people and their characteristics.	
Example: "How can we solve this problem?"	*Not: "Because of you a problem exists."*
Validating, not invalidating A focus on statements that communicate respect, flexibility, collaboration, and areas of agreement.	
Example: "I have some ideas, but do you have any suggestions?"	*Not: "You wouldn't understand, so we'll do it my way."*
Specific, not global A focus on specific events or behaviors and avoid general, extreme, or either-or statements.	
Example: "You interrupted me three times during the meeting."	*Not: "You're always trying to get attention."*
Conjunctive, not disjunctive A focus on statements that flow from what has been said previously and facilitate interaction.	
Example: "Relating to what you just said, I'd like to raise another point."	*Not: "I want to say something (regardless of what you just said)."*
Owned, not disowned A focus on taking responsibility for your won statements by using personal "I" words.	
Example: "I have decided to turn down your request because..."	*Not: "You have a pretty good idea, but it wouldn't get approved."*
Supportive listening, not one-way listening A focus on using a variety of appropriate responses, with a bias toward reflective responses.	
Example: "What do you think are the obstacles standing in the way of improvement?"	*Not: "As I said before, you make too many mistakes. You're just not performing."*

From David A. Whetten and Kim S. Cameron, *Developing Management Skills, Eighth Edition* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 243. Used with permission.

- ***Be descriptive rather than judgmental.*** Explain, in a nonjudgmental way, what happened. This statement is *descriptive*: "We had a report to turn in Friday morning, and because we didn't receive your section until late Thursday afternoon, everyone else had to scramble to meet the deadline." This is *judgmental*: '"Do you ever turn in anything on time?"
- ***Deal in specifics, not generalities.*** Describe concrete events such as, "You interrupted me when I was reviewing the information" rather than, "You always interrupt."
- ***Own the statements you make.*** Use sentences that start with "I" such as "I have a concern about your work" rather than "others have been complaining."
- ***Offer feedback but don't impose it.*** Present the information as something the receiver can consider and explore rather than only accept as a command.
- ***Avoid overload.*** Focus only on what is most important and changeable.
- ***Focus on the problem to be solved or the issue to be confronted rather than on the person.*** Refer to what a person does rather than who you think he is. For example, you might say that a person "talked more than anyone else in this meeting" instead of he is a "loudmouth."
- ***Avoid words or phrases that trigger emotional reactions.*** If you suspect that your employees see you as threatening or intimidating, ask a peer for feedback on your use of language. Do you routinely use words or phrases that send a message you don't want to send?
- ***Remember that not providing feedback is a message in itself.*** Employees may interpret the absence as disappointment, hostility, or lack of interest in them.

Dealing with resistance to feedback

A good way to overcome resistance to feedback is by asking your employees to give you feedback on your performance. A regular, private meeting with each employee is a great opportunity to take stock of how the team members are feeling, and what they are truly thinking. Are there resources that could help them do their jobs better or more efficiently? Is there something you could do (or not do) that would create a better work environment?

When you ask for feedback, monitor your reactions carefully. Responding angrily or with any suggestion of negative consequences will make employees reluctant to trust you in the future.

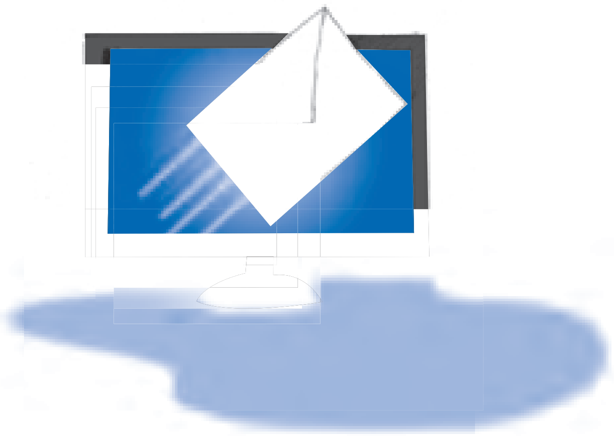
The following guidelines will help when you seek feedback from employees:

- Be ready to hear comments that may make you uncomfortable.
- Ask for clarification, explain your actions as needed, but do not debate the validity of the employee's observations.
- Thank the employee for the feedback. It may not have been easy to give, and you want to be sure that the person will be willing to do it again in the future.

Electronic communication and social media

Electronic communication such as e-mail, texting, instant messaging, and tweeting are valuable resources for today's supervisors. For example, e-mail can communicate the same message to many employees at once, can confirm a message delivered in a meeting or over the telephone, and can serve as a record of past communication. A brief text message can clarify a situation immediately to improve productivity rather than waiting for a meeting to deal with an issue.

Improperly used, however, these tools can be alienating. The problem with e-mails or tweets is that they cannot communicate tone (not even with emoticons, such as smiley faces). As a result, the receiver may experience a tone that isn't what was intended. For example, the sender's attempts at humor can be misinterpreted as insensitivity. Unless the receiver lets the sender know that he or she found the message upsetting or offensive, the exchange may break down entirely: what was intended to be a dialogue may end up as one-way communication.



Sensitive messages are best delivered in person; that way you can make sure you are taking into account the receiver's feelings. And when you use e-mail to deliver the same message to multiple employees, not everyone will interpret the message the same way.

Remember, too, that e-mails, texts, and tweets are all saved in accordance with record retention policies and are subject to freedom-of-information inquiries. A brief text meant to clarify can be interpreted much differently a week, a month, or a year later.

Here are some guidelines for using e-mail to communicate with your employees:

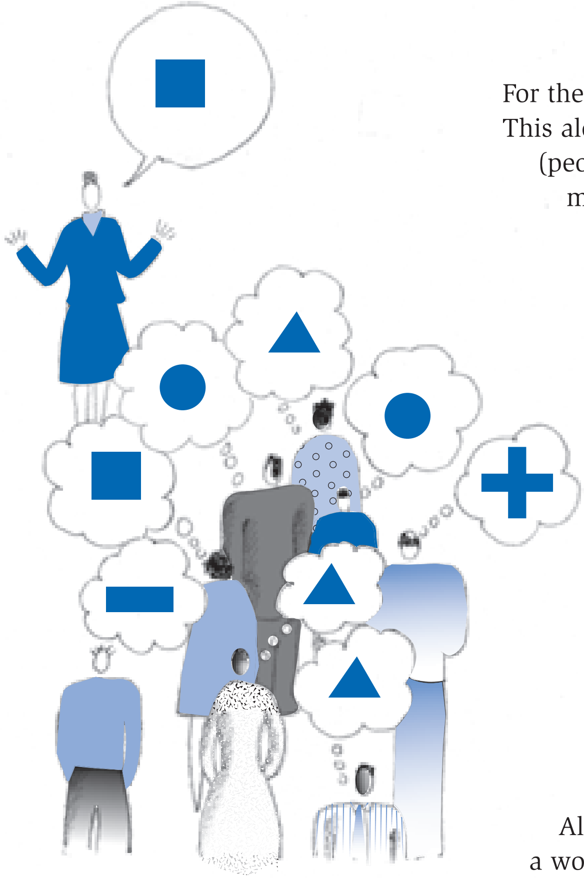
- Reread each message before hitting the send button. Is the message clear? Is there potential for misinterpretation?
- ***Ask for feedback.*** Encourage employees to come see you in person about the message if needed. Some employees respond better to face-to-face communication.
- ***Don't overuse e-mail.*** Your employees receive lots of e-mails and may make quick judgments about what they think is important. So if you send them e-mails constantly, it will be hard for them to distinguish the important from the general. Eventually none of the messages will carry any weight in their full inboxes.
- ***Never pass along joke e-mails in the workplace, no matter how cute, funny, or inoffensive they may seem.*** What is humorous to you may be offensive to someone else, and those e-mails add more inbox clutter.
- ***Before using the "reply to all" button, check who received the original e-mail.*** The golden rule with e-mail is that if you don't want to see it in print later, don't send it.

Electronic communication seems to have almost unlimited potential to increase workplace efficiency and effectiveness. Employees carrying smart phones and tablets can now check e-mail and access the Internet constantly. Workers can stay in touch with each other as never before, which ensures a well-informed team.

Communicating with a diverse workforce

Today's effective supervisor understands and appreciates individual differences, whether those differences are based on background, culture, age, or gender, and knows that good communication is essential to good management of a diverse workforce.

Diversity in the workplace has wide-reaching effects on the entire organization. Effective management of differences can increase creativity and improve problem solving by introducing new perspectives and ideas. Diverse teams of people process more information and arrive at more effective solutions. In contrast, ineffective management of differences—which often includes poor communication—can undermine group cohesion.



For the first time ever there are four generations in the workplace. This alone often creates communication challenges. Traditionalists (people born between 1922 and 1945) are of retirement age but many remain in the workforce. Already, some baby boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964) have reached normal retirement age and are beginning to move away from full-time employment. Behind this group are Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) and Generation Y or millennials (born between 1980 and 2000). Being aware of each generation's preferred working and communicating styles will help you better manage team relationships.

In broad terms, men and women, people of different cultures, and people of different ages tend to use different styles of communicating, working, and managing. Understanding these differences can help people work together more effectively. Remember, though, that behavior ultimately stems from individual preferences rather than group generalizations.

Avoiding stereotyping

Although generalizations may increase understanding within a work group, it is important to avoid stereotyping—that is, mentally placing individuals into various groups and interpreting their behavior in light of what you think you know about that group. Stereotypes are reflected in comments such as, "Oh, you work for a woman. You know how manipulative women can be," or "Bob's a good worker, but you know people his age don't take anything seriously." Stereotyping often occurs when something in our own background, culture, or experience makes us see people as members of a group rather than as individuals. As a supervisor, you must make sure you are not encouraging or allowing stereotyping within your group. It's your job to create the most harmonious work environment possible.

When working with a diverse group of employees, you should

- Use clear, concise language and avoid slang. An employee whose first language is not English may have trouble understanding idioms and jargon.
- Be particularly alert to nonverbal messages. Is there something in the employee's facial expression that indicates he or she does not understand you? Are you sending an unintended nonverbal message by standing too close, pointing, or insisting on eye contact?
- Accept different perspectives as valid. If a conflict occurs, consider the possibility that it is based on differences in background.
- Be aware that your organization has a culture. The organization culture and way of operating should be explained to new employees.
- Treat all employees with respect.

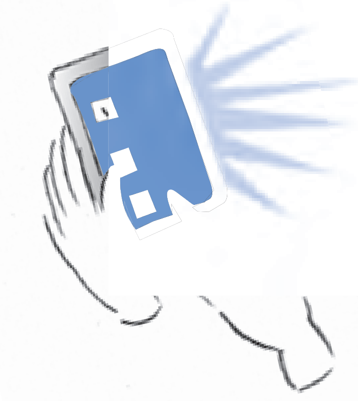
Everyone has preferences, values, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect backgrounds and experiences. But everyone is an individual first. Acknowledging individuality will go a long way toward understanding, acceptance, and improved communication.

Summary

Communication is an essential component of building a strong, productive team. You spend the majority of your workday communicating in one way or another—whether face-to face, over the phone, or through memos, e-mails, or texts. Fortunately, communication is a skill that can be learned and practiced.

Communication is the transmission of ideas, facts, information, and meaning. Because communication is filtered by both the sender and the receiver, what is sent may not be identical to what is received. Therefore, effective communication depends on active listening and on giving and receiving feedback. Communicating successfully is rarely easy, but the results are worth it: increased efficiency and effectiveness, higher morale, an honest exchange of thoughts and opinions, and a more harmonious work environment.

In many ways, effective communication is the very essence of effective supervision.



CHECKLIST

- Be aware of the importance of effective communication.
- Recognize that communication is a process and involves a number of components.
- Understand the various forms of verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Recognize the major barriers to effective communication.
- Use active listening.
- Understand the importance of giving and receiving feedback.
- Appreciate the relationship between good communication and good supervision.

Endnotes

1 Christine Becker, "Interpersonal Communication" in *Effective Communication: A Local Government Guide* (Washington, DC: ICMA, 1994), 153.

2 Robert E. Quinn et al., *Becoming a Master Manager: A Competency Framework, 3rd ed.* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2003), 43.

Supervisory situation 8-1

As the long-time supervisor of the local government's summer aquatics recreation program, Jordan is responsible for more than 100 seasonal workers between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two and six full-time employees. While Jordan is not directly responsible for interviewing or hiring the seasonal workers, he does develop and maintain the daily work schedules to ensure that every program is well handled and fully staffed.

Typically this time of year, Jordan feels overwhelmed and begins to get irritable and short-tempered at times. Since Jordan's regular full-time staff is also stretched thin, a couple of years ago his supervisor suggested that he use one of the seasonal workers for additional administrative support. Although initially reluctant to let go of some of these tasks, Jordan has found the additional support very helpful.

This summer Jordan has had Cathy, one of the more experienced of last year's seasonal workers, provide his additional administrative support. Because of the large influx of employees, Jordan sought and received permission to bring Cathy on board a month earlier than other seasonal workers. In addition to the daily tasks, Jordan has also assigned Cathy preparation of the weekly payroll for his review.

Cathy is twenty-nine years old and the single mother of two small children. She is well educated, excited about this role, and hoping to do a good job so that Jordan might offer her a full-time position. Cathy is eager to earn more money at a steady job she can count on with working hours that fit the demands of caring for her children. She has a cheerful personality and seems popular with other employees and customers alike.

In a typical week, Cathy will be late for work on one or two occasions. It is also not unusual for her to have two or three phone calls a day from her child care provider. At least once each week, Cathy texts Jordan and asks for permission to leave a little early so she can pick up medicine or run an errand associated with her kids.

Because of Jordan's busy schedule, he finds both the tardiness and leaving early frustrating. Because of a heavy workload, he has had little chance to talk with Cathy about her attendance and tardiness, but has given her two verbal warnings.

Today was the last straw. Jordan was in the middle of orientation meetings with the new lifeguards when he got a text from Cathy that said, "J, 911 at home. Gotta go. CUL8R. Thx, C"

At this point, Jordan is considering terminating Cathy since he feels he cannot count on her, and she doesn't seem motivated to change her work habits. With such a heavy summer workload, Jordan feels he can't afford to have an employee who doesn't pull her weight. "I am drowning here, and all she cares about is rescuing herself!"

As soon as he is done with the orientation Jordan texts Cathy back and says, "F2F, 8:00 a.m. sharp!!"

1. What approaches, short of termination, might Jordan try in order to help Cathy understand how her work habits are affecting him and her employment?
2. What are some communication techniques Jordan could use to assist Cathy in understanding the importance of her role?
3. What advice do you have for Jordan?

Supervisory situation 8-2

Chet has been a supervisor in the purchasing department for the past four years. Jim and Miguel are buyers in his division who have had problems working together. Jim is fifty-two years old and has been involved in various aspects of purchasing for the past twenty years. He is in charge of coordinating all capital purchases for the city, and prides himself on having worked his way up to senior buyer.

Chet hired Miguel two years ago. Miguel speaks with a strong Spanish accent, and his English is sometimes hard to understand; at Chet's urging, he is taking courses in English at night school. Chet assigned Miguel to work with Jim as an assistant buyer, but Jim and Miguel have not been able to work cooperatively together. Each worker continually complains to Chet about the other. Jim's major complaint is that Miguel does not follow directions and often turns in work that Jim has to redo. Miguel complains that Jim is far too demanding and impatient.

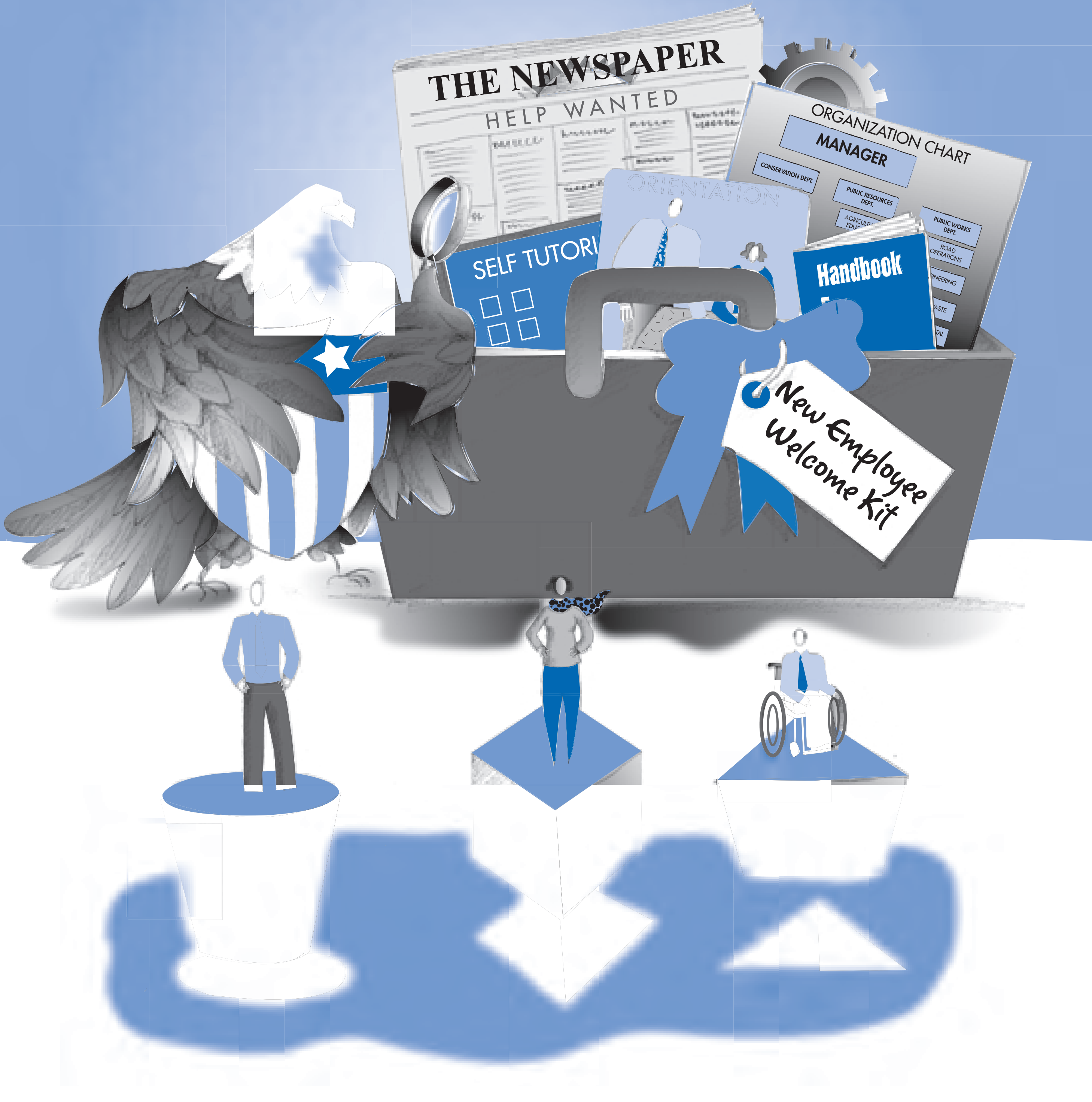
Determined to resolve the long-standing issue between them, Chet finally called both employees into his office. He asked Jim and Miguel to sit down and face each other. He then said that he wanted to help them resolve their argument by laying down some ground rules: each employee was to take five minutes to tell the other exactly how he was feeling about the issue. When one was speaking, the other was to actively listen.

Jim began by telling Miguel that he liked his sense of humor and unassuming manner. He then told Miguel that what he really didn't understand was why Miguel didn't follow his directions. Jim's voice grew louder as he recounted the latest incident, when Miguel had been instructed to contact the police department to clarify questions about the specifications for a police sedan that the department had submitted: "Because you didn't contact the department, several of the specifications were inaccurate. Your failure to follow through could cost the city an extra $2,500 per vehicle. That's a waste of taxpayers' money," Jim fumed.

When it was Miguel's turn, he first said that it sounded as though Jim was really angry and frustrated. "You feel that I don't follow directions because I didn't contact the police department as you had told me to do. I guess you're right. I didn't follow through. But that's because I thought you told me to check the police sedan specifications and to call the police department if I had any questions. I read the specs and didn't see anything wrong with them. I'll admit that there were a few phrases I had trouble understanding, but I thought that if I asked you to explain them, you'd be angry. You don't like me, do you, Jim?" Miguel asked.

After the session, Jim and Miguel admitted that they at least had a better understanding of the other's point of view.

1. What were the active listening steps that each employee was asked to follow?
2. How do you think active listening may have helped in this case?
3. In the future, what should Jim and Miguel each do to avoid a repeat of this situation?


THE NEWSPAPER
HELP WANTED
ORGANIZATION CHART
MANAGER
CONSERVATION DEPT.
PUBLIC RESOURCES DEPT.
PUBLIC WORKS DEPT.
ROAD OPERATIONS
ORIENTATION
SELF TUTORI
Handbook
New Employee Welcome Kit

9

SELECTING, ONBOARDING, AND DEVELOPING NEW EMPLOYEES

Cindy Taylor, Sherri Dosher, and Jimmy Powell

It is a fine thing to have ability, but to discover ability in others is the true test.

Elbert Hubbard, writer, publisher, and artist

SNAPSHOT

Selecting and developing new employees is an important supervisory skill. This chapter provides guidance on how to carry out that role successfully. Chapter objectives are to

- Increase understanding of the recruitment process from preparing a job description to selecting the best candidate
- Raise awareness of the legal requirements of recruitment
- Introduce key components of connecting with and orienting new employees
- Provide guidance on preparing an employee development program.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- What are your responsibilities in selecting employees?
- How do you conduct a successful interview?
- What steps can you take to assure that new employees get off to a good start?
- What is your role in employee development?

One of your most important roles as a supervisor is to select and develop employees assigned to your unit. You are more likely to succeed in getting work done with and through other people if you select employees carefully, let them know what is expected of them when they start working, go through an appropriate onboarding process with them, and keep them up-to-date through job-related training and continuous feedback. Opportunities for individual development are a key retention factor for employees.

Selecting employees

Selecting the right employee for a position requires a partnership between you and the human resources (HR) department. In most jurisdictions, the HR department is responsible for advertising positions and screening applicants. Your job as a supervisor is to furnish a current and accurate description for each job you are trying to

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Authors Cindy Taylor, Sherri Dosher, and Jimmy Powell appreciatively recognize the contribution of Stephen E. Condrey and Carl McCoy, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

fill, especially if the job has changed recently. A complete and legally compliant job description includes

- Specific duties and responsibilities
- Physical requirements, if any
- *Required* knowledge, skills, and abilities
- *Desirable* knowledge, skills, and abilities.

When developing a new or updated job description, it is helpful to have another employee who is doing or has done the same job review the description for accuracy. Once you have done this review, you are ready to work with your HR department to determine which requirements should be highlighted in the advertisement.

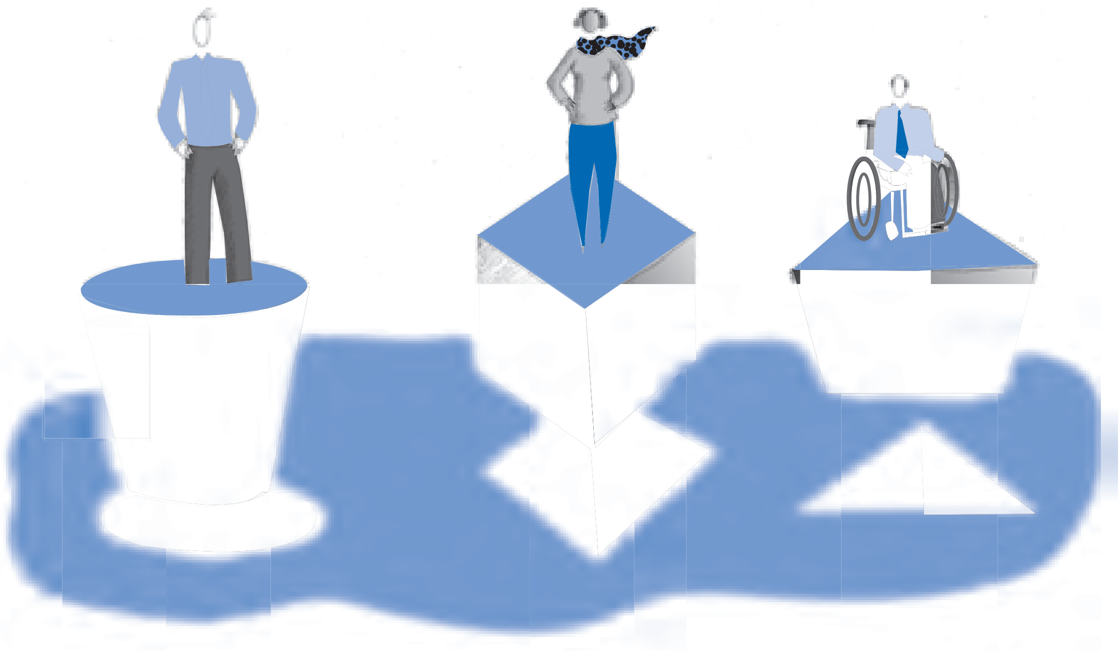
In addition to listing qualifications for the position, the advertisement should list any testing requirements. Assessment centers and performance examinations that allow candidates to demonstrate their skills in work-related situations are often used to rank candidates among a large pool of applicants. A performance examination can be especially helpful if the position requires the operation of equipment or machines or use of specific software. In order to comply with personnel and labor laws, it is essential to include any required exams in your advertisement and to administer the same test to all applicants. Your HR department can develop an assessment center if you decide to use one as part of the selection process.

Preparing to conduct a job interview

A successful job interview will provide the information you need to select the right person for the job. In addition, it will help the applicant learn more about the organization or unit in which the job is located and about you as a potential supervisor. If the interview is the candidate's first contact with you and the organization, you will want to make a good first impression.

Preparing to conduct a successful interview includes these steps:

- Reviewing the job description and the advertisement to revisit the job requirements as they were presented to potential candidates
- Reviewing the candidate's application and resume to become familiar with previous work experience and job-related skills



- Preparing questions you will use to conduct the interview
- Thinking about the type of person that will be an asset to your team
- Assembling the materials you will need to conduct the interview including the job description, the candidate's application and resume, your questions, and a pad for taking notes during the discussion.

With good preparation, you increase the chance of hiring and retaining the right person for the job.

You may want to consider using a panel to interview applicants. In this approach, you select three to five current employees who are familiar with the position to conduct the interview with you. The panel usually is composed of a subject matter expert from the work unit, an HR official, and representatives from other departments or divisions who typically work closely with the person in the position for which you are interviewing. An effort should be made to ensure that the panel reflects the organization's diversity, including gender, age, and racial diversity.

Behavioral interviewing

Behavioral interviewing is a technique that adds more depth to the information you gather about job candidates by examining past behavior in situations similar to what they might encounter in this job. Past behavior is a good predictor of performance in a new job. The first step is to develop a good set of job-related questions for yourself such as:

- What skills will the employee need right away?
- What skills are *required* for the job versus what are *desirable*?
- What skills can the employee learn on the job?
- What situations/examples will demonstrate the knowledge and skills required?
- What topics do you want to discuss and in what order?

You should develop interview questions based on the essential job functions and the knowledge and skills required to perform them. Use questions that will clarify or expand on the information that has been provided in the person's job application and resume.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASSESS PAST BEHAVIOR

Position	Essential *job function*	Required *knowledge/skills*	Interview *question*
Customer service representative	Responds to customer inquiries	Skill in oral and written communication	Describe a time when you had to deal with an especially unhappy customer.
Social worker	Interviews prospective foster parents	Skill in establishing relationships	Tell me how you have established rapport with customers.
Deputy sheriff	Monitors activity in court buildings	Skill in responding calmly and quickly in a crisis	Describe a time when you had to handle an emergency and how you dealt with that situation.
Building inspector	Inspects structures for code compliance	Knowledge of building codes	Tell me about a situation in which you applied a particularly complex or vague portion of the code.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- How did you learn about this organization?
- What professional accomplishments are you most proud of and why?
- What is your top professional goal for the next three to five years?
- Describe a time when you didn't accomplish a goal. What action did you take?
- Describe a significant report, policy, or presentation you have developed.
- Give an example of how you solved a problem in a previous position with a creative approach.
- Describe a time when you led a group or a team.
- Describe your experience in working with customers from various cultural backgrounds. What approaches have you used to address their diverse needs?
- Describe an ethical dilemma you have faced in the workplace. What was your role in the resolution? What, if anything, would you do differently if faced with the same issue again?
- Describe a difficult problem that you faced in a previous position. How did you resolve it?

Keeping it legal

Federal law prohibits employers from disqualifying a candidate because of race, sex, age, religion, nationality, disability, or other personal characteristics that have nothing to do with the person's ability to do the job. In addition, you are not permitted to ask prospective employees questions about their marital status, their children, what neighborhood they come from, or what church they attend. Questions that may seem harmless—such as "You have a very interesting last name. What country is it from?" or "How long have you been married?"—are considered discriminatory because they focus on aspects of an applicant's life that are unrelated to the ability to perform a job.

You should also avoid making judgments about what a person may or may not be able to do based on appearances. For example, assuming that a slightly built candidate may not be able to handle the

MAKE THE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE JOB, NOT THE PERSON

Illegal	Legal
Do you have a babysitter for your children?	Are you available to work on Saturday?
Does your religion prevent you from working weekends or holidays?	Here is our work schedule. Are you available to work during the scheduled times for this position?
Are you a citizen?	After employment can you submit verification of your legal right to work in the United States? (Note: this must be asked of all candidates.)
Do you have any physical handicaps?	Here are the job duties. Are you able to fully perform them?

physical requirements of a job or that an older candidate will not be familiar with technology is illegal and may interfere with choosing the best candidate for the job. If you examine your personal biases in advance, you can stop yourself from making an unfair—and perhaps illegal—employment decision.

Once you have made your selection, you must be able to demonstrate to others that your decision was based only on an applicant's ability to perform the essential job functions better than other candidates you interviewed.

Your organization's HR department, equal employment opportunity office, or legal department can provide guidance about screening criteria and appropriate questions to ask during the job interview. It's better to check with the experts who keep up with the legal aspects of HR management than to take a chance and risk a lawsuit. An effective supervisor follows legal guidelines, exercises good judgment, and is always fair and consistent when interviewing job candidates.

Conducting the interview

Your interview will be more successful if you

- Conduct it in a comfortable and private work space
- Put the applicant (and yourself) at ease

- Phrase questions to encourage conversation and to get the information you need
- Listen carefully
- Take notes during the interview, and write down your observations promptly afterward.

You and the applicant will learn more about each other if both of you are comfortable and relaxed. Begin by introducing yourself. Use the candidate's name right away, and continue to use it during the conversation. If possible there should be no physical barriers, such as a desk or table, between you and the applicant. Make sure you have adequate space away from noise and distractions.

Following your introductions, briefly review the job description and provide additional information about the position. Give a realistic description of the position including environmental factors, physical demands, workload, and hours of operation or shifts. It is important to state these factors clearly from the beginning of the interview, not only to give the applicant a clear picture of what to expect but also to help you begin to determine how well the individual may fit with your organization.

Avoid yes-or-no questions such as "Have you ever done this kind of work before?" "Do you think you can do this job?" or "Is customer service important?" Instead, ask open-ended questions such as these:

- What skills do you have that make you the right person for this job?
- How would you handle an agitated taxpayer who comes into your office because his garbage hasn't been collected for two weeks?

Successful interviewing requires you to focus closely on the conversation so you hear everything that is said and how it is said. In other words, you must truly listen. Steps you can take to maximize successful listening during the interview include

- Ensuring that there are no interruptions from visitors, the telephone, or mobile devices
- Focusing on what the applicant is saying from start to finish
- Waiting until the applicant is finished before thinking about your response or your next questions

- Giving the applicant time to gather his or her thoughts in response to your questions even if that means pauses in the flow of the conversation
- Being a careful and consistent listener throughout the interview.

Although you must ask each applicant the same initial interview questions, you may need to use follow-up questions to get additional information. The follow-up questions will differ depending on the answers the applicant provides. The key to a successful interview is asking sufficient and legal follow-up questions. Statements such as "Tell me more about that" or questions such as "Can you explain what your role was in that situation?" will help you to get important details about the applicant's experience. After you finish your questions, give the applicant an opportunity to ask you questions so that he or she has a clear understanding of what is expected. In addition, you can gather more information about your candidates by the questions they ask.

At the conclusion of the interview, tell the applicant what will happen next in the process. When do you anticipate making a decision? Will there be a second interview? Is a background investigation, drug test, or any physical examination required before a final offer is made? Make sure you are clear on what your organizational policies require.

Finally, write down your notes about the applicant as soon as the interview is over, while the conversation is still clear in your mind. Avoid recording any assumptions about the applicant or interpretations of what you think the applicant's answers or body language implied; instead, record facts about what the applicant said or didn't say, and what body language was visible. For example, you could write down, "made very little eye contact" but not, "seemed shifty" or "untrustworthy." Record your observations on a standard form (which will usually be provided by your HR department). Recording information about the same aspects of each interview will help you make fair comparisons and ensure equitable interviews.

Employee onboarding

Employee onboarding is a process designed to welcome, educate, and connect new employees to the organization and their specific work unit. A new employee who is well connected to the organization from the start—including rules and procedures,

processes, relationships, responsibilities, roles, development opportunities, and more—is much more likely to become a productive employee.

The three primary components of an effective employee onboarding program are

- Discussing job expectations
- Engaging new employees
- Promoting new employee retention.

While your HR department will usually provide new employees a general orientation to the organization, it's important that you provide a customized introduction to your department and division.

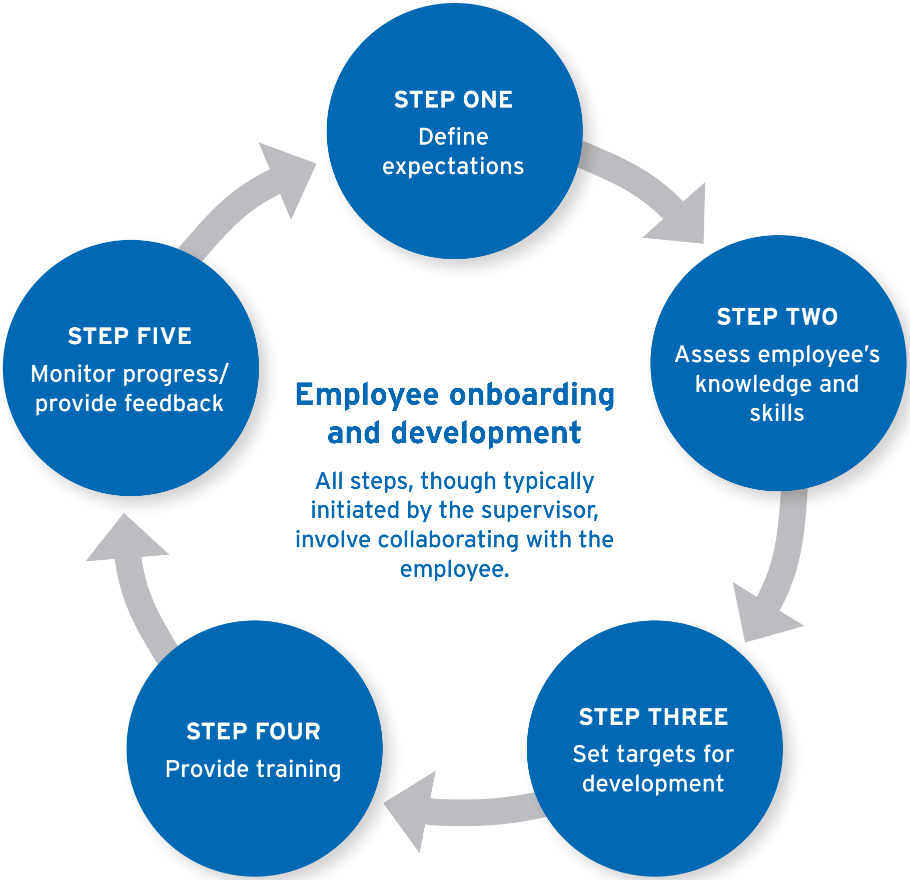
Discussing job expectations

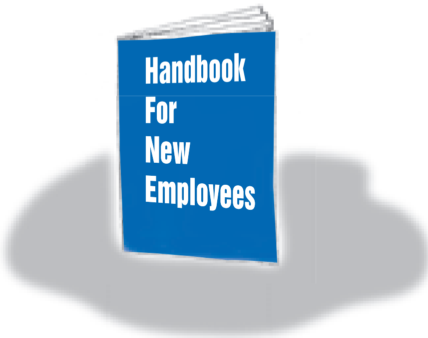
Early in the onboarding period, two points should be made clear: what you expect of the new employee, and what he or she expects from you. Sometimes new employees quit or are terminated because they consistently fail to meet the expectations of the supervisor. Making your expectations clear to the new employee on the first day and making sure the employee understands them will minimize misunderstandings, confusion, and disappointment.

Misunderstandings also arise if employees don't have the opportunity to discuss their expectations. Therefore, it is good practice for both you and the new employee to agree on the job expectations together. In addition, providing ongoing, constructive feedback is essential in reinforcing your expectations.

At this stage, you should also discuss the parameters of the probationary period, which provides a fixed time period to closely monitor and evaluate mutually agreed-upon job expectations.

Since priorities and expectations change, you and your new employees should continue to keep each other informed about what each expects from the other, particularly during the early months of the working relationship.



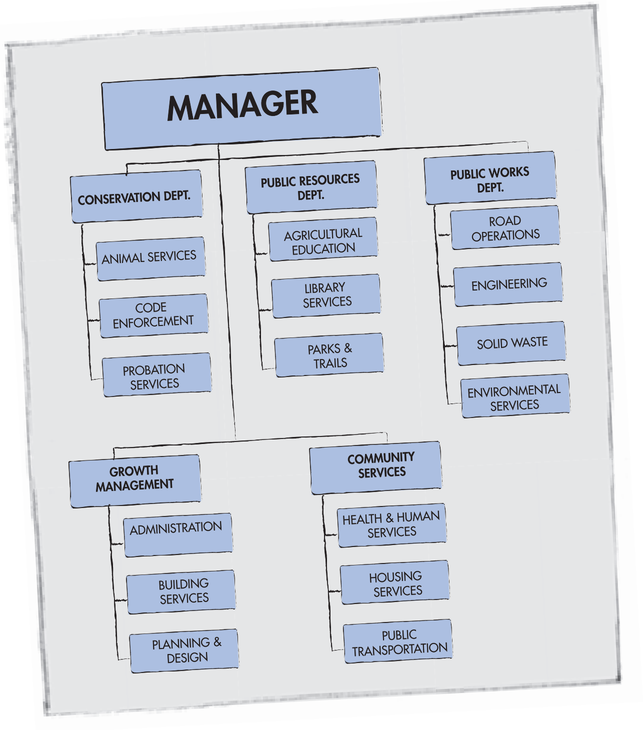


Engaging new employees

New employees need to know where tools and resources are, how work gets done, and who does what. When onboarding new employees, the following steps will help get them off to a good start:

- Introduce new employees to everyone they will come into contact with during the first week.

- Give new employees a tour of the work area including offices, unit work areas, supply and equipment storage areas, restrooms, drinking fountains, break areas, and places to clean up if appropriate.
- Explain the organization's ethical standards and rules and regulations including safety, smoking, parking, transportation, work hours, telecommuting, appropriate attire, drug- and alcohol-use policies, absences, work breaks, lunch hours, and pay days.
- If your local government publishes one, give new employees an employee handbook or a link to an online version. Set aside some time during the first week to explain important sections and to answer questions.
- Explain the steps employees must follow to clarify misunderstandings or get action on complaints.



- Review the organization's internal communication system including Internet, intranet, e-mail, telephone, and social media access and use.
- Explain how supplies and equipment should be used, including the telephone and voice mail system, computers, copying and fax machines, heavy equipment or machinery, and tools of the trade.
- Review any required electronic or paper reports and forms.
- Discuss how each employee's job fits in with the work of the department and of the local government's goals and objectives, perhaps using an organization chart to highlight roles and connections. Emphasize that every job contributes in some way to service delivery and is an essential part of the organization.

You can enhance the onboarding experience by assigning one or two seasoned employees to mentor each new employee for the first few weeks. Be sure that new employees understand that these experienced employees have been assigned to help them get connected to the organization and to answer their questions. It is also important for you to check with the mentors periodically to see how things are going.

Promoting employee retention

The first three to six months are tough for new employees. Customers, co-workers, the work environment, and job responsibilities are new and strange, and almost everything is being done for the first time. Most new employees have moments when they wonder, “Can I really do this job?” or “Did I make the right choice?”

A check-in system can be used to help new employees get adjusted to their new work environment. This means setting aside time regularly for the new employee to ask questions and for you to provide feedback on what’s going well and what needs improvement. Recognizing positive behaviors and early accomplishments regularly during the first few weeks will help the new employee settle into the job and feel more confident and comfortable. After that, you can schedule monthly reviews of the new employee’s work for at least the first six months. Regular support keeps employee morale high, reassures newcomers that they are doing a good job, and keeps them informed about your expectations. Lastly, a check-in process will help new employees learn their jobs faster, become engaged sooner, and increase their progress toward high performance. It will also enhance their desire to stay with the organization.

Planning a development program

You need to consider a number of points when planning how you will train and develop employees. You might begin by asking yourself the following questions:

- What do employees need to know or do, and at what skill level?
- What knowledge, skills, and abilities do they need?
- What do employees already know, and what skills do they already have?
- How soon do employees need training to expand their knowledge and skills?

When you have answered those questions, ask yourself these additional ones:

- What is the best method for delivering this training? On the job? In a classroom? Online?

- What resources are needed for this training? Money? Time? People? Training materials? Job aids?
- Depending on the method of delivery that is appropriate and the resources required, can you provide this training or will you need help?

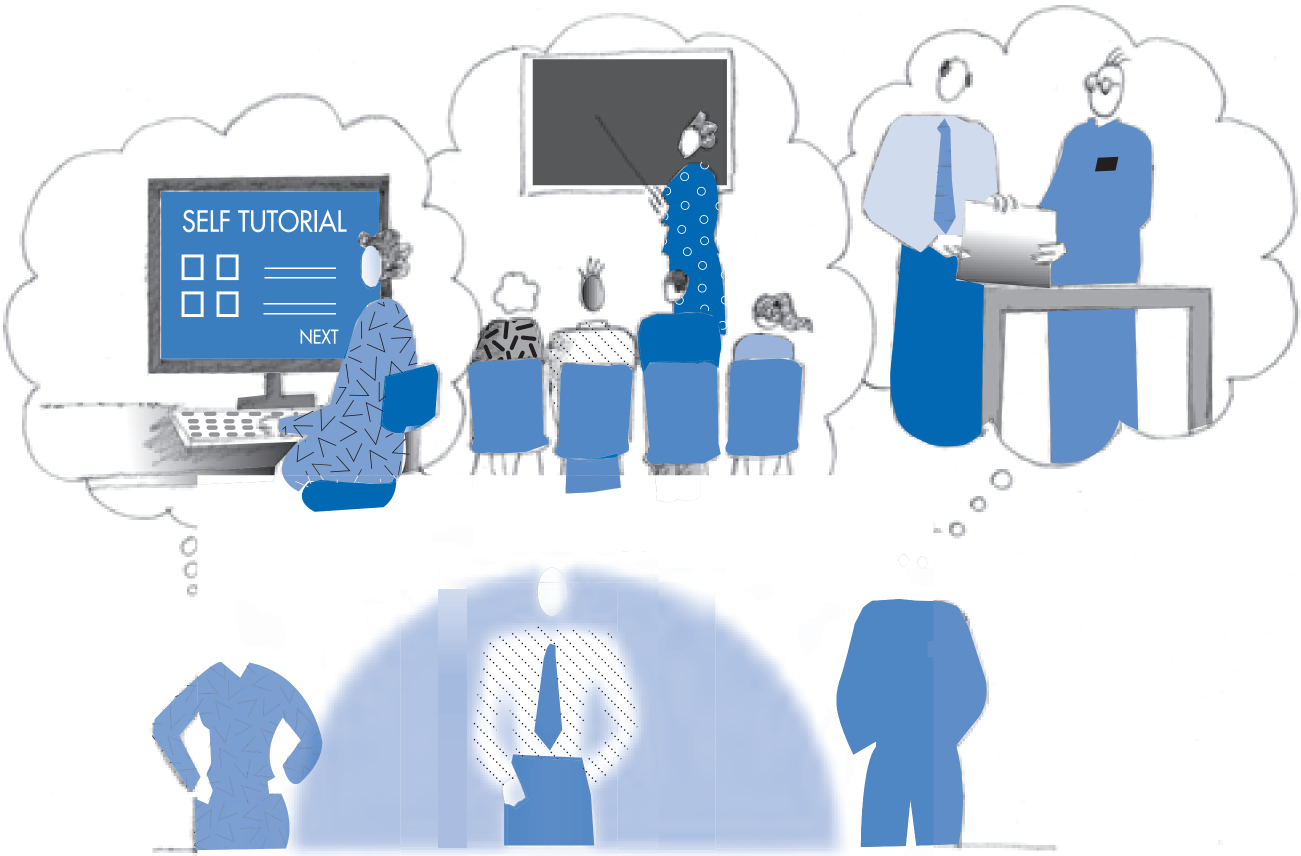
Your HR department will generally provide classroom training or help connect you with appropriate resources for specialized training or online resources. Training opportunities can be found through online databases that allow you to search by topic and geographic area, such as that offered by Seminar Information Service, Inc. at www.seminarinformation.com, which provides information from more than 500 different training companies. As a supervisor, you are primarily responsible for on-the-job training that deals with the specific requirements of carrying out the job successfully.

How we learn

Research has revealed that people learn in different ways. Understanding this can help you design your on-the-job training materials to present information in a way that appeals to all learning styles by including multiple methods of delivery. For example, some people learn best through visual means (illustrations, charts, videos), others by auditory means (listening to presentations), and still others by kinesthetic and tactile means (practice, "learn by doing").

Adults learn best when they are involved in the process and understand how the information will help them directly. Words can be forgotten quickly, but when words go hand in hand with actions—with doing and participating—your employees are more likely to learn and to retain.

In addition, adult learners retain information when it is given over time. This allows for application of the new knowledge to take place in the work environment. Don't be surprised if new employees need something shown or explained to them several times before they get the hang of it. Learning a new job can feel like drinking out of a fire hose. Your employees are unlikely to catch everything you say or do the first time—especially when they are becoming accustomed to a new environment and new co-workers at the same time they are learning a new job. Be patient and realize in advance that you'll need to review information over time.



If you are explaining a work process, teach the steps of the process in the order in which they are actually done on the job. Training should progress from the easiest idea to the most difficult. This strategy allows employees to build a foundation of knowledge that will help them with the more difficult concepts ahead. Following a logical pattern also means giving reasons: explain why each task is done, and show the connection between facts and the ideas behind them. Employees will remember *how* something is done if they know *why* it is done and how it contributes to successful outcomes.

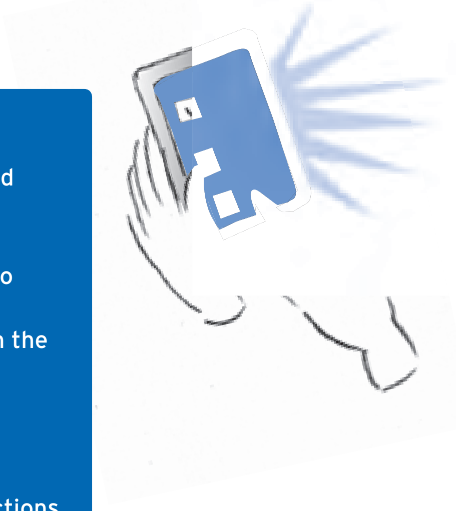
Job aids and mentors enhance skills

One tool for reinforcing learning is a job aid. A job aid can be a checklist, worksheet, chart, or other written material that the employee can use as a tool after the "instruction." Job aids help new employees remember what to do and double-check that they have completed all the required steps in a process.

To remember what they learn, adults must also have a chance to practice what they have been taught. Assigning mentors to help employees practice new skills with informal supervision will speed up learning and improve retention. Select an experienced employee to mentor or "shadow" the new employee when they are practicing a new skill. The mentor must be able and willing to give patient, constructive feedback throughout the process. Meet with the mentor separately to get feedback on how the new employee is doing and then follow up with the new employee to share the feedback and to develop a plan for continual improvement.

Summary

Since employees are your most valuable resources, the time you take to conduct complete interviews, carry out your part of the onboarding process, and develop your new employee is well worth the effort to ensure success for both the employee and the organization.



CHECKLIST

- Prepare an accurate, up-to-date job description for advertising a position and interviewing and hiring new employees.
- Be well prepared for interviewing each applicant.
- Be sure that you have cleared your mind of any personal biases in advance to minimize their influence during the interview.
- Only ask questions that genuinely relate to the knowledge and skills listed in the job description.
- Put job applicants at ease during the interview, and be at ease yourself.
- When a new person is hired, state clearly what is expected on the job.
- Listen to the new employee's expectations of the job.
- Check back with new employees regularly on job performance and their reactions to the job.
- Explain the organization's standard operating procedures to new employees.
- Encourage employees to participate in development programs.
- Select or design learning opportunities that meet the needs of adult learners and address the various ways in which people process information.
- After each formal or informal learning opportunity, carefully evaluate how successful it was in improving the employee's work performance.

Supervisory situation 9-1

Mary Dunn is head of administrative operations for the city's library system. She oversees all of the support services for ten library branches. The library system employs two van drivers who are responsible for making deliveries among branches several times a day. Since citizens are able to drop off or request to pick up books at any branch, the drivers are essential in getting materials back and forth. One of the driver positions has been vacant for six months, and Mary is anxious to fill it.

Recently Mary received approval to advertise the position. She assembled an interview panel consisting of one of the library branch managers and a representative from the human resources department. The panel worked together on the interview questions and has been conducting interviews for the past two weeks. Mary is anxious to conclude the interviews and make a selection so that her new hire can begin at the next new employee orientation date. With only one interview left to go, the panel begins to have scheduling conflicts. It looks like the next time the group can get together is not for several weeks. Since this is a crucial vacancy, Mary decides to conduct the last interview alone.

The final candidate, Wanda, is retired from a small transportation company and has good qualifications. She is a petite woman who looks to be in her 60s. Despite Wanda's excellent responses to the interview questions, Mary tries to picture Wanda lifting the heavy containers of books that go from branch to branch in the library van. When Mary comes to the end of the interview questions she asks Wanda, "I wonder if you have a minute for me to show you the containers that we use to transport books and other materials. I'd like to see you lift one of them."

Wanda replies, "Oh, the ad didn't mention we'd need to do that, but I'll give it a try."

1. What did Mary do correctly in this interview?
2. What did she do wrong?
3. Has Mary exposed her organization to any legal liability?

Supervisory situation 9-2

During the onboarding program for all new employees, one hour is designated for training on the county's customer service philosophy. New employees are briefly introduced to a customer service model designed to help employees provide quality service to challenging customers.

A group of new employees assigned to the fleet management department is anxious to finish the onboarding program and get to work. After working for several weeks, complaints begin to come in from several county departments regarding their customer service. Although Bill, the newly promoted supervisor of the fleet management department, has been aware of the customer complaints for several weeks, he has ignored them. Since nothing has improved, complaints have reached Bill's manager. He warns Bill that it is his responsibility to make sure the new employees use their learning from the customer service training on the job.

Bill feels that the new employees received enough training during the onboarding program to provide the expected level of customer service. Therefore, he places a written reprimand for poor customer service performance in each employee's personnel file and tells the employees that the next step would be termination if their customer service does not improve.

The next day, Bill is called into his manager's office. His manager is livid. "What have you been doing down in that garage? I've got a delegation of new employees in my office, and they are hopping mad."

1. What did Bill do wrong?
2. How would you have handled Bill's situation?
3. What steps could Bill take to provide skill development for the new employees in addition to the one-hour customer service training during the onboarding program?


POSITIVE ENFORCEMENT
NEGATIVE SANCTIONS
COACHING
COUNSELING
PRAISE, RECOGNITION & REWARDS
PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLANS
PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE
COACH
GOOD JOB!
PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN
MONITOR & ASSESS
CREATE SOLUTION
DEVELOP PLAN
GET INPUT
IDENTIFY PROBLEM

10

ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Lewis Bender

A cowboy must never go back on his word or a trust confided in him.

Gene Autry, entertainer
("The Singing Cowboy") and business owner

SNAPSHOT

This chapter examines key concepts of accountability in the workplace and the role supervisors play in making sure employees are accountable for their performance and their behavior. Chapter objectives are to

- Broaden understanding of what accountability is and why it is essential to successful supervision
- Provide tools for building an environment of accountability
- Establish the connection between accountability and progressive discipline.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- What is accountability?
- Why is it important to hold yourself and members of the team accountable?
- How do coaching and counseling skills enhance accountability?
- How do you create a performance improvement plan?
- What is the continuum of accountability?
- What is progressive discipline, and how does it fit into the continuum of accountability?

Imagine working in a team or organization where there is no interpersonal or team accountability. It would be mayhem! Indeed, people who have been part of teams where there were minimal levels of accountability can attest to the frustration, sense of unfairness, and reduced productivity. In contrast, people who are members of teams where individual and team accountability are high use words such as proud, fun, and meaningful to describe their experience.

As a supervisor, a major part of your job is ensuring that members of your team are accountable to you, to each other, and to the public they serve. Accountability begins with clear goals and expectations against which you can measure performance. People who are accountable do what they say they will do. They carry out their responsibilities as expected, and consistently contribute to team and division success.

Author Lewis Bender appreciatively recognizes the contributions of Allison McWilliams and Keith Barker, who wrote two corresponding chapters included in the previous edition.

Ignoring bad behavior or poor performance enables employees to continue unacceptable actions. Even worse, ignoring good behavior or good performance may undermine future positive performance.

Continuum of accountability

Accountability involves both negative and positive responses to performance. "Catching employees doing it right" is just as important as acting on unacceptable performance. Regrettably, some people view accountability only as a response to negative performance or behavior.

Feedback you give to ensure accountability should be appropriate to the employee's performance, commitment, and attitude. For example, how you deal with a team member who is really trying yet still not performing to expectations may be very different from your approach to an employee who isn't committed to the work unit and is a chronically poor performer. Positive reinforcement works best with an employee with a positive attitude. Negative sanctions using progressive discipline may be necessary with an employee with a negative attitude.

Your responses to an individual's performance can be viewed along a continuum of accountability that includes responding to both positive and negative behaviors using praise, recognition, and rewards; coaching; counseling; performance improvement plans; and progressive discipline.

Feedback is essential to accountability

Ongoing communication with your team members is crucial to accountability. As a busy supervisor, how do you find time to provide regular feedback to your team? One way is to implement a personal management interview program: a private, regularly scheduled, one-on-one meeting with each of your team members.

These meetings are an opportunity to define roles, expectations, and responsibilities so that your employees all know exactly what is expected of them. You can also use these meetings for coaching and counseling to improve performance.

Regular feedback meetings throughout the year make the annual performance evaluation meeting easier for team members. If you are giving employees regular feedback on what is expected and on how they are doing, there will be no surprises when you meet to review performance for the entire year.

But feedback doesn't have to occur only in scheduled meetings. As a leader, you should constantly be looking for teachable moments—times when you can create learning opportunities based on both positive and negative performance situations. For example, if you feel that a team member could have handled an exchange with an angry customer more effectively, it's important to discuss your observations as close to when the incident occurred as possible. The conversation should be private, and you should give the employee a chance to explain what happened.

Teachable moments also arise when you see team members doing something right. Letting an employee know that you like what you see will help them know how to handle similar situations in the future.

To be an effective team leader and supervisor, you must be able to work from all parts of the continuum, depending on the specific behaviors and situation.

Praise, recognition, and rewards

Develop the habit of emphasizing what's working well and who is performing well. Familiarize yourself with the formal options available in your organization for recognizing and rewarding your high-performing employees and use these systems to reinforce success on your team. In addition, there are many ways to provide positive reinforcement that don't require any organizational structure; you can initiate them on your own as a supervisor.

The following are some suggestions for ways to provide praise, recognition, and rewards:

Praise

- Give credit when credit is due.
- Smile, make eye contact, and say "thank you" whenever appropriate.

- Speak in person, privately, to use one-on-one praise as an opportunity to emphasize your personal and sincere appreciation.
- Write thank-you notes.
- Be specific with oral or written praise. Explicitly describe what your employee did well and why you appreciate it.
- Describe how the individual's accomplishment makes a difference as a valuable contribution to something larger, such as a benefit to the whole team or the goals of the unit or the larger organization.

Recognition

- Recognize an employee's accomplishments publicly at a team meeting, or at a larger meeting before senior leaders and/or colleagues from other departments.
- Write a letter of recommendation or commendation and present it to your employee in person. Put a copy of the letter in the employee's personnel file.
- Ask your department director or the head of the whole organization to attend a meeting to personally recognize and thank your team member.
- Nominate your best employees for awards available in your organization.
- Create an award within your team that you or any team member can present to an especially deserving member of the group.
- Treat your high performer to a cup of coffee or lunch. Use the one-on-one time together to demonstrate a personal interest in your employee and explore ways to support his or her success.

Rewards

- Entrust high performers with more challenging assignments and/or greater responsibilities.
- Give documented high performers prioritized preference to opportunities for professional development, such as attending conferences or desirable training.

- Submit a description of your employee's accomplishments to the employee newsletter, intranet, or internal social media site.
- Explore whether your organization permits you to allocate extra time off or one-time scheduling benefits to an especially high performer.

Coaching

Think back to a time when you were coached. It might have been in school as an athlete or a musician. What qualities did you admire about your coach? Were you pushed to perform to a higher standard? How? What tools did the coach use to inspire you? Were you criticized when you didn't meet standards, or were you shown a path to improved performance? What did you learn about being part of a team?

These are all questions you should ask yourself as you try to improve your coaching skills. The same skills apply to organizations as to the playing field or the concert hall: you are the director of your team, surrounded by players who have diverse talents, abilities, and skills. It is your job to get them all on the path to achieving the same goal—winning a game, receiving a standing ovation, or achieving a performance goal.

Effective coaches don't win by making last-second decisions. They are with the team from the beginning—on the sidelines, shouting words of encouragement, and giving the team the tools it needs to succeed. Just like a coach on the playing field or a conductor in front of an orchestra, an effective organizational team leader sets the standard, provides the tools, gives advice when it is needed, and lets the team play to the best of its abilities.

The following principles can improve your coaching success:

1. ***Be a conversation partner.*** Coaching means interacting with team members by having regular and frequent conversations about performance.

2. ***Define the outcomes.*** To be an effective coach, you must communicate what your vision is for your team. Your employees cannot strive toward a goal unless they know what it is.
3. ***Clarify performance expectations.*** Coaching means communicating both organizational and personal goals.
4. ***Build dynamic capability.*** As the organization and team members develop their talents and skills, goals will change. Good coaching means helping employees be prepared for each wave of change and learning to learn.
5. ***Engage your team members' interests and passions.*** One way to encourage positive performance and professional development is to offer your employees "stretch assignments" that encourage them to develop their skills and talents.
6. ***Recognize teachable moments.*** Effective coaches recognize that the smallest incidents can foster learning and growth.
7. ***Use multiple coaching media.*** All coaching need not occur face-to-face; it can happen by e-mail, over the phone, or through a written note.
8. ***Provide recognition and rewards.*** Coaching isn't just about letting people know when their performance needs improvement; it's also about catching them doing things right.

Effective coaches are able to pinpoint the reason for performance problems—for example, lack of ability versus lack of resources or lack of information—and give team members the tools they need to get the job done well.

Coaching team members for improved performance is an important skill for all supervisors. It is your chance to guide your team to higher levels of performance and achievement and to watch them grow and develop as individuals along the way.

Counseling

Your employees are complex individuals with personal lives and challenges that may affect performance. As an effective leader, you are responsible for helping your employees seek solutions for themselves, particularly when personal challenges affect performance or the overall work environment. This is your counseling role.

Examples of personal challenges that might affect performance include drug or alcohol abuse, marital difficulties, or the pressures of caring for an aging parent.

You may put on your counseling hat if you notice, for example, that an employee seems distressed or is getting into conflicts with another employee. If the behavior is affecting individual performance or work group effectiveness, you need to intervene as a counselor to try to identify causes and strategies for improvement. Key components of effective counseling are empathy, caring, listening, and confidentiality.

- ***Empathy*** is different than sympathy. With sympathy, you may intellectually understand how someone else is feeling and you may feel concern for them, but with empathy you recognize how such emotions feel within yourself and use that emotional self-awareness to relate to another person. Empathy allows you to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Accessing empathy supports your ability to care.
- ***Caring*** goes beyond simply accommodating someone's situation and feelings to include holding regard for their situation and feelings. It includes respecting individual characteristics, preferences, needs, opinions, and beliefs even if they are not your own and treating each person fairly. Caring effectively for others also requires that you not lose yourself in other's problems or emotions but rather remain separate from them as you provide support to them.
- ***Listening*** involves taking an interest in your employees including what is going on in their lives and how they feel about their jobs. It also means employing active listening to be sure that you fully understand messages from your employees.
- ***Confidentiality*** means not revealing to a third party what an employee told you in trust. There are two exceptions to confidentiality in your counseling role: if an employee is being referred for professional assistance or if a person is a danger to himself or others. In the first case, you will need to talk about the employee's problem to a referral person or agency. However, you must have the employee's permission to do this. In the case of a person who is a danger to himself or to others, you must share the information with the proper authority or agency with or without the employee's permission.

As a supervisor, you are responsible for ensuring that your employees and your work unit achieve agreed-upon goals. Performance, therefore, is the starting point for a counseling discussion. Successful counseling may include:

- Identifying employee needs
- Being supportive
- Providing advice
- Referring employees to your organization's employee assistance program (EAP) when appropriate
- Seeking assistance from the human resources (HR) department in determining how to facilitate a referral to a professional counselor if needed.

Any decline in an employee's performance is cause for concern. It is *not* your responsibility to solve the employee's personal problems. It *is* your responsibility to notice when changes in an employee's performance or behavior affect productivity or the work environment and to address your concerns with that employee.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

An employee assistance program (EAP) is an employee benefit that is sometimes offered in conjunction with a health insurance plan. EAPs help employees deal with personal problems that might affect their work performance, health, or well-being. Examples of issues for which EAP counselors provide support include

- Substance abuse
- Emotional distress
- Major life events including births, accidents, and deaths
- Health-care concerns
- Financial or legal concerns
- Family/personal/work relationship issues
- Concerns about aging parents.

If your organization has an EAP, become familiar with the services it offers and how employees can contact an EAP counselor when needed.

Performance improvement plans

Sometimes coaching and/or counseling do not raise an employee's performance to the desired level. In these cases, a performance improvement plan may be a useful strategy. A performance improvement plan is a more rigorous and structured form of coaching. It is not a disciplinary action. Instead the plan focuses on developing an employee's skill levels in areas that may be deficient. Unsatisfactory performance may occur for a range of reasons including lack of training, failure to adapt to new techniques, or a poor attitude toward achieving work goals. A performance improvement plan is generally used when preliminary approaches fail to produce desired improvement.

It is important that you consult with your supervisor and/or the HR department before developing a performance improvement plan with an employee, as you must first gain management support and HR guidance.

Performance improvement plans usually involve these five steps:

Step 1: Identify and document the problem

You must first identify and document a pattern of performance or behavior that is not up to expectations. This can be related to a lower skill level or behavior patterns that are not acceptable.

Step 2: Get input

Once you've identified the problem, discuss your findings and observations with the employee and ask for input on how the employee thinks these issues can be corrected.

Step 3: Develop the plan

Taking into account the employee's input, develop a plan for improving the performance. This may involve training, coaching, or more structured attention to established procedures for completing the work.

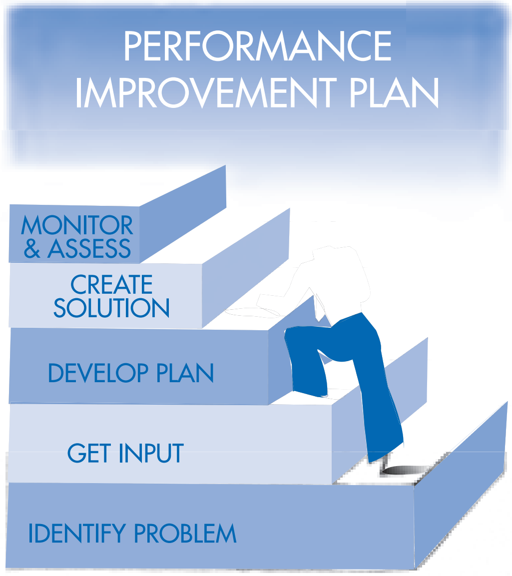
Step 4: Create the schedule

To be effective in improving performance, you should develop a schedule for monitoring and discussing the employee's performance or behavior over a specific period of time. This may involve weekly, biweekly, or monthly meetings with the employee. You should always have at least two meetings scheduled over a specific time period to send a clear message to the employee that the process is serious and that you are committed to improving performance or behavior.

Step 5: Monitor, assess, and give feedback

Regular, honest, and direct feedback to the employee will help you monitor progress and let the employee know how things are going. At each meeting, you should discuss areas of improvement and those that need further work. If the assessment and feedback are positive for two consecutive meetings, consider canceling the next scheduled meeting. When you have had a series of positive reviews, celebrate the employee's accomplishments. Once the plan process is completed, continue to monitor this employee's performance in the same manner as the rest of your team members' work.

In cases where the employee fails to meet expectations outlined in the performance plan, you may need to reassess the employee's tasks and roles. This may lead down different paths—from redesigning the employee's job to moving into progressive discipline.



Progressive discipline

As a supervisor, you must strike a balance between ignoring rule violations and pouncing on every mistake. The purpose of any disciplinary measure is to change employee behavior or improve job performance, not to punish the employee. This is a point worth emphasizing to the employee. Unless employees understand that the desired outcome of disciplinary action is improvement, every step in the disciplinary process may become a downward spiral that ends with termination.

Here are the steps that you should follow when a rule has been violated or poor performance persists:

Step 1: Act promptly

When a violation occurs or performance standards are consistently not met, you should take prompt action. This does not mean reprimanding or punishing the employee on the spot. It does mean that you should immediately begin to investigate the incident to find out exactly what happened. Be sure to notify the employee who may have violated the rule that you are looking into the matter.

If you do or say nothing when a rule is broken, you are condoning the violation. When employees see that you are not enforcing a rule or performance standard, they will soon stop abiding by the rule or standard.

Step 2: Get all the facts

Because most disputes about rule violations arise over the facts, your most important action is to gather all the facts as quickly as possible. Details are likely to be forgotten if there is a delay. Write down what you learn. The facts you gather and record should give a complete picture of the situation so that anyone reading your description of the event will feel that he or she was a witness.

You need the facts

- To decide whether a rule was broken, who broke it, and what action should be taken
- To ensure any decision you make will be objective
- To provide a reliable record in case the disciplinary action is challenged by an employee.

Be sure to ask the employee for an explanation of the incident and record the answer without passing any judgment on the response. If no explanation is given, this fact could be important, especially if an explanation is made at a later date such as at a grievance hearing. Pass no judgment until all the facts are in hand, and you have had time to review them.

In the case of accidents, follow your organization's reporting guidelines. Complete all accident reports promptly and thoroughly.

Informal memos are often a good way to present the facts. Whatever form your report takes, it should answer the following questions:

- Who was involved?
- Exactly what happened?
- When and where did it happen?
- Who else was there or nearby?
- What was said to the employee?
- What did the employee say?

Step 3: Decide what action to take

When you have gathered all the facts, spoken to everyone concerned, and are convinced that the employee did violate a rule, you must use your best judgment to decide what to do.

Take the time you need to make a well-informed decision, but do not delay. Consider all relevant factors and get all the advice you can. You should consult your supervisor and the HR department at this point. They can help guide you through relevant local government policies and legal requirements and ensure that any action you take is consistent with action that would be taken by other supervisors.

To decide what corrective action (if any) is most appropriate, you should first decide how serious the offense was. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Why did the employee commit the violation?
- Was it a major offense?
- How much trouble did it cause?
- What impact did it have on the organization?
- How many people or how much money was involved?
- How many rules were broken?
- How have previous violations of this rule or rules by other employees been dealt with?
- Does the employee have a good conduct and good work record?
- How long has the employee worked in the department?
- When was the last disciplinary action (if any) taken against the employee?
- Did the employee understand the possible consequences of the violation?

Keep in mind that the purpose of disciplinary action is to change behavior, not to punish the employee. How you deal with a disciplinary problem is a question of circumstances, precedent, your judgment, and the employee's personality. Any action you take should be constructive and designed to motivate the employee.

When you are making your decision, consider the possible effects—both good and bad—that your action may have on this employee and on other team members. Once you decide on specific action to take or to recommend to your manager, you must be prepared to explain it and defend it with facts.

Usually, the appropriate disciplinary action is the least severe penalty that is strong enough to convince the employee that the behavior that brought about the disciplinary action will not be tolerated. If the behavior persists and the disciplinary actions increase in severity, it is important to document prior problems and the use of progressively more severe penalties.

When considering a corrective disciplinary action, it is important to keep your supervisor informed and to follow your organization's policies, rules, and protocols related to discipline. This includes adhering to the agreements within any union contract if the employee is part of a bargaining unit.

Most policies on progressive discipline follow a sequence from informal talks to formal spoken warnings, written warnings, suspension, salary reduction, demotion, and dismissal. The following sections highlight each of these disciplinary options.

Informal talks Employees with good records who break minor rules will most likely respond positively to an informal talk. You tell the employee that he or she has violated a rule and ask for an explanation. You caution the employee about repeating the violation, and the matter ends there. No record is kept of this kind of action.

Spoken warning In a spoken warning, you tell the employee that his or her conduct or performance must improve or more serious action will be taken. This warning should always be given in private. A record of the warning should be placed in the employee's work file, but not in his or her permanent HR record. If the employee's behavior improves, the record of the warning should be removed from the file after a period of time, usually six months.

Written warning A written warning is used for more serious offenses or for employees who have broken the same rule several times. A written warning should

- Mention any previous warnings
- Describe what the employee has done wrong
- Indicate what improvement is expected and the time period during which the improvement should be made
- State what will happen if improvement is not made
- Offer your help in bringing about change.

The employee is given a copy of the warning, and copies are also placed in the department's work file and in the employee's permanent record. The warning can be removed from these files after a set period of time if the offense is not repeated and if the removal of warning letters is in compliance with organizational policies.

Suspension A suspension means that an employee is removed from his or her job without pay, usually from one to thirty days. You will almost certainly need the approval and support of your supervisor and the HR department for such action. Suspension is used when an employee violates a major rule or when repeated warnings fail to bring about change. The employee must be given a disciplinary interview before suspension is decided upon. He or she is then notified in a letter delivered personally by the supervisor or by certified mail. The letter should state the reasons for the suspension and the dates on which it begins and ends. It should also tell the employee how, to whom, and by what date he or she can appeal the action.

Salary reduction An employee's salary may be reduced if suspension fails to bring about a change in behavior. The employee must be notified in a letter that states the reasons for the action, spells out the exact amount of the reduction, and explains the employee's right to appeal.

Demotion A demotion is unlikely to improve an employee's behavior and may actually make it worse. For this reason, demotion is rarely used as a form of discipline or is used as a last resort before dismissal. Usually a demotion can be authorized only by a department head or higher management. In some cases, employees are moved to lower job levels because they are having difficulty coping with their jobs. Such changes are not disciplinary actions and should not be regarded as such.

Dismissal Dismissal is reserved for the most serious offenses and is used only after other steps have failed. Generally, only a department head or higher management can authorize dismissal, and even then only after all the facts have been gathered, and it has been determined that the penalty is justified.

Transfer, while not a disciplinary action, is sometimes used as a means of addressing persistent performance or behavior problems. Transferring a problem employee to another department or work group is valid only when there is a personality conflict between the employee and the supervisor that keeps both from performing effectively and affects the morale of the whole unit, or when an employee's skill set is better suited to a different position in another work unit. Transfer is inappropriate when it is used solely as a disciplinary action: removing a problem employee from a particular work group simply passes the problem on to another supervisor.

Step 4: Hold a disciplinary interview

After gathering all the facts and considering all appropriate disciplinary actions, you must talk to the employee who violated the rule before making a final decision. The purpose of this interview is to get the employee's side of the story.

Before you begin the interview, you should have a good idea of what disciplinary action seems appropriate based on the facts. If the employee gives you information that you had not considered or that you did not know about, it is possible that you will want to reconsider what you had in mind before the interview. You should not change your mind because the interview makes you feel more or less sympathetic toward the employee.

The interview should

- Be held in private without outside interruptions
- Be based on the facts you have collected
- Allow and encourage the employee to give his or her account of the situation
- End when the employee has given his or her version of the incident and has no further facts to add.

At this point you would tell the employee what he or she did wrong. If the disciplinary action you have decided to take is beyond an informal talk, you should tell the employee what action you will take or recommend to your supervisor.

You should specify what the employee must do, and in what specific period of time, to improve his or her performance or behavior. Be sure the employee understands what changes are expected by when, and what will happen if the changes are not made. Finally, before the employee leaves, you should inform him or her of the right to appeal your decision and explain how, when, and where the appeal can be made.

Be fair, calm, and businesslike throughout the interview. If you find you are losing your temper, stop the interview and reschedule it for later in the day. Treat the employee like an adult, and restrict your comments to the employee's performance or work conduct.

After the interview, write up the main points that were discussed, being sure to include the goals for improvement. Place the record of the interview in the employee's work file.

Step 5: Use the appeal procedure

In an effective disciplinary system, the employee has the right to appeal to a third party. As the supervisor, you should inform the employee about the appeal procedure and help with the appeal if necessary. You should be familiar with your organization's appeal process and be sure the employee has all the information needed to exercise his or her right to appeal your decision.

Emphasize to the employee that he or she is completely protected from reprisal if an appeal is filed. Remember that an employee who feels wronged and cannot get justice inside the organization may decide to take you to court outside the organization—a situation that could be most unpleasant for all.

Special considerations in unionized local governments

In local governments that have bargaining units, disciplinary measures must be in accordance with the procedures specified in the labor contract. Most of the guidance provided in this chapter is applicable to both non-union-represented and union-represented employees; in addition, the labor contract in a union-represented environment will usually guarantee the right, as a final step, to appeal a disciplinary decision to a neutral third party. In local governments that do not have bargaining units, the right to appeal a disciplinary action typically exists, but there is little consistency among local governments in assigning final decision-making power.

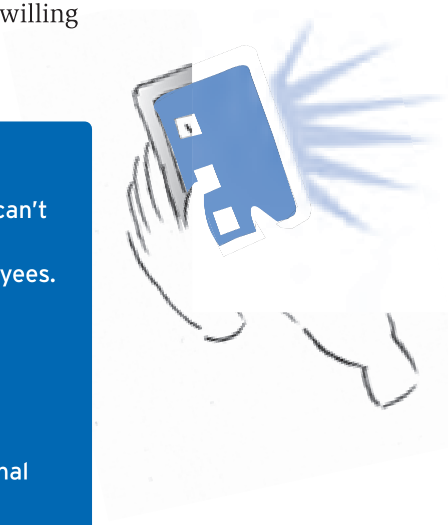
Labor contracts always address dismissal, and most include a clause stating that dismissal can take place only "for cause" or "for just cause." The legal effect of this clause is to require that the constitutional guarantee of due process, as defined by state and federal court decisions, be observed in any dismissal action. If you dismiss an employee in a unionized local government, a step-by-step process should be followed before the employee is deprived of his or her job or income:

- Determine what happened and write a letter or a memorandum to the employee explaining your concerns. Include factual allegations in writing and cite the rules that were violated. Allegation is a legal term for a statement you intend to prove.
- Give the employee a copy of any written complaint upon which a disciplinary action may be based.
- Let the employee know in writing about any disciplinary action you are considering, such as suspension or dismissal.
- Give the employee a chance to reply to the allegations in writing. Give a specific date and time for his or her reply, allowing at least forty-eight hours from the time of receipt of your allegations.
- Give the employee a chance to talk to you personally to present his or her side of the story. Set up a definite date, time, and place for the meeting, preferably one day after you have received the employee's written reply.
- Let the employee know in writing when the decision will be made and when the employee will be notified.
- Allow the employee to resign, but do not suggest or urge him or her to resign or offer any incentive for the employee to do so.

It is always prudent to check with your supervisor, the HR department, or the labor relations office to review the steps to be followed for dismissal or other major actions. In addition to being good management practice, this assures a defensible position if your action is appealed.

Summary

Teams and team members cannot be effective in an environment that lacks accountability. Accountability is not a negative sanction or reaction to someone breaking the rules or failing to perform, Instead, it involves a continuum of responses ranging from positive reinforcement through coaching, counseling, and mentoring and finally to sanctions such as progressive discipline. An effective team leader must be willing to and capable of using the entire continuum of accountability.



CHECKLIST

- Recognize that you are the first person who must be held accountable. You can't hold others accountable if you aren't doing what you say you will do.
- Provide ongoing feedback, and seek out teachable moments with your employees.
- "Catch" employees doing something right in addition to holding them accountable for doing something wrong.
- Recognize that accountability is a continuum ranging from positive reinforcement to sanctions.
- Assess your own ability to coach and counsel.
- Watch for performance problems that may stem from team members' personal circumstances.
- Know the human resource rules and regulations of your organization.
- Conduct regular meetings to discuss changes in policies and rules with employees.
- Maintain a secure file on all members of your work team.
- Apply rules consistently to employees.
- When you have to correct an employee's behavior, discuss the problem privately and direct your comments toward the problem, not the person.
- Consider creating a performance improvement plan to guide employee improvement.
- Always check with your supervisor and the HR department or higher management, as necessary, before implementing any severe disciplinary action.

Supervisory situation 10–1

Josie has worked for the clerk's office for two years. She is a bright, energetic young woman who is well liked by citizens and her co-workers. She greets people with a cheery smile and works hard to make sure people at the clerk's office counter are served promptly. Josie's charming personality has helped to diffuse potentially difficult situations involving local residents.

Josie's job also requires focused work at her desk. This involves reconciling funds coming in from various accounts. If Josie doesn't complete her work, others in the office are not able to complete their work. Josie's people orientation has become a major distraction from her more focused desk duties. At every opportunity she jumps up to greet people at the counter or engages others in the office in extended conversations. Her work has suffered, and people in the office have complained to Deputy Clerk Maria that Josie is holding them up and that her loud laughter is a distraction.

Maria has briefly addressed this issue with Jose in the past, but there has been no change in her behavior or performance. Josie is a sensitive person and is easily hurt by negative feedback.

1. How should Maria address this issue? How would you handle it if Josie reported to you?
2. What should Maria say to other members of the team who are complaining about Josie's low productivity and her office distraction?

Supervisory situation 10–2

Rob has worked for the Water Billing Department for five years. He is personable and generally does a good, but not stellar, job. With recent staff cuts and a new computer billing program, team members have been asked to do more than they have in the past.

Jason, Rob's team leader, has noticed that Rob has not kept pace with the changes. At times he seems distracted and unable to focus on the job. Others in the team have told Jason that Rob seems to be constantly texting and tweeting during the work day. Sometimes he hides his cell phone in his lap as he tweets his friends in what turn out to be fairly extended exchanges. Rob has also been seen texting or tweeting on his cell phone while discussing billing issues with residents on the office phone. It is also not unusual for Rob to interrupt a business conversation with fellow workers to respond to a text or tweet. It is almost as if Rob is addicted to his cell phone, and that addiction is reducing his overall productivity and his ability to adapt to the new job expectations.

Rob has complained regularly that he needs more training to learn the new computer billing program. In addition, he has regularly asked to work overtime to complete his work. He is the only person in the office who has reported difficulty learning the new software system or getting work completed on time.

1. How should Jason handle the situation with Rob?
2. What component of the continuum of accountability is appropriate for this situation?
3. If Rob does not cooperate with Jason, what steps should he take?
4. Is this a possible referral to the Employee Assistance Program? Why or why not?
5. How would you handle the situation?

Supervisory situation 10–3

John has been employed for seven years as a motor vehicle operator in the county's bulk item disposal program. He works as part of a two-person team picking up discarded bulk items such as refrigerators, washers and dryers, and sofas. As the driver, John is also the team leader.

In order to have bulk items picked up, residents schedule times online or call the dispatch office. The dispatcher then gives John and the other team leaders a list of their daily pickups. Residents must place their discarded items on the curb outside their homes the night before the scheduled pickup. However, some residents set items out just as John arrives in his truck. This upsets John because he must wait for the resident to bring the items to the curb, which causes him to run behind schedule and affects his preferred lunch hour.

On a day when this occurred, over the objections of his co-worker, John decided that he would bypass any homes where items weren't already outside, thus requiring residents to schedule a new pickup date. Residents became upset when this occurred because it required them to remove the items from the curb, or risk receiving a citation from the code enforcement office. Several residents called the dispatcher to complain. The dispatcher passed the complaint on to John's supervisor, who reminded John and his co-worker that they are expected to not only pick up items but also provide good customer service.

John improved for awhile and the complaints stopped, but as the weather got warmer, he started bypassing late residents again. This resulted in calls to the county board office, which passed the complaints on to the county manager, who, in turn, contacted the department head. The department head told John's supervisor to address the problem immediately, particularly since this wasn't a first-time complaint about John's route.

1. Is disciplinary action warranted in this case?
2. If so, who should be disciplined?
3. What, if any, action should be taken?

11

EVALUATING PERFORMANCE

Lewis Bender

All the Woulda-Coulda-Shouldas
Layin' in the sun.
Talkin' 'bout the things
They woulda-coulda-shoulda done…
But those Woulda-Coulda-Shouldas
All ran away and hid
From one little *did*.

Shel Silverstein, poet, cartoonist, and author

SNAPSHOT

Performance evaluation is an essential, but often misunderstood, management tool. This chapter focuses on the benefits of a well-designed and well-implemented performance evaluation system. Chapter objectives are to

- Help supervisors develop a positive approach and attitude toward performance evaluation
- Increase understanding of the ongoing evaluation cycle and how it contributes to the annual performance rating
- Provide tools and guidance for carrying out successful performance evaluations and avoiding common pitfalls.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- Why do you evaluate work performance?
- How can you establish clear expectations between you and team members?
- How can you conduct a performance evaluation that helps both you and your team members?
- How can you be sure your evaluations are fair?
- How do you conduct a formal evaluation interview?
- What legal considerations will affect evaluation?

Evaluations are one of the most widely misunderstood and misused forms of organizational accountability. Positive comments about the performance evaluation experience from either supervisors or employees are rare. Supervisors frequently complain that the process is time-consuming and unproductive. Employees often discount their performance evaluations, suggesting that the process and the outcomes really aren't important to them. Often, the loudest complaints come from low performers or employees who believe they were rated too low or unfairly.

Some complaints are legitimate. A poorly done performance evaluation can destroy an employee's sense of accomplishment and pride in the job. Indeed, super-

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Author Lewis Bender appreciatively recognizes the contributions of Stephen E. Condrey and Carl McCoy, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

visors who give lip service to the performance evaluation process can send a powerfully negative message to employees. "Why should I care about doing a good job if my supervisor doesn't care?" becomes the refrain of low-performing and middle-range performers. Poorly done performance evaluations can actually do more harm than no performance evaluation at all.

A different view of performance evaluation

As demands on local governments continue to expand while resources are limited, supervisors and their employees tend to operate in reactive mode. They go through days and weeks of reacting to this problem or that crisis with little or no opportunity to think about how the team is doing in accomplishing its shared goals. A high-pressure environment forces you to focus only on near-term problems rather than

THE MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Myths

- People don't like to have their work performance reviewed.
- A performance evaluation is a one-way conversation from the boss to the employee.
- A performance evaluation is a waste of time, especially if it isn't tied to wages.
- Employees don't take performance evaluations seriously because they don't care what the boss thinks about their work.
- Performance evaluations only focus on poor performance and problem behavior.

Realities

- The performance evaluation interview is about a fascinating topic—namely, oneself.
- A performance evaluation is a discussion about the job, changes, challenges, accomplishments, and the employee's future in the organization.
- A performance evaluation is an opportunity to recognize accomplishments and positive behavior and address needed changes and opportunities for improvement.
- Most employees care about their work and what their supervisors think about their performance.
- Performance evaluations are balanced discussions focusing on positive and negative performance.

long-term growth and development. Effectively done performance evaluations give you a tool for interrupting this reactive process and focusing on your most important resource: the members of your team.

Your approach and attitude toward performance evaluations has a huge impact on how your employees regard the process. You will have a positive impact on your employees if you treat the performance evaluation process as an opportunity to

- Clarify job expectations between you and your team members
- Address needed changes in the job, the organization, and the work environment
- Coach and counsel team members to improve performance
- Acknowledge the work of team members who are meeting or exceeding performance expectations
- Hold low-performing employees accountable and identify ways to improve their performance
- Communicate and reconnect with team members.

If you view performance evaluation as just another job requirement, the outcomes won't be positive for you or your employees.

The evaluation cycle

You might think of evaluation as an action that takes place at the end of something—for instance, the end of a probationary period or a year. In truth, the evaluation process is ongoing. The formal step of recording progress, goals, objectives, and observations should never replace your responsibility to provide people with regular feedback about their performance. Immediate and ongoing feedback throughout the year is essential to keep employees on track in achieving goals and meeting expectations.

For new employees, the evaluation cycle begins the day a person accepts a job and continues throughout the year. The job description, list of major responsibilities, how the job fits in with others in the organization, and a description of the employee's qualifications all provide a framework for evaluating performance. Within the first two weeks, you should create performance goals with and for a new employee and explain how the employee's individual goals relate to the work unit's goals and the vision and mission of the organization.

Over the first three to six months, you should focus on

- Clarifying responsibilities, assignments, authority, and relationships with other departments and people
- Providing information about major work assignments to ensure complete understanding and feedback on how well those assignments are carried out
- Describing the evaluation process and the job factors that are important for both the early performance assessments and the annual review.

Do not underestimate the amount of information and explanation new employees need in order to succeed. Most supervisors do not provide enough information; most new employees fail to ask enough questions because they are afraid to admit how much they don't know. [See the section on *employee onboarding* in chapter 9 for more information.]

For seasoned employees, you will generally spend less time on clarifying responsibilities while still providing regular feedback throughout the year.

A year-long process rather than an event

Recognizing that the evaluation cycle is ongoing—rather than an isolated annual event—will help you stay connected to employee performance throughout the year and prepare employees for a productive annual evaluation. Many organizations schedule evaluations once a year, such as on the anniversary of the person's hiring, at the beginning of the calendar year, or at the end of the government's fiscal year. Unfortunately, this approach often means that performance is discussed infrequently. By the time an annual evaluation is held, employee actions that should be discussed are old and perhaps forgotten.

When viewed as an annual cycle rather than an event, completion of the official performance evaluation instrument and interview is the final step in a year-long performance discussion and the beginning of planning for the coming year. Effective performance evaluation is built around continuous and ongoing feedback. Therefore, there should be no surprises during a formal evaluation interview.

In addition, if the evaluation factors and goals are stated clearly and your employees have kept good records of work accomplished, you will not have to point out which job factors and goals have not been met. Your employee will see this without help. Thus, the evaluation serves a developmental purpose and is not a punitive or disciplinary process.

During the evaluation process, you should always focus on performance results—not on personality or personal shortcomings and failures. Employees should be praised for all jobs completed satisfactorily and on schedule. In cases where goals were not met, you should help your employee determine what problems occurred and how they can be overcome.

Establishing performance criteria

Regardless of the rating scale or assessment instrument your organization uses, the bottom line is whether you and the person you are evaluating clearly understand and share the same job performance expectations. Too often, the employee finds out what the supervisor's expectations are after the performance evaluation is completed. This is not a fair or effective way to achieve positive performance, and it can lead to a negative and unproductive evaluation.

For a performance evaluation to be fair and effective, it is essential that you discuss and clarify the job expectations and standards you will use with your employee early in the performance cycle. This includes both organizationwide evaluation factors and goals tailored specifically to individual jobs.

If your organization has a performance evaluation instrument, you can follow these steps to ensure that all employees understand the evaluation factors and how they relate to their jobs:

- Meet with your team to review evaluation factors that are in the instrument. Examples of typical evaluation factors include timeliness of work and customer service. What do they think the factors mean? What do you think the factors mean? How do the factors apply to this team? Are there exceptions to how they are applied?

- Discuss the rating standard—such as excellent, good, and poor—that you will give for these performance factors. What guidelines will you use for assigning ratings to individual performance? What do your employees believe you should keep in mind as you make your decisions?
- To the degree that you need to establish greater clarity, discuss the instrument and standards with each member of your team individually before the performance evaluation period begins.

Setting goals

Beyond the organizational factors used to evaluate job performance you should identify specific goals with each team member. Progress toward these employee goals should also be evaluated as part of the overall performance evaluation.

Every six to twelve months, develop and discuss with all team members their goals for the next work and review period. Employees should contribute as much as possible to setting their goals at this stage. Of course, you lead the goal-setting process to make sure that the goals fit in with the realities of the work group and support department goals and the organization mission and vision. But even people whose jobs are very precisely defined can and should be given the chance to express their own goals in their own words.

Employee goals

- Include actions that are designed specifically to fulfill the responsibilities spelled out in the job description and the role of the employee on the team
- Cover actions like training that will help the person meet those responsibilities
- Are challenging but realistic.

You and your employees should agree that all established goals are relevant to their specific jobs, are defined in the right order of importance, and are achievable within the established time frame.

You can use the same model for individual employee goals that you use to set strategic goals for your work group, such as VISTA[1] or SMART[2] goals:

VISTA Goals	SMART Goals
Visualized	**S**pecific
Inspirational	**M**easureable
Specific	**A**ttainable
Time bound	**R**elevant
Assessable	**T**imely

Setting standards for goals

Once goals have been set, work with your employees to decide how their jobs should be done—that is, what will be considered satisfactory performance and how it will be measured. Your employees may not agree with all the standards you set, but the fact that they have had some say in the process will create fewer disagreements or disappointments later on.

Conducting an evaluation interview

You should have at least one formal evaluation interview each year with each member of your team. Many organizations also encourage or require six-month evaluation interviews. When accompanied by periodic informal discussions throughout the year to measure progress and give feedback on accomplishments and problems, an annual or six-month evaluation interview can be a valuable opportunity to review overall job performance. Discussing past performance and planning for the future can be a positive, constructive, and even enjoyable experience for both you and your employees. Whether or not a major improvement in job performance is needed, it is critical to have a formal evaluation interview.

The evaluation interview should be held in a private, quiet, neutral place, such as a conference room or an empty office where no one will overhear or interrupt the conversation. Sit side by side instead of across physical barriers, such as tables or desks; this emphasizes that you are a partner with the employee rather than a judge or adversary. Before the interview takes place, review the employee's job description or duty list, performance criteria, and goals. Suggest that the employee prepare by reviewing the same information and by reflecting on personal job performance during the past evaluation period. Many organizations require employees to complete written self-evaluations to ensure that the employee's perspective is considered by the supervisor.

At the beginning of the meeting, state the purpose of the interview and the specific goals of the meeting. During the interview, discuss performance ratings first and then developmental goals.

You should review the evaluation report point by point with your employee; make sure you each have a copy of the completed report to review together. To support your ratings, provide examples of performance. Be sure to discuss specific work completed, overall achievements, and behaviors, not personal traits. When giving negative feedback, discuss how the performance failed to meet the established standards or goals, provide specific examples of actions that failed to meet expectations, and discuss what should be done to improve performance. Try to improve future work by focusing on what was learned about performance during the past evaluation period. [See the section on *giving performance feedback* in chapter 8 for more information.]

Encourage the team member to communicate during the interview; listen to the comments and respond appropriately. You should encourage two-way dialogue during the interview, rather than you doing most of the talking.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING AN EVALUATION INTERVIEW

- Schedule one to two weeks in advance to give your employee time to prepare.
- Plan for the interview.
- Avoid distractions.
- Hold the interview in a neutral space.
- Prepare for the interview.
- Stick to work-related comments and questions.
- Focus on the employee's development.

End the interview with a summary of the major points that were discussed; emphasize the work that has been accomplished and plans for the next evaluation period. This ensures closure and shared understanding.

Handling difficult discussions

Some interviews may be difficult, no matter how well prepared you are. These guidelines will help you prepare for and carry out more difficult evaluation interviews:

- Show that you are concerned about your employee and interested in his or her point of view
- Keep the discussion focused on job-related issues
- Be firm if you have critical comments to make
- Back up any negative feedback with facts and examples
- Never allow yourself to get into an argument or lose your temper with the employee
- Keep your cool even if the employee becomes defensive or aggressive.

If the discussion gets heated, there is no benefit in responding with angry behavior. As a supervisor, part of your job is to model the behavior you expect from your employees, so losing your temper sends the wrong message. Stay focused on your message by emphasizing the shared goals of the team and the larger mission and vision of the organization that every team member supports. If you need to take a break to allow the employee to cool off and to gather your thoughts, adjourn the meeting for a specific amount of time rather than continuing an unproductive discussion. A fifteen- or twenty-minute break may be what's needed to get the conversation back on track.

Maintaining employee records

No matter what type of evaluation you carry out, always document factual information about employee progress and place this in the employee's personnel file. No elaborate system of record keeping is required, but all significant information should be recorded, kept up-to-date, and shared with the employee. Keeping a critical-incident log is a good way to track important events and observations. In this type of record keeping, you maintain a weekly or monthly bullet-point log of positive and negative employee actions. Examples of actions that should be recorded include confirmed goals, work output, specific achievements on the job, action you have taken to support the employee, and recognition given for accomplishments. It is especially important to maintain accurate performance logs and records of instances of unsatisfactory performance including when and how you addressed those incidents.

While accurate and complete documentation is critical, it is equally important to inform the employee of any positive or negative observations you are making. Your goal is to do whatever will help your employees improve performance. Constant feedback—including a written notice of a job well done—will help employees improve their job performance and reinforce the message that they are valued team members. Most employees appreciate feedback when it is presented in a constructive, evenhanded way.

Evaluation and compensation

Most of the evaluation discussions you have with employees should be developmental; focus on improving performance in the future. Wage or salary adjustments, in contrast, are designed to recognize and reward past performance and to keep the person's rate of pay at a level that is appropriate and fair for the services rendered. When the two evaluation activities are kept separate and distinct, you and your employees can concentrate on the specific purpose of the discussion. For example, the performance evaluation interview should focus on how the employee can improve performance or maintain high performance, not on the value of the next salary increase.

Your local government's personnel policies may require that performance evaluation and pay adjustments be conducted in a particular way. Your role in influencing compensation may be very broad or very limited. Whatever the case, your role is to focus on guiding the person toward better performance and future success in your organization.

Legal considerations

In addition to the organizational reasons for seeking valid and reliable measures to assess performance, there are legal considerations. Court decisions have established performance evaluation as a type of selection tool or test. Therefore, the performance evaluation must be based on a thorough analysis of job requirements. An improperly constructed or administered performance evaluation tool can result in charges of discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 if the evaluation instrument has an adverse impact on protected groups. These are the characteristics of a legally acceptable performance evaluation system:

- The performance evaluation instrument is developed from a systematic analysis of individual jobs
- Job descriptions used in the evaluation process are kept up-to-date
- The performance evaluation focuses on specific, job-related behaviors rather than traits, abilities, or personal characteristics
- Performance standards or goals are communicated to employees
- Supervisors are trained to evaluate employees
- Written documentation about the evaluation process is maintained.[3]

Common performance evaluation errors

No matter how rigorous the process used to develop a performance evaluation tool, it is of little value unless it is carried out effectively. Common errors can significantly undermine the value of the performance evaluation process. Typical evaluation errors include the following:[4]

- The ***central tendency effect*** happens when the supervisor rates everyone at the midpoint of the scale, regardless of performance. For example, all employees are given a rating of three on a one-to-five scale. The general rule is that it should take as much evidence and observable pattern of behavior to give a person a five (high) as it would to give them a one (low).
- The ***recency factor*** occurs when the supervisor rates an employee on the basis of a recent event (either positive or negative) and disregards the remainder of the evaluation period. It is essential to take the entire rating period into consideration when completing the performance evaluation.

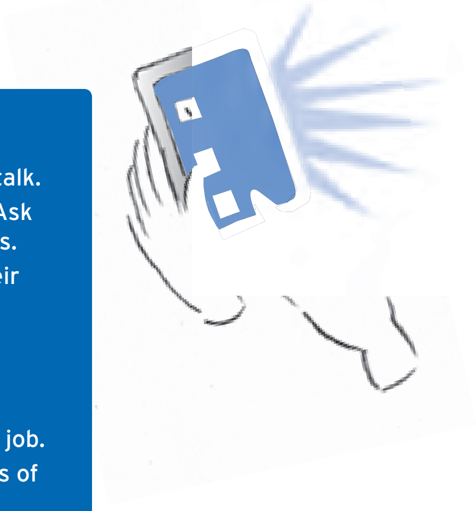
The central tendency effect happens when everyone is rated at the midpoint of the scale. Avoid that error by basing your ratings on actual evidence for each employee.

- The ***halo or horn*** effect happens when the supervisor lets especially positive (halo) or negative (horn) performance in one area influence the ratings for other areas. For example, a person may have excellent verbal skills but poor writing skills. It is important to be able to separate these two qualities for the purpose of conducting a performance evaluation.
- ***Personal bias*** occurs when the supervisor allows factors not related to job duties to influence an employee's performance ratings. For example, a supervisor's personal affinity for a team member could interfere with an honest assessment of performance.

Keep these potential errors and pitfalls in mind when completing both the performance evaluation form and the performance evaluation interview for a fair, legally sound, and satisfying outcome.

Summary

Performance evaluation is a key tool for holding your employees accountable for their work and actions. Effective use of the performance evaluation process will help you reinforce positive job performance and behavior and provide a legitimate and fair approach for addressing poor or problematic job performance and behavior.



CHECKLIST

- Commit to performing fair and effective performance appraisals. Walk your talk.
- Involve your employees in discussing the job factors that will be evaluated. Ask for their input before identifying or clarifying performance evaluation factors.
- Clarify expectations. Be sure that employees understand their authority, their responsibility, and what is expected of them.
- Involve employees in setting goals, determining performance standards, and developing ways of measuring results.
- Compare work results frequently against the agreed-upon goals.
- Do not evaluate until you have enough information to do a fair and thorough job.
- Work with team members to make the evaluation successful, to identify ways of improving work performance, and to set new goals.
- Keep written records of all actions and impressions.
- When possible, keep performance evaluations separate from salary adjustments.
- View performance evaluation as a developmental process.

Endnotes

1 Ross Page, *Everyone Agrees With TOM!* (London, United Kingdom: Ross Page, 2007).

2 George Doran, "There's a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management's Goals and Objectives," *Management Review* 70 (November 1981; AMA FORUM), 35–36. [According to Wikipedia, this is the first reference to S.M.A.R.T. goals.]

3 Stephen E. Condrey, *Appraising Employee Performance* (Athens, GA: Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia, 2003).

4 Ibid.

Supervisory situation 11-1

By all accounts, Officer Harry Jones is a talented police officer who rarely applies his talents to the job. If there is an easy way out or a convenient way to avoid work, Officer Jones generally finds it. Beyond his minimalist approach to work, Officer Jones has been known to try to intimidate other officers. For example, if other officers comment on his lack of productivity or his attitude, Officer Jones will confront his colleagues with a finger to the face or an intimidating tone. He will even occasionally take the same approach with his shift commander, Sergeant Nobles.

Sergeant Nobles is known in the department as the “easy rider” supervisor. He is a friendly guy who avoids conflict and tough decisions. Because of his seniority, Officer Jones has always been able to bid for and get Sergeant Nobles as his shift supervisor. Officer Jones never received a negative or unfavorable performance evaluation from Sergeant Nobles. In fact, Officer Jones’s evaluations suggest that he is a high performer.

Recently, Sergeant Tom Strickland became Officer Jones’s new shift supervisor. Sergeant Strickland is a firm, fair team leader who is widely respected for his mature judgment and his attention to detail.

It became evident quickly that Sergeant Strickland’s expectations of the job, behavior, and performance are much higher than those of his predecessor. It also became evident that Officer Jones would most likely resist any changes in his performance or behavior.

1. How should Sergeant Strickland handle the relationship with Officer Jones?
2. What should Sergeant Strickland do at the beginning of the evaluation period?
3. How should Sergeant Strickland deal with Officer Jones if he resists Sergeant Strickland’s efforts to change his performance and behavior?
4. What communication should Sergeant Strickland have with his supervisor about his new report?

Supervisory situation 11-2

Carolyn has been employed as a community planner in the Recreation Department for eleven months under your supervision. She is intelligent, charismatic, articulate, and honest—qualities that allow her to interact effectively with the community. Her work is always done on time and is high quality. However, you have observed that Carolyn seems aloof when interacting with her colleagues and condescending to administrative and support staff. She is also argumentative when you ask her to perform tasks she doesn’t like or agree with. You have coached Carolyn on her workplace interactions during your bi-weekly one-on-one meetings. In addition, you gave her a counseling memo about her attitude after she scolded the unit’s administrative assistant to the point that the assistant left the office in tears. Carolyn’s anniversary date is in one month, and you will be preparing her performance evaluation including whether Carolyn should be retained as a permanent employee.

1. What are your options?
2. What, if anything, could you as Carolyn's supervisor have done better?
3. Develop your recommendation on Carolyn's future status.

Supervisory situation 11–3

Street Foreman John Anderson frequently complains that the organization's performance evaluation process is "a huge waste of time." "My people know what their jobs are, and they get their jobs done. It is a waste of their time and mine going through every little petty element of their work," he said. As a result of this view, John gives everyone the highest possible ratings, which makes John's crew the highest rated in the department.

Several other foremen and forewomen have complained to Street Superintendent Bob Mays about the high ratings that everyone on John's crew always receives. Bob knows that, despite the high ratings, John's crew is not the most productive in the department. Other foremen and forewomen take the performance evaluation process very seriously, document performance carefully, and generally give fair and balanced ratings.

1. What is the impact of John's approach on the credibility of the overall performance evaluation system?
2. What is its impact on other foremen and forewomen in the department and how they approach the evaluation system?
3. How should Superintendent Mays handle the situation?
4. What would you do?


AWARD
ESTEEM NEEDS
SOCIAL NEEDS
Recognition
Empowerment
Supportive feedback
Partnering
Expectations
Consideration
Trust

12

MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES

Michelle Poché Flaherty

A leader's role is to raise people's aspirations for what they can become and to release their energies so they will try to get there.

David Gergen, professor, presidential advisor, and political consultant

SNAPSHOT

Motivating employees to carry out their responsibilities and release their energies in productive and satisfying ways is an essential and highly challenging role of a supervisor. This chapter provides a framework for understanding motivation and tools for energizing and inspiring employees. Chapter objectives are to

- Increase understanding of individual interests and needs and how they affect employee motivation
- Deepen awareness of theories of motivation to provide a context for action
- Explore actions supervisors can take to meet employees' needs
- Introduce the connection between personality type and employee motivation.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- What theories of motivation can guide your work as a supervisor?
- What do employees want and need from their work?
- What can you do as a supervisor to reduce dissatisfaction in the workplace?
- How do autonomy, mastery, and purpose contribute to motivating employees?
- How do you release higher levels of motivation in your employees?
- How can you apply these concepts and strategies to strengthen your relationship with your boss?

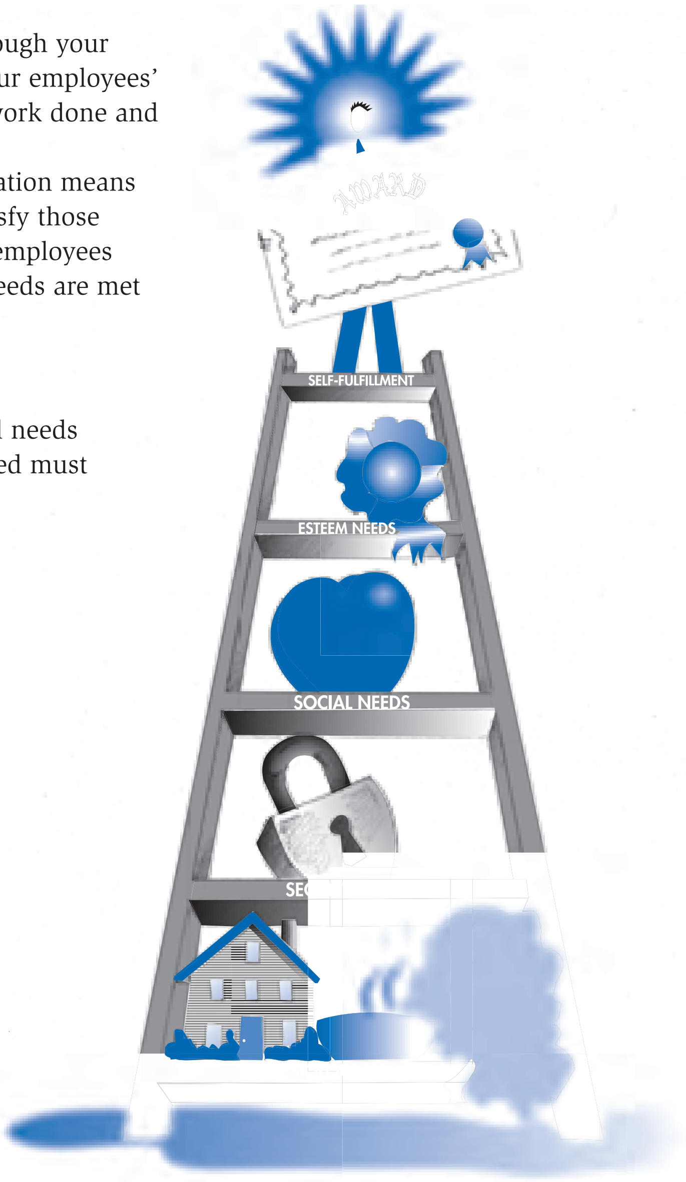
The study of motivation is an examination of what makes people tick. What turns them on to want to try harder, do more, and be happy? What turns them off or even makes them feel like giving up? What makes them respond positively or negatively to you? Are there ways to inspire your employees, create synergy with your peers, and delight your boss? The answer is yes, and the secrets lie in understanding motivation.

Author Michelle Poché Flaherty appreciatively recognizes the contribution of Richard L. Milford and Mark D. Bradbury, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

The needs of employees

Your job as supervisor is to get work done with and through your employees. To do this, you must find ways to release your employees' motivation—to awaken and energize their drive to get work done and to get it done well.

In your role as supervisor, releasing employee motivation means aligning individual needs, and employees' efforts to satisfy those needs, with the goals of the organization. To help your employees do their best, you need to ensure that their individual needs are met as they pursue the organization's goals.



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Psychologist Abraham Maslow suggested that individual needs are organized on a hierarchical ladder, and that each need must be met before you can move to the next level of need.[1]

- ***Physiological needs:*** food, shelter, clothing, and an environment that sustains life
- ***Security needs:*** physical safety and an orderly environment
- ***Social needs:*** acceptance and a sense of belonging
- ***Esteem needs:*** self-respect and the respect of others
- ***Self-actualization or self-fulfillment needs:*** full development of individual abilities and a satisfying personal life.

The lower-level needs must be satisfied before higher-level needs have any effect on motivation. Human behavior is driven by unsatisfied needs, and as long as a more basic need remains unsatisfied, it will dominate. Once lower-level needs are satisfied, higher-level needs begin to drive behavior.

When asked to describe their worst jobs, employees who have experienced adverse work conditions will quickly cite them: dirty, smelly, burning hot, freezing cold, or dangerous conditions often qualify a job as the worst in someone's history. However, employees who have always worked in fairly safe and orderly environments tend to cite negative issues that fall higher up Maslow's hierarchy, such as inconsiderate co-workers and disrespectful or unsupportive bosses. When asked to describe their best jobs, employees consistently describe them in terms of satisfying higher-level needs, such as a challenging job where they were able to learn and grow, a position that involved independence or responsibility, or a role where they were able to make a difference.

Your employees will have a hard time focusing on the fulfilling aspects of their work if their equipment rarely works or weekly assignments are frequently unclear. Start by ensuring that your employees have an orderly work environment so that you both can focus on higher needs such as collaborative teamwork and innovative, interesting ways to improve the work.

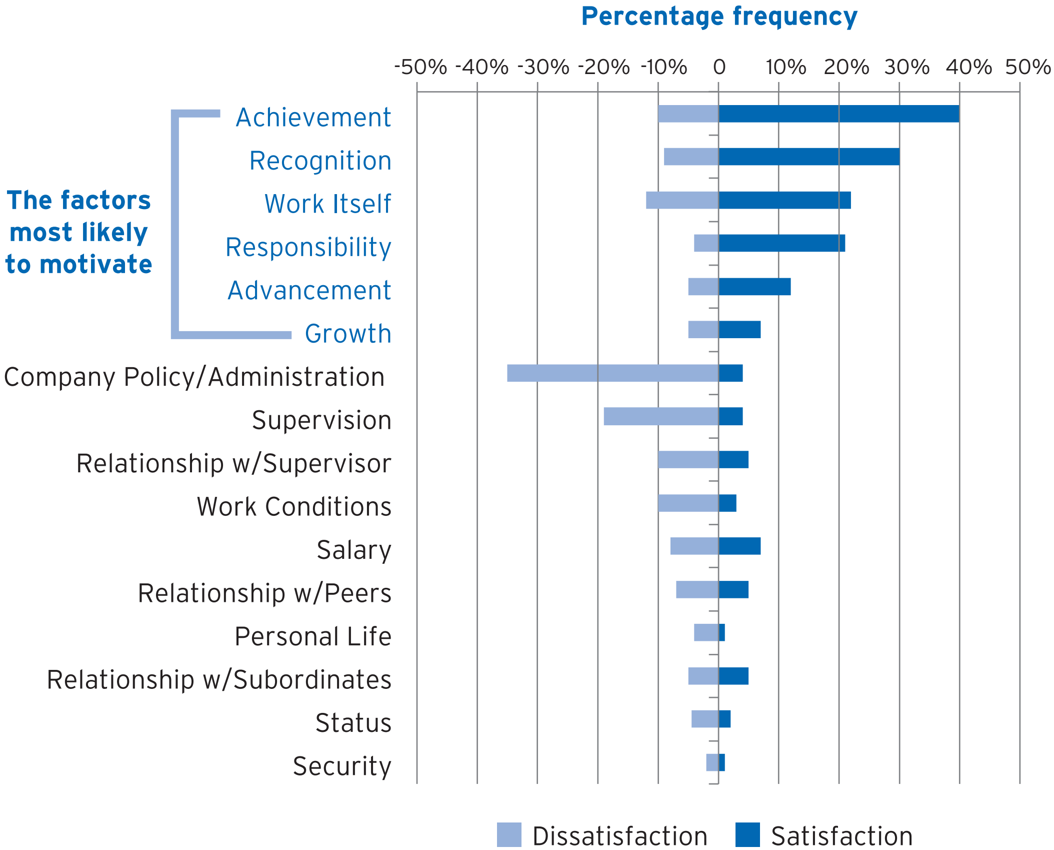
Herzberg's motivation factors

Frederick Herzberg's theory of motivation is compatible with Maslow's view. Herzberg divides sources of motivation into two categories: those that prompt satisfaction and those that prompt dissatisfaction.[2] Herzberg identifies six factors that are most likely to satisfy workers and lead to increased levels of motivation. They are: achievement, recognition, interesting [work], responsibility, advancement, and growth. There are ten factors that Herzberg said are likely to demotivate when they reach undesirable levels. The demotivators are policies/administration, supervision, relationship with the supervisor, work conditions, salary, relationships with peers, personal life, relationship with subordinates, status, and security.

For example, *salary* scores higher in dissatisfaction; therefore, the data indicate that a higher salary doesn't necessarily motivate an employee, but an inadequate salary can demotivate. An adequate level of pay will remove the issue of compensation as a primary motivator for most workers, who are then free to be motivated by factors like achievement, recognition, responsibility, and interesting work.

The most frequent source of dissatisfaction is company policy and administration, also known as bureaucracy or red tape. While many rules are established by senior management and do not fall under your control as a supervisor, you can still find ways to advocate for reducing rules that cause significant dissatisfaction.

HERZBERG'S MOTIVATION FACTORS



Adapted from Frederick Herzberg, "One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?" *Harvard Business Review* (September–October 1987), 8. ©Harvard Business School Publishing, 1987. Used with permission.

SIX STEPS TO PROMOTE CREATIVITY AND REDUCE BUREAUCRACY

- Decrease required number of approvals and eliminate unnecessary rules
- Push decisions as far down the chain of command as possible
- Remove formal communication protocols; let people talk directly to the person with the answer
- Seek employee suggestions more often and follow through on pursuing them
- Remove punishments for mistakes made while trying to solve problems
- Do not assign authority based only on job title or position; allow for situational authority.

Adapted from Daniel H. Pink, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009).

The next most frequent source of dissatisfaction is the employee's relationship with his or her supervisor. This is a powerful reminder of the importance of your role as a supervisor. You can reduce dissatisfaction in your team by promoting the most frequent sources of employee satisfaction and productivity, including

- Giving your employees opportunities to succeed and experience high achievement
- Recognizing and celebrating good work, talent, and effort
- When possible, allowing employees to work on the projects and tasks that interest them most
- Seeking ways for employees to take on additional responsibilities and work toward opportunities for advancement
- Helping employees develop their skills and abilities by offering them learning opportunities that go beyond the basics of their current jobs.

Herzberg and Maslow both disprove the assumption held by some supervisors that many employees dislike work and will avoid it if possible. Such supervisors wrongly assume that most people have little initiative or ambition and are unwilling to take responsibility. As a result, they must be controlled, directed, coerced, and intimidated to produce desired results. Maslow and Herzberg both demonstrate that most people:

- Welcome work as an opportunity to learn and grow
- Will seek more responsibility and challenging work
- Are primarily motivated by their desire for acceptance, recognition, and a sense of achievement.

Autonomy, mastery, and purpose

In his best-selling book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*,[3] Daniel H. Pink summarizes employee motivation in three concepts:

- ***Autonomy*** An urge to direct our own lives
- ***Mastery*** The desire to get better and better at something that matters
- ***Purpose*** A yearning to do what we do in service of something larger than ourselves.

Paul L. Marciano, *Carrots and Sticks Don't Work: Build a Culture of Employee Engagement with the Principles of RESPECT.* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 80-81. ©2010 McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. Used with permission.

The following sections identify actions you can take to motivate employees using Pink's three concepts.

Ways to provide *autonomy* to your employees:

- Ensure clear, accurate, reliable, and open communication.
- Make resources easily available.
- Provide facilitative, supportive leadership.
- Increase flexibility by establishing desired results and letting employees decide *how* to achieve those results.
- Let employees design their jobs or propose their own deadlines when appropriate.
- Get out of their way.
- Be accessible when they need you.

Ways to develop *mastery* in your employees:

- Give them access to training.
- Make resources easily available.
- Permit job rotation and cross-training.
- Take responsibility for supporting the development of each of your employees by
  - Assessing where and how each one needs to grow
  - Asking them about their own interests and aspirations
  - Investing in coaching and mentoring
  - Giving them access to others who can help them grow.

WHAT MILLENIALS WANT

...from their boss	...from their company	...to learn
Top five characteristics millennials want in a boss	**Top five characteristics millennials want in a company**	**Top five things millennials want to learn**
Will help me navigate my career path	Will develop my skills for the future	Technical skills in my area of expertise
Will give me straight feedback	Has strong values	Self-management and personal productivity
Will mentor and coach me	Offers customizable options in my benefits/reward package	Leadership
Will sponsor me for formal development programs	Allows me to blend work with the rest of my life	Industry or functional knowledge
Is comfortable with flexible schedules	Offers a clear career path	Creativity and innovation strategies

From Jeanne C. Meister and Karie Willyerd, "Mentoring Millennials," *Harvard Business Review* (May 2010).

Ways to cultivate *purpose* among your employees:

- Promote a supportive team environment.
- Model a positive attitude.
- Align employees and their work with a larger strategic vision and values by highlighting connections between their efforts and the end results.
- Provide fair and desirable rewards and recognition.
- Trust employees to do the right things.

These motivators are becoming even more pronounced in today's workforce due to the values prevalent among members of Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979) and the Millennial generation (born between 1980 and 2000). By 2014, Millennials will account for nearly half the employees in the world.[4]

Maslow, Herzberg, and Pink provide insights into the major themes you can rely on to release higher levels of motivation in nearly all employees. However, you must also deal with the nuances of different personality types on your team and look for ways to customize your approach to specific individuals.

Customizing motivation for individual temperaments

Many psychological models and assessments have been developed to measure and categorize human personalities into various groups. The most widely used is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which measures a person's preferences about how he or she perceives the world and makes decisions. Other popular tools include Gallup's StrengthsFinder, the Birkman Method,® and the DISC® assessment. The majority of these instruments measure *preferences*, not *ability*, so they are not to be used as predictors of job performance. However, you can use them to increase understanding of what makes a person tick and what kinds of motivation he or she may respond to best.

Some organizations have employees on staff, usually in the human resources (HR) department, who are certified to administer these similar instruments. Still other organizations have contracts with consultants, facilitators, or trainers who can administer the MBTI for you and your team. You may want to check with your HR department to see if this resource is available to you.

The MBTI uses letters to describe its categories of personality components. According to MBTI theory, the combination of certain components (represented by letter combinations) correlates to four categories of personality temperaments: NF, NT, SJ and SP. (These initials are explained in the "Four Temperaments" sidebar.) Most people can identify with aspects of all four temperaments, but the theory suggests one temperament is likely to be a stronger fit than the rest.

If you are able to determine the temperament that describes you best, it will enhance your self-awareness—and can strengthen your success as a supervisor. If you recognize the characteristics of a particular temperament in each of your employees, it may provide insight into the most effective ways to motivate, connect with, and reward each individual.

(text continues on page 221)

FOUR TEMPERAMENTS
Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

In the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, sixteen personality types are identified as combinations of these type preferences: **E**xtravert or **I**ntrovert, **S**ensing or **I**ntuition, **T**hinking or **F**eeling, and **J**udging or **P**erception. The personality types are usually referred to by an abbreviation of the initial letters (highlighted here in boldface type) of each of a person's four type preferences.

NF *[intuition and feeling; 12 percent of the population]*

NFs look at the world and see possibilities for people. They tend to serve causes that advance human interest, but their sensitivity can lead them to take criticism personally, sometimes in their feeling hurt. Overall, NFs feel that harmony with themselves and with others is their most important value. If harmony exists, everything else will fall naturally into place.

Words that describe NFs	How NFs lead	How to motivate NFs
• Strong interpersonal skills • Supportive of others • Sympathetic • Relationships • Possibilities for people • Interaction • Seductive • Cooperation • "Becoming" • Vivid imagination • Mysterious • Hypersensitive to conflict • Search for self • Autonomy • Need encouragement and recognition • Integrity • Give strokes freely.	• Regard power as residing in personal and professional relationships • Create and maintain non-hierarchical work structures and relationships • Build bridges to individuals and groups through shared values, concern, and affection, and then leverage these bridges to bring about the desired outcome • Use inspirational speeches and imagery to unite and motivate • Communicate appreciation, approval, and hope with greater ease and urgency than criticism or anything that invites conflict • Give and want compliments and affirmation often.	• Like them, know them, acknowledge their uniqueness, share their values or at least acknowledge that their values exist and are important • Acknowledge their contributions and effort with affirmation and sincere expressions of gratitude • Help provide and maintain an open, conflict-free workplace • Ask for their help, support, creativity, and collaboration • Affirm and complement at least as much as you criticize and correct; make sure criticism is framed as a means to greater personal and professional development—and a stronger bridge between you and the employee.

VividFrom Hile Rutledge, *The Four Temperaments Workbook* (Fairfax, VA: OKA, 2008). ©OKA, 2008. Used with permission.

NT *[intuition and thinking; 12 percent of the population]*

NTs perceive the world largely through abstractions and possibilities to which they apply objective analysis. Their driving force, in their quest for competence, is to theorize and intellectualize everything. Driven to try to understand the universe, they ask, "Why?" or "Why not?" NTs learn by challenging any authority or source. They have their own standards and benchmarks for competence against which they measure themselves and everybody else.

Words that describe NTs	How NTs lead	How to motivate NTs
• High achievers • Knowledge seekers • Objective perceptions • Independent • Self-doubt • Intellectually curious • Conceptualizers • Competitive with self and others • Nonconformists • Wordsmiths • Principles • Enjoy complexity • Authority-independent • Architects of change • Systems designers • Argumentative • "What would happen if..."	• Regard power as residing in skill, ability, knowledge, and competency • Drive toward an independently conceived and assessed standard of competence and excellence, and then apply this standard to those who work for them • Intrigued and motivated by challenges and problems to be solved, often taking a systematic, strategic, and/or conceptual approach to generating solutions • Visionary, focusing on possibilities, change, and continuous improvement through non-personal analysis • Often see conflict as a positive tool, shining a light on what needs to be confronted, fixed, or improved • Reward success with criticism, a harder assignment, and more freedom to perform independently.	• Demonstrate your own competence by passing their individual (and often internal) competency assessment • Identify clear quality standards and accept nothing less • Have a vision of the future and communicate this direction clearly to put today's activity into a strategic framework • Allow for independent contributions, successes, and failures; do not micromanage • Push for independent problem solving on challenging issues, and introduce, allow, and encourage "why" questions • Follow these points, and you will have the NT employee on board until the end of the day; tomorrow, you'll start over again.

From Hile Rutledge, *The Four Temperaments Workbook* (Fairfax, VA: OKA, 2008). ©OKA, 2008. Used with permission.

SJ *[sensing and judging; 38 percent of the population]*

SJs focus on what is practical and realistic to provide organization and structure. They yearn to belong to meaningful institutions. They are trustworthy, loyal, helpful, and reverent. As stabilizing traditionalists, SJs tend to organize people, furniture, schedules, structures, and more to ensure that everything runs smoothly and on time.

Words that describe SJs	How SJs lead	How to motivate SJs
• Loyal to the system • Duty • Super dependable • Resist change • Preserve traditions • Precise • "KISS" (keep it simple and straightforward) • Procedures • Decisive • Stability • "Should" and "Should Not" • Social responsibility • Structure • Orderly • Authority dependent.	• Regard power as residing in the organization or system, so real power is in the authority of your title, rank, tenure, position, or status • Prize efficiency, responsibility, and consistency • Orderly, dependable, and realistic • Understand and conserve institutional values • Supply stability, routine, and structure • More likely to reward institutionally using trophies, letters, and commendations rather than personally • Tend to be more critical of mistakes than rewarding of expected duties.	• Communicate and maintain clear timelines and reporting structures • Give specific and detailed instructions • Get to the point and stick to it • Emphasize consistency and efficiency • Address the bottom line results • Officially reward and recognize contributions with money, status, and official commendations.

From Hile Rutledge, *The Four Temperaments Workbook* (Fairfax, VA: OKA, 2008).

SP *[sensing and perception; 38 percent of the population]*

SPs focus on what is practical and realistic to which they bring spontaneity and flexibility. They are simultaneously grounded in the reality of the moment and open to multiple ways of dealing with that reality. The only thing the SP can be sure of is the moment; a long-range plan is a contradiction in terms. They are driven to act in and adapt to the moment; everything else, from past procedures to future possibilities, becomes irrelevant in the face of the options, challenges, and fun offered "now."

Words that describe SPs	How SPs lead	How to motivate SPs
• Free spirit • Process oriented • Fun-loving • Good in crisis situations • "When all else fails, read the directions" • Impulsive and spontaneous • Need freedom and space • "Let me do something" • Flexible • Focus on immediacy • Realistic and practical • Enjoy the moment • Like hands-on experience • Adaptable • Seek variety and change • Action oriented • Most worry free of the four temperaments.	• Regard power as residing in the moment, unencumbered by the past and future • Hunger for freedom and action • Flexible, open-minded, and willing to take risks in dealing with realistic problems • Highly negotiable • Challenged by trouble spots but not long-term concepts • Best at verbal planning and short-range projects.	• Get to the point • Make tasks a challenge and allow them to make it fun • Be realistic and practical • Outline any critical guidelines, provide options; then back off and let them approach the task at their own pace and in their own way • Relax and have some fun.

From Hile Rutledge, *The Four Temperaments Workbook* (Fairfax, VA: OKA, 2008). ©OKA, 2008. Used with permission.

(text continued from page 216)

After reviewing the descriptions of the four temperaments, think about which one best describes you, and consider how you use the leadership style described to succeed as a supervisor. Also keep in mind that any strength maximized can become a weakness; therefore, if these leadership approaches are your strengths, what blind spots might interfere with your expectations? How can you take advantage of the strengths of your temperament to become a better leader?

You should also consider which temperaments best describe your team members. Understanding how their temperaments differ from yours can provide insight into what motivates them. With this in mind, how might you use this information to lead and motivate each member of your team?

You also might consider which temperaments best describe your peers and how having a better understanding of your co-workers will help you become a more successful team member.

Lastly, consider which temperament best describes your boss. How could this help you to focus on what your boss wants most from you and help you to communicate more effectively with your boss?

The needs of managers

The study of motivation will not only help you to lead and inspire your employees but also strengthen your relationship with your supervisor. In the same way that Maslow, Herzberg, and Pink have identified general principles that meet the needs of most workers, there are some general principles that can help you meet the needs of nearly all managers. These principles include being accommodating, doing your due diligence, and earning trust and confidence. Some of these approaches may take extra effort on your part, but they may increase your long-term success in the organization.

Nine tips to manage your manager

1. ***Share information strategically.***
   - Respect your manager's time by asking for it only for important issues.
   - Know when she needs to hear it from you first.

- Listen to what she's asking before you answer.
- When she requests information, don't just pass on all the raw data. Analyze it, bring out what is essential, connect related points, and eliminate unnecessary details.
- Demonstrate alignment between her priorities and yours.

2. ***Respect your manager's role as a generalist.***
   Your manager has multiple responsibilities beyond you and your team. Don't assume he knows as much as you do about your unit's work and your expertise. Translate from your perspective as a subject matter expert by simplifying, summarizing, and getting to the point. When you approach your boss, make it easy for him to give you what you're asking for (direction, permission, etc.) by
   - Getting your facts straight and being ready for questions.
   - Providing context and framing the discussion. Briefly remind him where you left this issue at your last meeting. Remind him of the *why* before rushing into the *what* and *how* of your immediate concern.
   - Summarizing quickly the options considered and criteria for your recommended choice.
   - Saying what you're asking for (just informing vs. seeking approval, guidance, back-up).
   - Identifying where you need help.
   - E-mailing a summary after the meeting to confirm understandings and next steps.
   - Keeping him posted on the status.
3. ***Be a problem solver.***
   - Don't act helpless and ask your manager to fix everything or everyone for you.
   - Don't bring problems without bringing at least one possible solution to explore.
   - Before you approach your manager, identify the causes of the problem and/or the gap between the desired objective and the current situation.
   - Identify options to close the gap or correct the cause to prevent it in the future.
   - Identify tasks and resources (time, people, money, materials, tools, and skills) required. Bring this analysis with you when you seek her help with the problem.

4. ***Exercise initiative.***
   - Learn when you need to seek permission before acting versus when you can leap and take a risk.
   - Clarify your authority and your manager's expectations.
5. ***Underpromise and overdeliver.***
   - Demonstrate integrity. Do what you say you are going to do—every time. Be the one your boss knows she can count on.
   - Be prudent with estimates. Give yourself and your team a margin for error and adjustments.
   - Don't confuse underpromising with saying no. It's your job to figure out how to make it happen rather than identifying all the reasons it can't.
6. ***Avoid surprises and never bluff.***
   - Stay on top of your team's projects and keep your manager posted on both good and bad news.
   - If you don't know an answer, say so.
     - Don't bluff your way through questionable information or give your best guess and portray it as certain.
     - If you don't have the data, say you'll get it. Then get it, and give it to your boss as soon as possible.
   - When you or your team makes a mistake or there is a problem, say so.
     - Don't wait and hope your manager won't find out, or that the mistake will go away on its own.
     - Own it. Don't make excuses. Don't blame others.
     - Fix it.
     - Demonstrate what you're doing to prevent repeating it.
     - Add value by applying lessons learned to future efforts.
7. ***Support your manager's leadership.***
   - Stand by her decisions in front of all others. When you disagree, speak up respectfully and in private. Once you've made your best recommendation,

support the decision even when you've been overruled. Whether it was your preference or not, the final decision is now yours to implement.

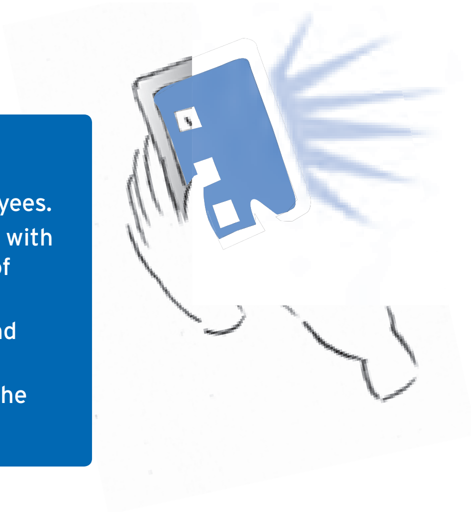
- Watch her back. If you can help your boss avoid a setback, do so.
- Help your boss succeed by making her look good when you can. Her wins are your wins.

8. ***Meet your manager where he is.***
   - Accommodate his personality type; don't demand that he accommodate yours.
   - Customize your communication according to his preference. Does he prefer a written memo or an oral briefing? By appointment, at the group meeting, or in the hallway? Do it his way.
   - Figure out what annoys your manager and don't do it.
9. ***Earn trust by doing good work.***
   - Take pride in your work. Don't be sloppy, careless, or indifferent.
   - Always give your best work, not half-baked drafts. It's not your manager's job to fix what you could have done on your own; it's her job to fix what you couldn't—which should be minimal.
   - Show your strengths. Be the star you are.

Summary

Being effective in the workplace requires more than having the proper rank or the correct answer. You must also have the skills to deal with the human aspects of your managers, peers, and subordinates—however illogical or strange they may sometimes seem to you. People are all individuals with different personalities and motivations that affect how they respond, behave, and perform in the workplace.

Part of your responsibility as a supervisor is to integrate an understanding of motivation into your leadership approach. When you apply this to your employees, you can inspire and empower extraordinary levels of satisfaction and productivity in your team. When you apply it to your co-workers, you can increase your contributions and success as a team member. When you apply it to your manager, you can enhance your own achievement and organizational success. When you apply it to yourself, you can use that self-knowledge to minimize your weaknesses and maximize your strengths. These positive outcomes support the overall success of your organization, and that is the goal of leadership.



CHECKLIST

- Maximize the opportunities for autonomy, mastery, and purpose in your employees.
- Get to know employees individually, find out what motivates them, and work with employees to determine how best to release that motivation in the service of organizational goals.
- Use the principles of motivation to increase your success with your peers and managers as well as your subordinates.
- Know yourself. Understand your own motivations so that you can minimize the obstacles and maximize your strengths.

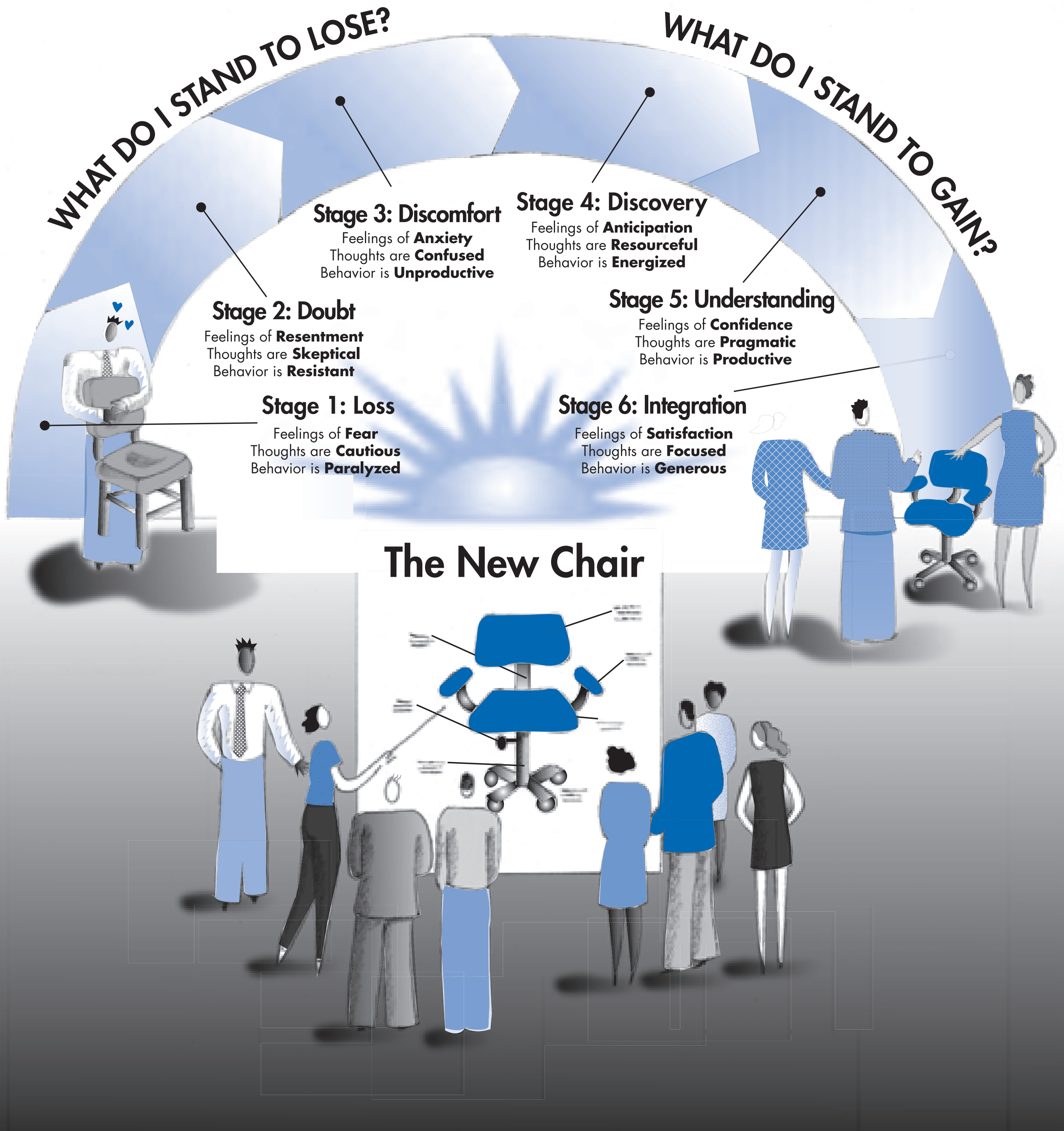
Endnotes

1 Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper, 1954).

2 Frederick Herzberg, Bernard Mausner, and Barbara Bloch Snyderman, *The Motivation to Work* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1959).

3 Daniel H. Pink, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009).

4 Jeanne C. Meister and Karie Willyerd, "Mentoring Millennials," *Harvard Business Review*, May 2010.


WHAT DO I STAND TO LOSE?
WHAT DO I STAND TO GAIN?
Stage 1: Loss
Feelings of Fear
Thoughts are Cautious
Behavior is Paralyzed
Stage 2: Doubt
Feelings of Resentment
Thoughts are Skeptical
Behavior is Resistant
Stage 3: Discomfort
Feelings of Anxiety
Thoughts are Confused
Behavior is Unproductive
Stage 4: Discovery
Feelings of Anticipation
Thoughts are Resourceful
Behavior is Energized
Stage 5: Understanding
Feelings of Confidence
Thoughts are Pragmatic
Behavior is Productive
Stage 6: Integration
Feelings of Satisfaction
Thoughts are Focused
Behavior is Generous
The New Chair

13

LEADING CHANGE

Michelle Poché Flaherty

There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.

Niccolò Machiavelli, Italian historian, writer, philosopher

SNAPSHOT

This chapter explores change in organizations and provides practical techniques to help you lead your team to a better place on the other side of change. Chapter objectives are to

- Increase understanding of the challenges of introducing and leading successful change processes
- Provide tools and strategies for helping you guide, support, coach, and lead employees when changes are implemented
- Introduce a five-step model for removing obstacles to change and sustaining positive outcomes
- Help you become a successful change leader.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- Where do you get ideas for making improvements?
- How do you decide where improvements should be made?
- How do you choose a better way of doing things?
- How do you get management, employees, and the public to accept new ideas?

What is change? It might be a new policy or procedure, the addition of a new team member, or a software upgrade or new piece of equipment. Without change, there would be no progress or improvement. Organizations must change for many reasons:

- To keep up with the times, with customer expectations, and with new technologies
- To adapt to cultural shifts that come from new employees who bring different experiences, ideas, and expectations to teams
- To introduce new programs and services to respond to emerging challenges.

Author Michelle Poché Flaherty appreciatively recognizes the contribution of Wes Wynens, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

Change cannot be avoided. It is usually good for the organization and the people in it. Yet, many people in organizations don't like change.

As a supervisor, you are expected to help implement change. Some changes are the result of management decisions while others are responses to new conditions in the environment. Regardless of the impetus, nearly all major changes will require you to lead your employees through the discomfort and uncertainty of the unknown.

Planning for change

By thinking through a change and its implications for your work unit, you can guide your employees through the transition and increase the chance of success. The following questions will help you plan for a change.

- ***How quickly?*** Change creates stress. The faster a change takes place, the greater the stress on the people involved. Must this change happen overnight, or can it be introduced gradually so that people have time to adjust? You should also consider how long the change will last. Is it permanent or temporary?
- ***Big steps or little steps?*** The bigger the change, the more stress and resistance it will generate. You should ask yourself how different your work environment will be after the change. Can the change be made in a series of small steps rather than in one big step?
- ***How many changes?*** Your work crew may begin to feel overwhelmed when asked to make many changes, even if they are small ones. The greater the number of different changes that employees must make in a short time, the greater the stress they will feel. You should also consider whether the government is implementing changes in other areas of their work environment which could add to employee stress.
- ***Right now or later?*** Do the changes in your work unit have to take place right now, or can some of them wait? Your employees may find changes that are spread out over time to be less overwhelming than multiple changes pushed through all at once.

Sometimes senior management will mandate a change in response to a crisis without realizing the effect it will have on the employees who implement it. In such cases, it is wise to let your supervisor know of the possible effects of the change and to suggest ways to reduce the associated stress.

TRY A PILOT PROJECT

If a change is sweeping or may be threatening to many employees, it might be best to launch a pilot project—an experiment to see whether the idea will work. This approach signals to employees that you're seeking their involvement in assessing the change, identifying implementation problems, and helping to solve them.

If you choose to undertake a pilot project, it is important to explain to employees that success depends on their willingness to help make the project work. You may want to choose a team quarterback to lead the unit in the new project.

Since a pilot project is an experiment, you will eventually need to decide whether the experiment has succeeded. Employees should keep records to compare the quantity and quality of the work resulting from the old method versus the new. When the before-and-after information is available, employees should share in making the decision about the project's success. Did it save money? Time? Did it help the team work faster? Better? Should we continue it? Change it? Or go back to the old system?

Answers to these questions should be written down in a final report for management. If there is a difference of opinion on the results or the recommendation for action, you must include the opinions of the minority as well as the majority on your team.

Is this a good change to make?

Let's assume you have studied your most troublesome operation and figured out why it is not going smoothly and how it could be improved. What do you do next?

Implementing change takes time and patience. Before you can begin to put a change into effect, you need to be sure that the new approach has a good chance of succeeding. At the very least, it should not create more problems than it sets out to solve. There are a wide range of issues to consider when assessing whether you are ready to implement a change proposal including cost, timing, impact on other departments, compatibility with regulations and policies, and public reactions. Ask yourself these questions to make sure you haven't overlooked anything and to assess the potential for success:

- Does the new method comply with safety regulations?
- Does it conflict with any working conditions?
- Will it reduce costs? Increase service levels? Improve quality?

- Will the cost of implementing the new method be offset by lower operating costs in the long run?
- How might your improvement affect the work of other units and departments? For example, how would a change in meter readings affect the workload in the billing department?
- Is the proposed change compatible with other systems, schedules, and machines already in use in your department or in the government?
- Are there any recent public issues or broad organizational changes that might affect your proposed change? For example, you would not want to test a new method of installing storm sewers if most of the streets in the area were resurfaced a month ago.
- Do you have the money, materials, and capacity to adjust to the changes? Or have you made too many other changes in work methods lately?
- Are you making changes more quickly than your department can adjust to them? Would it be better to make this change at a time when another department (or a department in a nearby jurisdiction) makes a similar change?

Once you've reviewed all the issues and challenges, you're ready to lead a change.

Implementing change is difficult

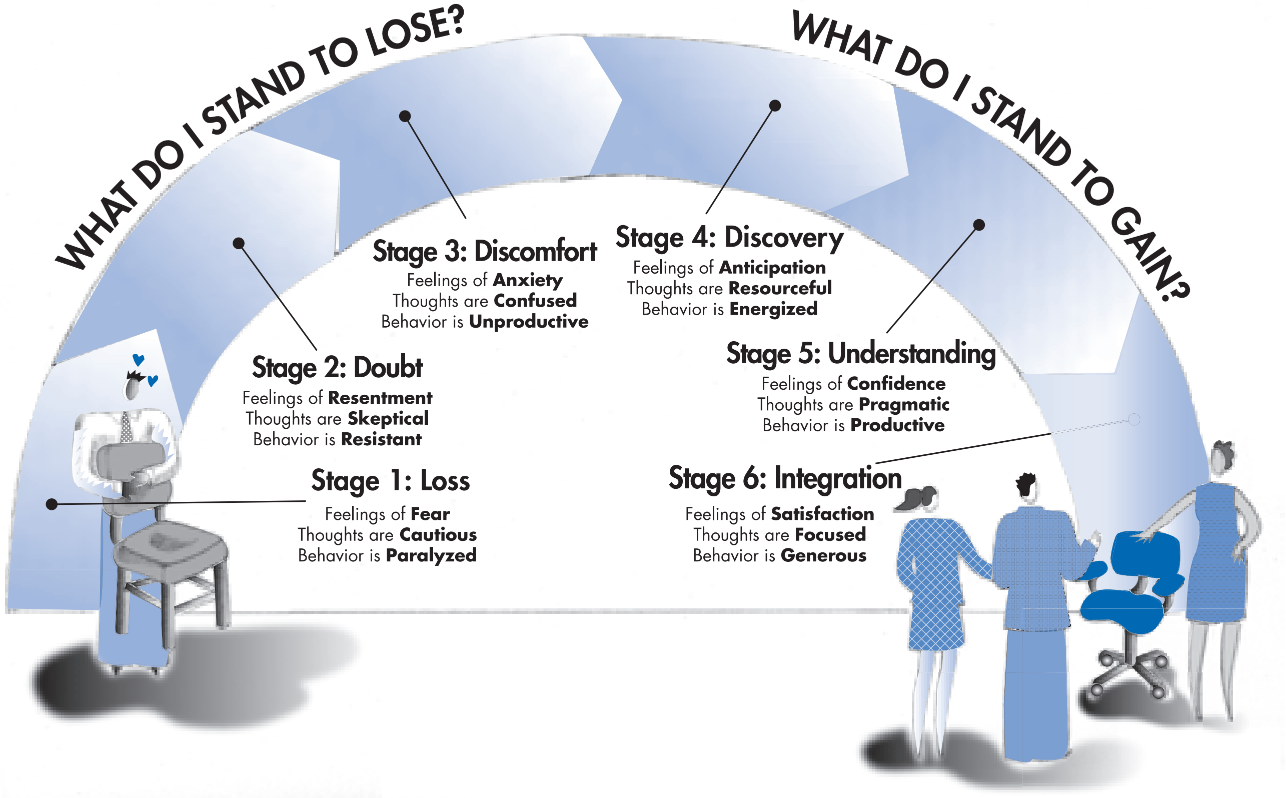
Most people's initial reaction to change is unfavorable. It can prompt worries and complaints, such as

- I like the old way. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.
- It'll take too long to switch everything. And it probably won't work, anyway.
- You should have seen the last time they tried something like this; it was a complete failure.
- Sounds like the latest "flavor of the month." They're always chasing the latest new thing like it's going to be some kind of magic bullet, but nothing ever really changes.
- Sounds complicated and like more work, not less.
- I just finally got the hang of this, now you want to change it?

- What if the new way is too hard to learn, or I'm not good at it?
- What if they won't need my job anymore?

When you lead a change, your job includes helping your employees embrace something they may not like initially. It is important to recognize that people don't move quickly from disliking something to liking it. Adapting to change is typically a slow, gradual process of moving from an unfavorable view to a favorable one by traveling through several stages.

In their book, *The Change Cycle: How People Can Survive and Thrive in Organizational Change,* Ann Salerno and Lillie Brock describe six stages that people move through in responding to change.[1]



In stages one and two, people are fearful, cautious, resentful, and skeptical. They are worried about what they may lose and may resist the change. As the supervisor, you have the difficult but powerful responsibility of leading people out of these stages and through the discomfort of stage three, where they are confused and anxious. This can be especially challenging not only because it's unpleasant but also because productivity typically drops during stage three, making it easy for people to argue that the change isn't working. However, you can lead your employees through difficult change efforts by confronting the challenges of stages one, two, and three, and keeping the process moving despite the initial resistance.

When you successfully lead your team through a change, you help them to adapt to the change and to focus on what they stand to gain from it. By doing so, you move them out of stage three and into stage four: a place of discovery where employees become energized and resourceful in anticipation of the new possibilities. From there, it is an easier journey to stage five, where they begin to truly understand the change and become confident in their relationship to it; and finally to stage six, where they embrace the change and find genuine satisfaction from integrating it into their norms.

It will take some time for your employees to move through these six stages. Once you've decided to propose a change—or your managers have explained their proposal for a new change to you and you feel ready to lead it, you have likely reached stage five or six yourself; you understand why the change is necessary and how it will make things better. You cannot command your employees to jump from stage one to stage six. They will need your patience and reassurance as you help them move out of the negative stages of caution and anxiety and into the positive stages of confidence and productivity.They need you to be their leader more than their boss.

ADJUSTING TO CHANGE

Think of a time when you were asked to make a change that you weren't comfortable with. Then consider these questions:

- What were you being asked to leave behind?
- Why was that such a difficult loss for you?
- If you overcame your resistance, how did you do it?
- If you successfully implemented the change, what replaced what you lost?

Building commitment to change in three steps

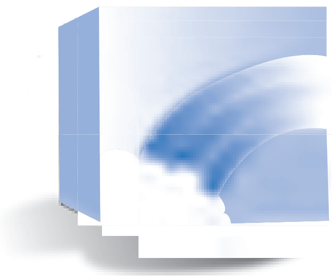
As you introduce the need for change to your work unit, you want your employees to develop a commitment to change rather than feel forced into compliance with your demands. *Compliance* means that employees feel they have to make the change and are more likely to resist it. *Commitment* means they want to make the change and truly support it. Changes that grow out of commitment last longer and work better. You can build commitment among your team members with three steps of change leadership: promote why, promote how, and maintain momentum.

Step 1: Promote the *why*

When leading a change process, managers often think they can simply direct people to do things differently because they have the authority to issue orders. They start explaining *what* the new way is and *how* it will work differently from the old way. This rarely goes well. Instead, always start with the *why*. Explain *why* things need to change from how they are *before* you explain what will change or how it's going to be different.

Develop your vision. Imagine your change has been successfully implemented. How has it benefitted the organization? Your community? What have your employees gained from the change? How is it making people happy?

Forming a picture of success in your mind can help you tap into the positive emotions associated with success. This is important because much of the opposition to change stems from negative emotions like fear. A logical change to improve productivity must overcome the psychological blocks and emotional objections of those resisting it. You can fight fire with fire by using positive emotion to counteract negative emotion. Your positive picture of success can replace the worries rising in your team. Draw on your hopeful feelings and your image of what is possible so that you can share them with others.



Once you have an image of possibility and a sense of what success would feel like, ask yourself which of your convictions are being fueled by this vision. Then ask yourself what are the values that are held by all members of your team, or at least the vast majority of them. Connect your vision to the shared values of your audience, and you have created an inspiring vision that will promote conviction and teamwork toward your change.

Inspiration is not limited to charismatic leaders. This simple method of imaging your success and linking that picture to shared values can enable any leader to shape a logical plan into an inspiring vision.

Once you have a clear vision, consider which additional key points should be included in your message, how it might best be delivered, and by whom.

What are the key message points? Your vision message should focus on the positive aspects of your change once it is successfully implemented: how the change will benefit the organization and/or the community, and what your employees will gain from this change. Keep refocusing on what's in it for them. Are there other compelling factors that demonstrate why the change is necessary? What are the costs to the organization and/or the community if the change isn't made? What will your team members lose or risk by not changing? The answers to these questions will help raise your employees' awareness of the benefits of making the change. It is also important to confirm that your message is consistent with the messages being delivered by others in your organization—especially senior management.

How might the message best be delivered? It's fairly difficult to communicate an inspiring vision by e-mail. You will need to convene your team so that you or your designee can address the team directly. One option might be to begin with a team meeting followed by an e-mail to confirm what was covered. How big or small the change is, how much it means to your team, and how people in your organization typically communicate will influence your decision about the best delivery methods.

Who should deliver the message? Do your employees need to hear this directly from you, as their immediate supervisor? If this is a change that is being led by senior management, would the message be more powerful coming from a more senior manager? Your audience will notice who is delivering the message, so it is important to think carefully about the most appropriate spokesperson.

Promoting the *why* requires effective sponsorship; that is, the people in charge need to demonstrate that the change is important and that they support its implementation. Therefore, if you want a change to succeed, you must make sure that senior management agrees on its benefit and value and will speak in favor of it. If senior leadership is delivering the message, it is your role as a supervisor to reinforce that message by repeating it and focusing on what it means for your work group.

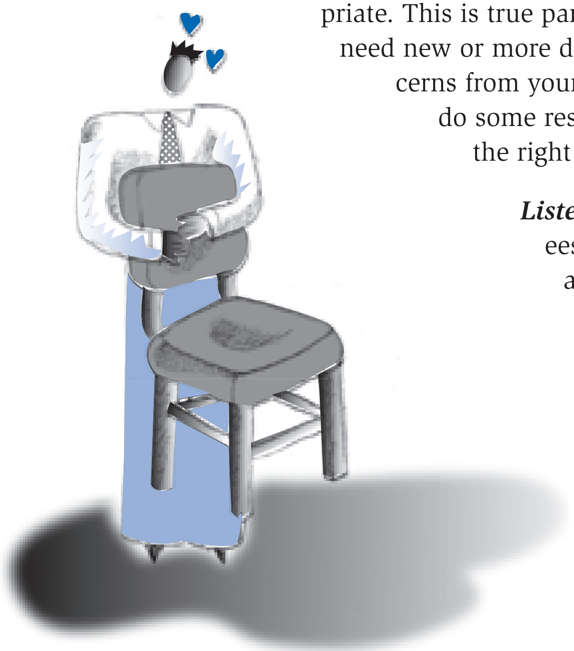
Remember to focus on values.

In addition to delivering your message, two-way communication requires that you also listen.

Listen for questions. Misunderstandings and confusion about facts and details are common. Invite questions and listen for misunderstandings so that you can correct the facts and clear up confusion. The most effective way to prevent and correct misinformation is to ensure that accurate information is readily accessible to your employees. Distribute written explanations of the details to everyone, post them on bulletin boards and shared online resources, and review them in staff meetings. Make it as easy as possible for everyone to get the correct information about the change and why it is necessary.

Your credibility as a change leader depends on having the most current and accurate information. If the change is being led by senior management, you should periodically confirm that your information is still correct and seek updates as appropriate. This is true particularly as questions arise or if confusion erupts. You may need new or more detailed information in order to adequately address new concerns from your team. If you are leading the change yourself, you may need to do some research to find the right information. Take it upon yourself to get the right data; don't just offer your best guess.

Listen for suggestions. To promote the *why* among your employees, listen not only for *questions* about a proposed change but also for employee *suggestions* about how to implement the change. The people responsible for certain tasks usually have the best ideas on how to improve work processes. Incorporating suggestions from employees to improve the change will help employees become more invested in the change and its success. These employees can become such strong supporters that they may also serve as effective messengers to their peers about the value of the change. These advocates can provide momentum to support your transition from the first step of promoting the *why* to the second step, promoting the *how*.



Address change with empathy

Regardless of how well you lead a change effort, you are likely to encounter some resistance. Expect this, be ready for it, and don't let it discourage you.

TIPS FOR OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS TO THE *WHY*

When people find the change too big, too hard, or overwhelming,

- Make the change smaller by breaking it into manageable pieces for people and focusing them on the first piece.
- Show that the change will be easy by building on people's current strengths to make the change.
- Find examples to share of a similar change that was successful.

When people still fear the change despite your inspiring vision,

- Show the path forward will be safe by starting to remove any negative consequences for making the change.
- Show that the future benefits from this change really are going to happen by starting to make any needed adjustments to systems or policies now (instead of waiting until the change is accomplished to begin the necessary updates to systems or policies).

Step 2: Promote the *how*

In the same way that your inspiring vision will help your employees develop an attitude that welcomes the change, you must provide the guidance and resources required to ensure they have the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to implement the change.

Some changes may require formal training and education to learn about a new system, process, or piece of equipment. Other changes may require less structured ways of explaining how employees are to go about making the change. It is important that everyone who is involved in or affected by the change is given the information and assistance needed to thrive in the changed environment. Your goal here is to make it as easy as possible for everyone to succeed.

SUPPORT THE CHANGE, NOT THE RESISTANCE

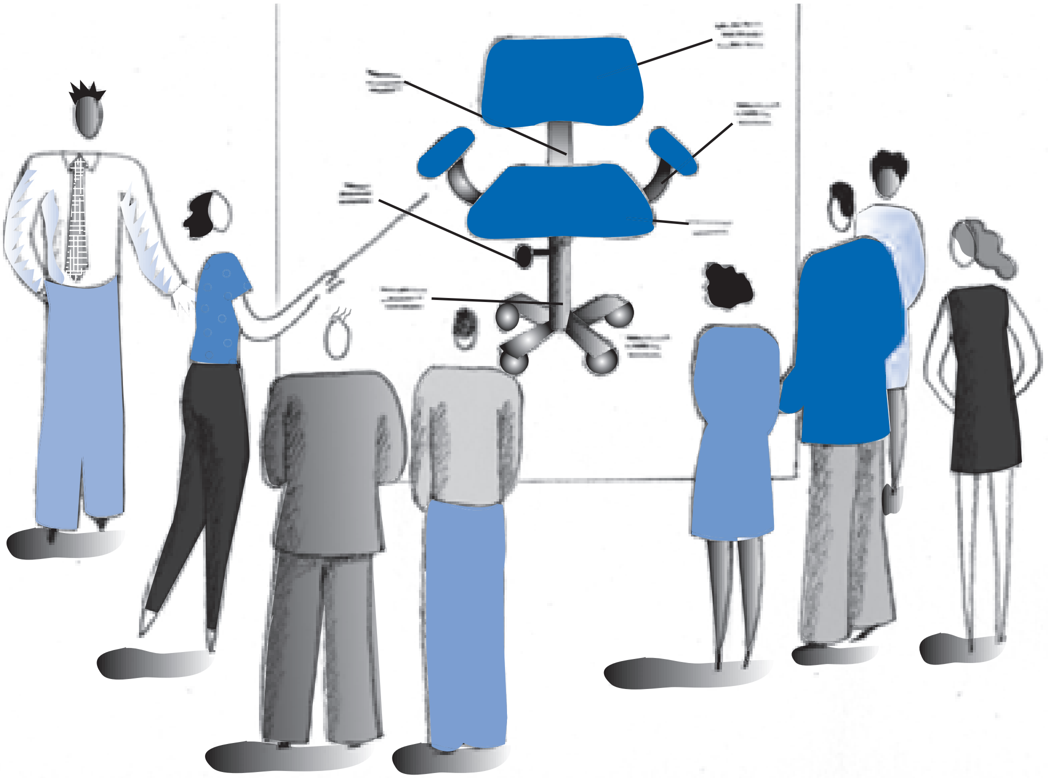
Senior leaders of one city undermined their own computer software upgrade by sending only half the workforce to computer training classes because people in the other half were "too busy" to enroll. The leaders rationalized that this approach saved money and those who didn't receive formal training would just pick up the ability to use the new software along the way. However, no support team of trained users was ever organized to coach the untrained users.

When the untrained employees had to use the new software, their work took longer to complete, leading to frustration and inefficiencies. Before long, the untrained half of the workforce was complaining about how stupid and useless the new software was and arguing that the city should go back to the old software that got the job done more effectively. These leaders not only failed to promote their own change process, they fed the resistance to their change.

Provide well-prepared instruction. If you are responsible for training or coaching your employees on how to accomplish something new, try to keep your early instructions simple. Change can be easier in bite-size pieces. Once employees get the hang of the basics, you can add more details and more complexity to the information you give them. If you provide all the instruction in one sitting, your employees may feel like they're trying to drink from a fire hose. To build confidence and minimize resistance, you should be patient and supportive, willing to repeat explanations, and available for questions.

Provide simple job aids. Job aids are excellent tools for helping people get the hang of learning something new. A job aid or "cheat sheet" might be a one-page template, card, or diagram that summarizes a more complex set of instructions that your employees have already learned in training sessions. The tool can serve as a quick reminder of the steps required to complete a task until the employee has gotten the hang of the new process. If job aids are not provided to you, you and your team can create your own and accomplish a good review of the new information at the same time. (See the section on Planning a Development Program in chapter 9 for more information.)

The New Chair



Make it fun. Remember that opposition to change is fueled more by emotions than facts; therefore, you must look for ways to continue feeding positive emotions while you promote the *how*. You tapped into positive emotions when you were promoting the *why* by describing your vision in a way that was inspiring. Now tap into positive emotions when people are struggling to learn something new by making the learning fun. Incorporate games into training and let people socialize as they learn. Make it safe for people to make mistakes while they're practicing new skills and techniques. Stay lighthearted; don't let the importance of the change turn promoting the *how* into a boring, serious production or an intimidating experience.

Provide coaching and mentoring. You can continually coach your team members in a variety of ways to reinforce new learning and new habits. Some information might be most effectively shared through group meetings, while other learning is better achieved through one-on-one coaching between you and each team member.

Ask yourself who else might be able to help you and your team. If there is someone outside your normal work group who is particularly knowledgeable about what your team is trying to master, ask that expert to provide coaching, additional instruction, or serve as a resource to answer questions as needed. Co-workers are often flattered to be asked to help, as long as the requests don't interfere with other work responsibilities and you've cleared your request with their manager. As the requesting supervisor, you should monitor the amount of support being requested to make sure your team doesn't wear out its welcome with someone who is lending a hand.

Once some of your team members become comfortable with the new approach, you can ask them to help their co-workers. Peer-to-peer mentoring can make it more fun and easier for learners to ask questions, and their co-workers are often able to give explanations and examples that are relevant to the team's work and easier to understand.

Keep repeating your message. As people become more focused on the *how*, you will need to periodically remind them of the *why*. Re-energize your team by keeping the vision alive and reminding them that all this effort at changing is for a higher worthy goal.

Celebrate small wins. Don't wait until the change is accomplished to celebrate. This is a mistake made by too many leaders. Certainly, your big celebration will mean more by waiting until the end, but that shouldn't prohibit you from offering modest celebrations along the way as members of the team make incremental progress toward the change. Celebrating small wins in small ways is a valuable leadership technique to sustain your team through trying times. Celebrate the hard work performed by those working toward the change. Celebrate smaller milestones as your team progresses toward the vision. Use these small wins to reinforce the possibility of achieving the vision and to build momentum toward the final, big celebration once the change has been implemented. Celebrating small wins will build a foundation to support your efforts in the third step of this process.

Step 3: Maintain momentum

Your work isn't over once change has taken hold. Have you or someone you know ever lost weight on a diet, only to put the pounds back on again? Old habits die hard. If a successful change isn't reinforced continuously after it has been implemented, there's a good chance it won't be sustained.

The key to sustaining a change is to motivate the people involved to want to keep at it. A review of the motivational factors described in chapter 12 may help you customize your efforts to motivate various participants and stakeholders according to what might resonate most strongly for each of them.

Celebrate the team's success. Once you've implemented the change, you should make the effort to hold a large celebration. Go the extra mile for this one; the size of your celebration should reflect the importance you placed on this change when you first shared your inspiring vision of the success that has now been achieved. Take stock of the benefits gained for your team, the organization, and the community and speak about them with pride and congratulations for all involved. Don't wait until later to hold this celebration just because everyone is busy; everyone is always busy. Hold it close in time to the achievement or you will lose the emotional connection that celebrations are intended to feed.

Once the big celebration is over, don't give up small celebrations for small wins. Look for ways to continue to recognize your team for sticking with the new change and the accomplishments associated with it.

Provide individual rewards and recognition. In addition to holding team celebrations, look for ways to offer rewards or recognition to individuals who have gone the extra mile to contribute to the attainment of the vision. Depending on the rules in your organization, rewards might include monetary compensation, extra time off, gift cards, assignments with new levels of responsibility or interesting new work, opportunities to partner with people who are otherwise difficult to access, and training or travel opportunities. Recognition might range from public acknowledgement, like presenting a framed certificate or offering congratulations at a group meeting, to private acknowledgement, like writing a thank you message in a note card, writing a letter of commendation and submitting a copy to their personnel file, or simply stopping by their work station and saying congratulations and thank you in person. When recognizing an individual for exceptional performance or contributions, it's most effective to tailor the recognition to the person's own preferences. For example, a more extraverted personality may be comfortable being recognized in front of others, whereas a more introverted personality may prefer to receive recognition in a private setting.

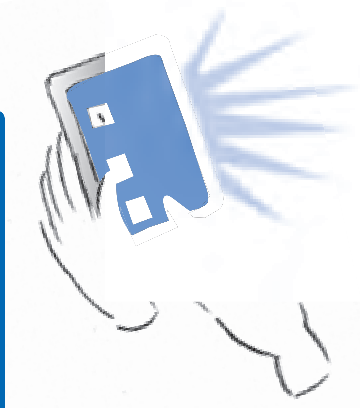
Enforce accountability. Fairness dictates that you not only celebrate the positive but also correct the negative. As a supervisor who has led this change, you should align your accountability systems to preserve the vision that has been attained. Now that everyone has learned how to operate under the new change, incorporate the new methods and procedures into the requirements of your work place, and enforce adherence to them appropriately. This might include reviewing employee performance goals to reflect the change and any new expectations and to ensure there are no conflicts. Depending on the scope of the change, you may need to coordinate with the human resources (HR) department to ensure that accountability systems support the change and that desired outcomes are reinforced. Be sure to continue providing extra coaching and support to those who are struggling with the new change. As always, communicate your standards and consequences clearly before holding people accountable to them.

Monitor progress. You will need to keep track of how successfully your team members are adapting to the change and implementing it. Monitoring the performance of the team is always your responsibility, but during a change process it is especially important. Monitoring progress can help you measure how successfully the change is taking hold and how much support your team members continue to require. It is also essential for identifying the wins you'll be celebrating, where rewards have been earned, and where accountability must be enforced.

Seek feedback. Stakeholders who are affected by a change may have feedback to offer regarding how well it is working and areas needing improvement. While it may be challenging to invite criticism on an effort you've helped to lead, seeking feedback is a key element of remaining committed to continuous improvement in any undertaking, including change management. In addition, seeking feedback from those affected by the change before they come to you with a problem or concern will help you be proactive in uncovering any issues and demonstrate your interest in good solutions. You can use the feedback you receive to correct problems and refine your implementation. This is one of the most effective, but often overlooked, keys to sustaining change.

Summary

Leading a successful change process requires a clear reason to change, a solid strategy for implementing the change, effective two-way communication to promote awareness and desire, training and coaching to ensure employees have the ability to change successfully, and reinforcement to sustain the change. This roadmap will help you lead your employees from the early stages of fear and skepticism, through the inevitable resistance that will arise, to successful change implementation characterized by confident and highly productive employees.



CHECKLIST

- Think through the pros and cons of a proposed change, and the best timing for it, before you launch it.
- Anticipate resistance to change and plan to address it with empathy and strategy rather than commands.
- First communicate why the change is necessary. Then explain how employees are being asked to change.
- Coach people through learning the new change and adapting to it.
- Listen to people's concerns about change and provide positive reinforcement to those who are making progress toward it.

Endnote

1 Ann Salerno and Lillie Brock, *The Change Cycle: How People Can Survive and Thrive in Organizational Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2008). Material adapted by permission.

Supervisory situation 13–1

The manager of Glenview County has just announced that the county will begin a countywide citizen-service campaign with the county's work teams, departmental managers, and supervisors reviewing county services from customers' perspectives. The manager has announced that she expects many changes in the way the county performs its operations and delivers its services.

George is a supervisor in the finance department. His work unit is responsible for processing tax bills. When George announced the pending campaign to his staff, a look of alarm passed across the faces of several staff members. After the meeting, Sue and Tom approached George. Both asked him whether the changes would mean layoffs. Sue was also concerned that her system for filing receipts would change. "I have a really good system that works for me, and I don't like the idea of changing it," she said. George wasn't quite sure how to respond to Sue and Tom.

1. What are some of the reasons that Sue and Tom might be resistant to possible changes in their work processes?
2. What steps might George follow to analyze his unit's work processes?
3. What suggestions would you give to George for reducing the potential negative effects of change?


HARASSMENT POLICY
NO HARASSMENT ZONE

14

ENSURING A HARASSMENT-FREE AND RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE

Stephen F. Anderson

Respect for ourselves guides our morals;
respect for others guides our manners.

Laurence Sterne, writer and Anglican clergyman

SNAPSHOT

This chapter addresses the important role supervisors play in promoting a healthy and inclusive work environment where employees value and respect each other. Chapter objectives are to

- Provide a legal foundation for the supervisor's role in ensuring a harassment-free and respectful workplace
- Broaden understanding of the importance of your organization's harassment policy as the key resource on prohibited behaviors, supervisor and employee responsibilities, and the complaint process
- Offer practical advice, action steps, and tools recognizing and responding appropriately to discrimination and harassment situations and complaints
- Increase awareness of the opportunities and challenges of increasingly diverse workplaces.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- What is the legal basis of employment law and its impact on an organization's harassment policy?
- How can you recognize subtle sexual harassment when the recipient has not said, "that's unwelcome?"
- How does your organization's harassment policy apply to today's complex workplace issues?
- What is your role in ensuring a harassment-free and respectful workplace?
- What is a complaint?
- How do you appropriately respond to a complaint and avoid interview mistakes?
- How is intervention different from receiving a complaint?
- What is an effective intervention?

Workplaces and their clients, customers, and the public are becoming increasingly diverse. This diversity creates new opportunities and challenges for supervisors. An inclusive, harassment-free, and respectful workplace is one where employees feel safe and are treated fairly. This environment enables them to focus on their work, maintain teamwork, and communicate effectively. As a supervisor, your responsibilities include monitoring the workplace and promoting a healthy and inclusive work environment where people value and respect each other.

Recognizing discrimination and harassment

One step in creating a harassment-free and respectful workplace is to understand the definitions of discrimination, harassment, and disrespectful behavior and the differences among them.

Definitions of negative behaviors

- Discrimination is making a choice such as what you eat for supper or your favorite color. *Illegal discrimination* is making biased employment decisions against a person because of their protected characteristic.
- *Harassment* is a legal term describing a form of discrimination where a person is subjected to threatening, intimidating, embarrassing, or other offensive and unwelcome behavior because of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, or some other protected characteristic.
- *Disrespectful behavior,* while not a legal term, describes actions that insult or indicate hostility or aversion toward someone. The behavior is not directed at a person because of a protected characteristic.

Federal and state employment laws prohibit illegal discrimination and harassment based on protected characteristics, but those laws do not prohibit disrespectful behavior. Whether illegal or not, these behaviors have a negative impact on employees and teamwork.

Examples of prohibited behavior in the workplace

The following list identifies types of behaviors that are always prohibited in the workplace even if they are welcomed or tolerated by the employees. The list doesn't cover all behaviors that may be prohibited in your organization.

- Pressure for sexual favors
- Derogatory ethnic or racial jokes, gifts, images, graffiti, e-mails, tweets, or comments about a person's gender, religion, age, color, race, weight, medical condition, or other protected characteristic

- Sabotaging an employee's work, or withholding information from an employee because of gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or other protected characteristic
- Sexual materials, images, videos, tweets, links, screen savers, or other content
- E-mails and tweets that ridicule, denigrate, or spread rumors about a person's sexual orientation or gender identity
- Unwelcome touching, hugging, letters, phone calls, gifts, or repeated requests for dates
- Unwelcome questions or comments about a person's religious beliefs or sexual life
- Mimicking or ridiculing an accent, cultural characteristics, clothing, or a person's weight.

Your organization's harassment policy

An organization's harassment policy identifies

- Types of prohibited behaviors
- Supervisor and employee responsibilities in preventing workplace harassment
- The process for filing a complaint.

As a supervisor it is important to be familiar with your organization's harassment policy and complaint process so that you can meet your unique responsibilities.

Building a respectful work environment

Organizations write and update their harassment policies and complaint procedures based on overlapping federal, state, and local employment laws and court decisions interpreting these laws. Many state and local harassment and discrimination laws, rules, and regulations broaden the scope of protected groups to cover, for example, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status. In addition, most states and some localities have their own compliance agencies that are responsible for enforcing state or local harassment and discrimination laws. Lastly, state and federal courts interpret and apply these laws to specific cases to clarify and sometimes expand the scope of the laws.

While federal, state, and local laws are the basis for harassment policies, employers often impose a higher standard than the law requires to ensure a respectful work environment for all employees.

FEDERAL LAWS ON DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, as amended in 1991, prohibits discrimination in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, benefits, job training, classification, and other aspects of employment on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, pregnancy, and other protected characteristics. Courts have ruled that sexual harassment is sexual discrimination and is, therefore, prohibited by Title VII.

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 protects applicants and employees forty years of age or older from discrimination in hiring, promotion, discharge, compensation terms, conditions, or privileges of employment. It does not protect workers under the age of forty, although some states do have laws that protect younger workers from age discrimination.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, protects qualified applicants and employees with disabilities from discrimination in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, job training, fringe benefits, and other aspects of employment. The law requires an employer to provide reasonable accommodation to an employee or job applicant with a disability, unless doing so would cause an undue hardship for the employer.

Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 prohibits the use of genetic information in making employment decisions, restricts employers from requesting, requiring, or purchasing genetic information, and strictly limits the disclosure of genetic information.

The Equal Pay Act of 1967, as amended, prohibits sex discrimination in payment of wages to women and men performing substantially equal work in the same organization.

Ignorance of the organization's harassment policy is no excuse

"I was just joking" or "I did not intend to discriminate" are not valid excuses for violating an organization's harassment policy. Your organization's harassment policy, *not* employees' personal comfort, determines what behaviors are prohibited in the workplace. Even if employees seem comfortable with a joke or a questionable comment, many may "go along to get along" rather than complain about unwelcome behavior. In addition, a person can feel harassed even if he or she is not the intended target of the behavior. An overheard conversation that any employee finds offensive may create a hostile work environment.

THE FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 entitles eligible employees to take up to twelve weeks of leave during any twelve-month period for one or more of the following reasons: (1) birth of and care for a child; (2) placement of and care for a child through adoption or foster care; (3) care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition; and (4) a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform one or more of the essential functions of his or her job. FMLA guarantees time off, whether paid or unpaid. Many employees use accumulated sick leave and/or vacation leave to avoid leave without pay during an FMLA absence. The type of leave taken depends on the reasons for the leave, an employee's earnings, and any relevant regulations. There are often eligibility criteria, medical certification guidelines, and other detailed rules governing employee rights to FMLA leave. As a supervisor, it is important to be familiar with FMLA provisions to support eligible employees. Check with your human resources or legal department to ensure that you administer FMLA leave correctly.

Some employees who are members of a protected group are surprised to learn that they are also prohibited from telling jokes and making derogatory or stereotypical comments about others in the same group. Members of the same protected characteristic group are, like all others in the organization, prohibited from discriminating against others in their group.

Recognizing subtle sexual harassment

Some unwelcome behavior that is not clearly illegal or prohibited by your organization's harassment policy such as hugging, asking for a date, nonsexual touching, or comments about appearance may constitute subtle sexual harassment. Unintentional sexual harassers often do not recognize when their behavior crosses the line from welcome to unwelcome. Subtle sexual harassment creates an uncomfortable workplace; if it escalates, it may create a hostile work environment.

These are two practical ways to recognize subtle sexual harassment when the recipient has not said, "that is unwelcome":

1. Focus on the *impact* of the behavior rather than on its *intention*. Even if

the employee is "just joking around," the behavior may make some people uncomfortable.

2. Try to determine if the person experiencing the behavior, such as a hug or nonsexual comments about appearance, initiates and participates in the same behavior. If he or she doesn't, then the behavior is usually unwelcome.

Sexual orientation

In today's increasingly diverse workplace, it is important to understand sexual orientation terminology and to be able to recognize types of behaviors that are prohibited by a harassment policy.

Sexual orientation describes a person's emotional, physical, and romantic attraction to members of the same or opposite gender. Based on that attraction, a person's orientation is gay, straight, bisexual, or asexual.

Gender identity refers to an internal understanding of self as a man or a woman. That understanding can be consistent with or different from how the individual was defined at birth.

Transgender refers to people whose gender identity, or how they feel about being a man or a woman, does not match their birth gender.

Transsexual refers to people who change their body from the sex they were born with to match their gender identity.

Examples of behaviors related to sexual orientation that are usually prohibited by a harassment policy include

- Publicly declaring or "outing" a person at work who does not want his or her sexual orientation known to others
- Joking about, ridiculing, or mocking a person's sexual orientation and gender identity
- Speculating about, asking co-workers, or spreading rumors about an employee's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Responding appropriately to discrimination and harassment complaints

Your role as a supervisor is to:

- Know your organization's harassment policy and complaint process

- Establish and maintain a harassment- and discrimination-free work environment
- Encourage respectful behavior
- Recognize behavior that is prohibited by your organization's harassment policy
- Respond appropriately to all discrimination and harassment complaints.

To respond appropriately to a complaint, you must understand what is considered a complaint, how to be an objective fact finder rather than an investigator, and how to respond to a complainant's questions.

What is a complaint?

Employees don't have to use specific words or legal terms such as, "I want to file a harassment complaint" or "I'm being sexually harassed" to put the employer on notice of potential harassment or discrimination.

As a supervisor, you must understand that any conversation you have with your employees—even outside the workplace—that includes a discussion about behavior that is prohibited by the harassment policy constitutes a potential complaint and creates three responsibilities:

1. You, as the supervisor, must bring the situation to the attention of your human resources (HR) department.
2. The HR department must determine if the alleged behavior occurred.
3. If the HR department finds that prohibited behavior has occurred, the employer has a legal responsibility to stop it and prevent retaliation against any of the involved employees.

Receiving a complaint

Resolving harassment situations can be fairly complex so it is important that you understand your responsibilities and have the tools to respond appropriately if you receive a complaint. You are *not* responsible for investigating harassment complaints. You *are* responsible for responding appropriately if an employee talks with you about an alleged harassment or discrimination situation. How you respond initially to a complaint can hinder or support its timely resolution and encourage or discourage an employee from talking with you and/or using your organization's complaint process.

Conducting an initial interview

When an employee brings a complaint or concern to you about possible discrimination or harassment, it is your responsibility to be an objective fact finder and to conduct an initial interview. The following steps will help you conduct the interview.

Step 1: Receive the complaint
Begin by ensuring privacy during the interview. Then explain that your role is to be a neutral fact finder. Focus on listening carefully. If the involved employees are friends of yours, it could be difficult for you to be unbiased. Asking open-ended questions will assist you in being neutral. Take careful and detailed notes because the HR department will use your notes when conducting its investigation. Your notes could also be evidence for establishing when the organization knew of the alleged discrimination or harassment.

Step 2: Obtain details
Objectively gather details of what allegedly occurred by asking the complainant *what, who, where,* and *when* open-ended questions and if there were any witnesses. Ask clarifying questions to gather more details about what has already been said. For example, "You said she touched you. Where did she touch you?" Don't put words in the employee's mouth by asking leading questions. For example, "You said she touched you. Did she touch you on your arm or hand" is a leading question.

Step 3: Respond appropriately to the complainant's concerns and questions
Be patient. The employee may be upset, uncomfortable talking with you about the allegation, and/or fear retaliation. One concern shared by many employees is that they want to talk to their supervisor, but don't want the supervisor to tell anyone else. Possible responses to that concern include

- "I understand that you don't want me to tell anyone else. I may or may not be able to make that promise until I know what you want to talk about."
- "If you don't talk with me, I'm concerned that the situation could continue and or escalate."
- "Please give me an opportunity to assist you."

One question asked by some employees after they describe what allegedly occurred is, "That's sexual harassment or discrimination, isn't it?" One effective response is, "I don't know exactly what occurred so I can't say what did or did not happen. I need to gather additional details from you to determine my next steps. And, I do want to emphasize that I take this situation seriously."

Step 4: Close the interview

Review the details with the employee to ensure that you have a clear understanding of what was said. Then ask, "Is there anything else?" to provide an opportunity for additional details. It is also important to ask how the employee feels about returning to work to determine if there are any other issues that need to be addressed. You should emphasize that the organization does not tolerate retaliation and encourage the employee to contact you, another person in management, or the HR department immediately if it occurs.

Immediately after the interview contact the HR department.

Effective intervention

Intervention means

- Drawing a clear line between acceptable behavior and behavior that is prohibited by the organization's harassment policy so that your employees know what's expected of them
- Applying effective communication techniques to stop harassment and disrespectful behavior that you see, hear, or read

- Clarifying the harassment policy to your employees when needed.

The goal of an effective intervention is to clarify the organization's harassment policy, encourage open communication, and stop prohibited behavior. If you don't intervene to stop prohibited behavior that you see, hear, or read, you risk being disciplined for allowing a hostile work environment to exist. In addition, you give the impression to others that you approve of the harasser's behavior, and you may lose the confidence of your employees and others in management in your supervisory capabilities.

Carrying out an effective intervention

The following steps provide a guide for talking with employees about unacceptable or prohibited behavior.

Step 1: Document your conversation
Take thorough notes, including the date the conversation occurred.

Step 2: Objectively identify the specific behavior that is prohibited
For example, *"Your screen saver is a picture of a naked person."*

Step 3: Identify the policy that prohibits that behavior
For example, *"Our sexual harassment policy prohibits that type of behavior."*

Step 4: Respond to questions and concerns from the employee
Employee says, *"No one is ever around or visits me, so why is the picture on my screen saver an issue?"*

You respond, *"I understand that no one visits your cubicle, but that type of visual is always prohibited in our work environment."*

Step 5: Ask the employee to stop the prohibited behavior
For example, *"I want you to remove the screen saver of the naked person right now."*

Step 6: Ask for and receive the employee's commitment to stop the specific behavior now and any similar behavior in the future
For example, *"Will you remove it and agree not to do anything similar again?"*
Employee responds, *"Yes, I will remove it and not use it again."*

Step 7: Contact the HR department to report your conversation and the outcome
Give documentation of your conversation with that employee to HR.

Step 8: Monitor your workplace to ensure that the behavior has stopped
Review the harassment policy and ensure that other types of probated behavior are not occurring.

Preventing retaliation

Retaliation is prohibited by federal employment law and your organization's harassment policy. It includes any adverse action taken against an employee for filing a complaint or supporting another employee's complaint.

Supervisors play an important role in protecting employees from retaliation and assisting their organization in avoiding retaliation claims. Examples of retaliation include, but are not limited to

- Avoiding the complainant in the workplace
- Drawing unnecessary attention to the complainant or the situation involving the complaint
- Spreading rumors about the complainant
- Trying to find out who made the complaint in the first place.

An employee does not need a strong discrimination or harassment case to have a strong retaliation case. In fact, retaliation can convert an easily defensible harassment claim into an expensive legal liability.

One method for avoiding retaliation, or its appearance, against an employee you supervise who has filed a discrimination or harassment complaint is to seek guidance from your HR department any time you make an employment decision that affects that employee's job status.

CHECKLIST

- Become familiar with your responsibilities and your organization's harassment policy and complaint process.
- Learn to recognize prohibited behavior in the workplace.
- Treat your employees respectfully.
- Take every complaint seriously.
- Use the four-step process for receiving a complaint.
- Intervene when you witness behavior prohibited by the organization's harassment policy, even if there is no complaint.
- Use the eight-step process for carrying out an effective intervention.
- Prevent retaliation.

Supervisory situation 14-1

Joan is part way through her interview with Deborah. Deborah just said that "Bob took my face in his hands and tried to kiss me. " Joan asked, "When he did that, what did you do?" Deborah replied, "I left." Then Deborah asked, "That's sexual harassment, isn't it?"

Which of these responses would be the most appropriate?

1. You're right. Bob does not have the right to treat you this way.
2. Let me explain the factors that would make this a case of sexual harassment, and see if they apply.
3. I know you don't like being treated this way, but until I have more information, I can't decide what this is or how to resolve it.

Supervisory situation guidance The third response is most effective because it acknowledges how Deborah feels while making it clear that Joan needs more details before she can determine what her next steps will be.

Supervisory situation 14-2

Joan's employee, Deborah, has just told her that her co-worker, Bob, has been repeatedly asking her out. During their meeting Joan asked Deborah for more detail and documented their conversation. Joan is now explaining that she is going to contact the HR department about this situation.

Deborah asks Joan not to do anything because she does not want to get Bob in trouble and she is afraid of getting a reputation as a troublemaker. Based on your employer's complaint process, what should Joan do?

1. Tell Deborah "I understand, but I must notify HR."
2. Tell Deborah "I won't do anything now, but if it happens again, I'll have to talk with HR."
3. Tell Deborah that you'll "respect her request but that you must document their conversation."

Supervisory situation guidance The most appropriate response is number one because the supervisor has knowledge of alleged behavior that is prohibited by the employer's harassment policy which must be reported and investigated. The second response is less appropriate because if Bob is doing the alleged behavior, it creates a hostile work environment for Deborah or other employees which establishes a potential legal liability for Joan and the organization. Number three is not quite right. Though Joan should document their meeting she should also contact the HR department.

Supervisory situation 14-3

Pam, who is Ivan's supervisor, saw him point his cell phone at a co-worker's buttocks and take a picture. Pam immediately asked Ivan to come to her office. When she explained the purpose of her meeting and talked about his prohibited behavior, Ivan became defensive. Here is a summary of their conversation.

Pam: Ivan, the reason I asked you to join me is that I want to talk with you about what just happened.

Ivan: What do you mean?

Pam: Before I start, I want you to know that I'll be documenting our conversation.

Ivan: Why?

Pam: Because it's my responsibility to document these types of discussions, which I then submit to HR.

Ivan: Ok, but I still don't know why I'm here.

Pam: The purpose of this meeting is to discuss what I observed, to address your behavior, and to make sure it does not happen again. I'll be talking with Tom about the same issues later today. I observed you and Tom stop your conversation as Wendy walked by. I then saw you look her slowly up and down and take a picture of her buttocks with your cell phone.

Ivan: No I didn't!

How should Pam respond?

1. Ivan, I saw you, so why are you denying it?
2. Ivan, please don't get upset, that will only make this intervention meeting more difficult.
3. What do you mean, "no, I didn't"?
4. Do you believe I am making up what I just said"?

Supervisory situation guidance Pam's most effective response is "What do you mean, 'no, I didn't'?" because it is a neutral, open-ended question that asks Ivan to provide more information and clarify what he meant.

Asking, "Why are you denying it?" is less effective because it is a combative question. Pam would be making assumptions about what Ivan is thinking or feeling if she asked, "Do you believe I am making up what I just said?" or said, "Please don't get upset." Even if she is correct this time, she is guessing and could be wrong the next time. Plus, because these types of questions and assumptions are more likely to increase the harasser's defensiveness, and hinder open communications, you should not use them.

Supervisory situation 14-4

As Pam continues her intervention meeting with Ivan, he gets very upset. Here is a summary of their continuing conversation.

Pam: What do you mean, "No I didn't?"

Ivan: How could I take a picture of her when I don't even know how to work my phone yet!

Pam: OK. Then what I saw was, you looked Wendy slowly up and down and then you pointed your phone at Wendy as she passed.

Ivan: Where I come from, in my culture, that is how a man shows his appreciation for a pretty woman. If you don't notice, a woman gets offended.

Pam: This is not about where you came from or your culture, Ivan. Looking a woman up and down and pretending to take a picture of her buttocks is unacceptable. And it's prohibited by our policy against harassment. After this meeting I want you to go to our website…

Ivan: So to work here [irritated, disbelief], I have to give up my culture! Well, I'm [raises voice] not going to do that, I'm out of here! [Stands up].

What is an effective way for Pam to respond?

1. Ivan, unless you want to be disciplined, please sit down.
2. Ivan, please listen to me before you decide what to do next.
3. Ivan, please stop being defensive and listen to me.
4. Ivan, if you want to continue working here you must stop those types of behavior.

Supervisory situation guidance Pam's most effective response is to ask Ivan to "listen to me before you decide what to do next" because she is focusing on getting Ivan to listen and to think about what he is doing, and Pam is maintaining control of her own emotions by not reacting defensively.


WORK SAFE
WORK SAFE
WORK SAFE
WORK SAFE
WORK SAFE
OSHA NIOSH
Safety Program Guidelines
EXIT
WARNING! ALARM SOUNDS WHEN DOOR IS OPEN!
OYEE
$4.2 BILLION
$13.4 BILLION
$5.4 BILLION
$3.41 BILLION
$5.36 BILLION

15

WORKPLACE SAFETY, SECURITY, AND WELLNESS

Larry "Nick" Nicholson

Open the door to safety; awareness is the key!

Unknown author

SNAPSHOT

This chapter provides guidance, resources, and tools to help supervisors create a safe, secure, and healthy workplace. Chapter objectives are to

- Increase awareness of the importance of supervisory attention to workplace safety and security
- Highlight key components of both workplace safety and security programs and your role in implementing those programs
- Demonstrate the value of investing in employee health and wellness to improve productivity.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- Which federal agency is responsible for enforcing workplace safety and health regulations?
- What impact does a workplace injury or death have on the organization?
- What are the elements of a safety plan?
- What programs should be put in place to prevent injuries to employees?
- How do accidents happen?
- What security measures should be implemented when dealing with potential violence in the workplace?
- How can you promote a healthy workforce?

You are a new supervisor of a public works crew in the county. Earlier in the day, you sent the crew out to dig up and repair an old water pipe that had broken during a recent winter storm. Not long after the crew's arrival, you hear your crew chief over the county fire radio call for help to rescue a man who is trapped in a hole.

As you listen, you can only imagine the worst and begin to wonder how to handle the situation and what you might have done to prevent the incident.

Work-related injuries and illnesses are costly, starting with the direct costs of workers' compensation to pay employee salaries for lost time due to job-related

Author Nick Nicholson appreciatively recognizes the contribution of Walt McBride, who wrote the version of the chapter included in the previous edition.

injuries or illnesses. In addition, organizations incur costs for replacement workers, lost productivity, scheduling delays, damaged property or equipment, and negative community relations. And, there is the emotional toll on you and your work group when a colleague is seriously injured on the job.

Every workplace incident has multiple effects on you, your team, and the entire organization. These events include

- Injured employees may face physical pain, recovery and rehabilitation, emotional upset, and lost work time.
- A claim will be made against the organization's workers' compensation insurance, which could increase future premiums.
- Depending on the scope of the incident, local, state, or federal investigations may be conducted to find out what happened and how it could have been prevented.
- Corrective and possibly disciplinary actions may be required to deal with the findings of any investigations.
- Longer-term corrections and improvements must be explored and implemented to eliminate future risks.
- You and the work team need to recover, regain your equilibrium, and learn from the accident or incident to make sure something similar doesn't happen.

WORKPLACE STATISTICS

Approximately 820,900 injury and illness cases were reported among state and local government workers in 2011, resulting in a rate of 5.7 cases per 100 full-time workers—significantly higher than the rate among private industry workers (3.5 cases per 100 workers), and unchanged from the rate reported among these public sector workers in 2010.

Nearly 4 in 5 injuries and illnesses reported in the public sector occurred among local government workers in 2011, resulting in an injury and illness rate of 6.1 cases per 100 full-time workers—significantly higher than the 4.6 cases per 100 full-time workers in state government.

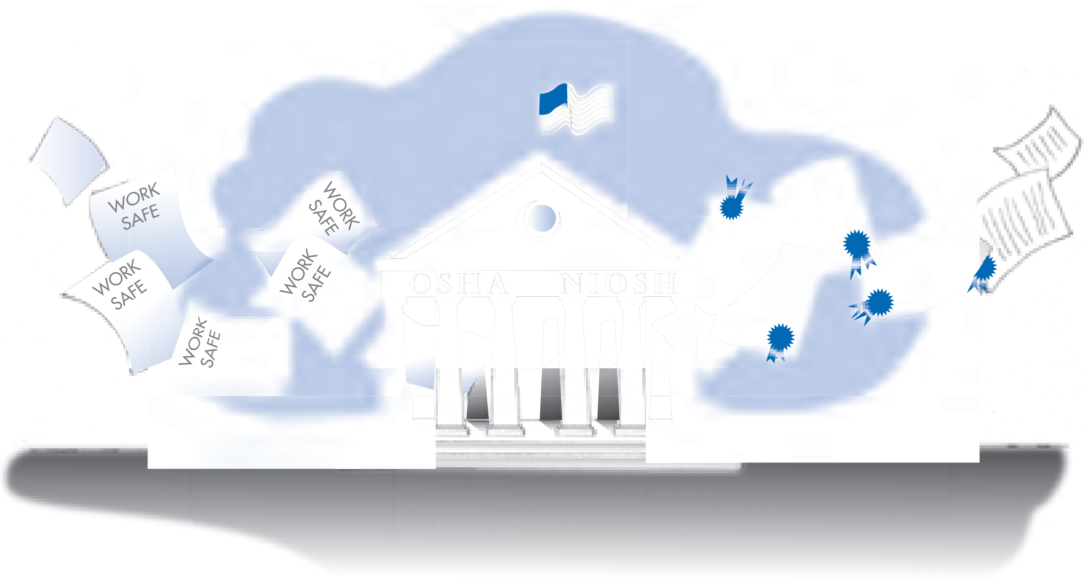
Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, "Workplace Injuries and Illnesses-2011" News Release, October 25, 2012, USDL-12-2121, http://www.bls.gov/iif/oshsum.htm.

ORGANIZATIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR WORKPLACE SAFETY

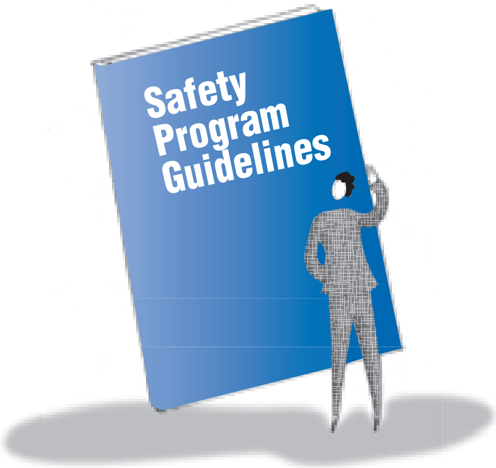
The *Occupational Safety and Health Administration* (OSHA) was created in 1970 by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. OSHA's mission is to assure safe and healthy working conditions for working men and women by enforcing standards and providing training, outreach, education, and assistance. OSHA is part of the U.S. Department of Labor. (www.osha.gov)

The *National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health* (NIOSH) conducts research and makes recommendations on how to prevent work-related injuries and illnesses. NIOSH is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIOSH is recognized as a leader in preventing work-related illness, injury, disability, and death. It gathers information, conducts in-depth research, and disseminates that knowledge through its products and services. (www.cdc.gov/niosh)

The *National Safety Council* (NSC) was created in 1913 to promote safety in U.S. industry. It is a nonprofit, member-supported organization that focuses on traffic safety issues, workplace accidents, and home and community safety. (www.nsc.org)



Keeping your workplace safe



Understanding the statistics is one thing; doing something about them is tougher. Most local governments have a safety program in place. As a supervisor, you are responsible for knowing the details of the plan, applying it to your work unit, ensuring that your employees know what's expected from a safety perspective when they're on the work site. You must also monitor compliance on a regular basis to ensure continuous adherence to safety rules and policies.

Good safety habits begin with a leadership commitment to safety. If you expect your employees to comply with established safety guidelines, you must constantly demonstrate not only that you believe in workplace safety but also that you live it. Your commitment to workplace safety will motivate your employees to develop a similar attitude and commitment.

Elements of an effective workplace safety program include

- Clear and easy-to-reference safety guidelines and policies
- Joint management and employee involvement in developing the plan, refining it to meet new challenges, and implementing it consistently
- Clear and well-understood duties for all areas of the safety program
- Consistent accountability among all employees for achieving workplace safety goals
- A review of operations at least annually to evaluate the plan's effectiveness, identify any deficiencies, and revise the plan or related policies to ensure future success.

Even with management commitment to and employee involvement in making the workplace safe, you are responsible for day-to-day safety within your work area. You can start with these two actions:

1. ***Conduct a workplace safety analysis.*** A workplace analysis will help you identify the types of hazards that exist and the conditions in which employees work. For a more thorough analysis, bring a supervisor in from another work area to provide a fresh set of eyes on potential hazards.

2. ***Develop a corrective action plan.*** Once you complete the baseline analysis, develop a corrective action plan to address the specific areas requiring attention. Common safety risks likely to need attention include:
   - Failure to wear safety equipment properly
   - Improperly marked hazardous work areas
   - Improperly marked and stored hazardous substances
   - Improperly marked trip hazards
   - Inadequate training on how to perform job tasks safely or how to handle hazardous equipment and substances.

You should encourage your employees to contribute to the safety analysis; they should not have to fear reprisal. Reporting potentially hazardous situations is everyone's responsibility. A well-publicized and easily accessed reporting system should be in place to facilitate employee feedback on safety risks.

When you receive a report about a potential safety risk, you should investigate the problem immediately and determine what corrective actions are required. Failure to address reported safety risks can lead to accidents and leave you open to civil litigation in the event of employee injuries.

Preventing accidents

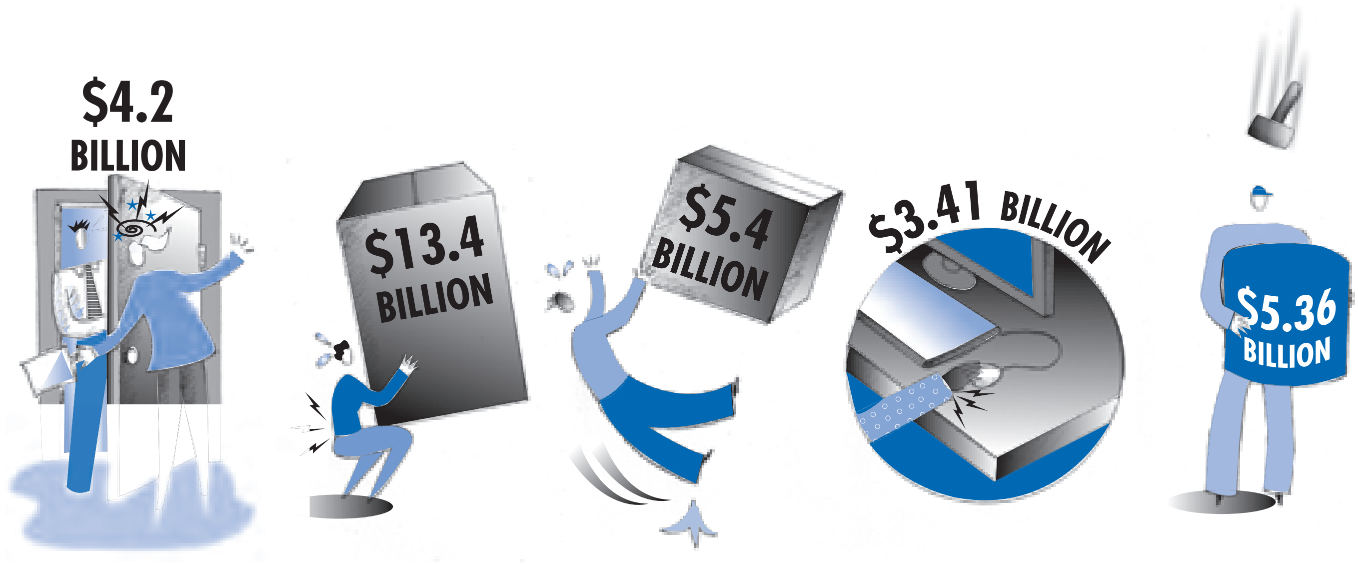
Accidents don't just happen: they have causes. Understanding the causes can help prevent many accidents. Four major causes of workplace accidents are

TOP FIVE WORKER INJURIES AND ASSOCIATED ANNUAL COSTS

- Injuries related to lifting, pushing, pulling, holding, carrying, or throwing: $13.4 billion
- Injuries from slipping or tripping without falling: $5.4 billion
- Injuries when struck by an object such as a tool falling on a worker: $5.36 billion
- Injuries when struck against an object, such as a worker walking into a door: $4.2 billion
- Injuries related to repetitive motion: $3.4 billion

2010 Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index, Liberty Mutual Institute for Safety, www.libertymutual.com/researchinstitute

- ***People*** When people are properly trained and motivated, accidents are less likely to occur. Your employees must have the know-how, commitment, and willingness to work safely.
- ***Equipment*** Everything from a hammer to a truck is a potential accident cause. When employees use faulty equipment or adapt equipment to tasks for which it is not designed, accidents happen.
- ***Materials*** Items that are sharp, heavy, or toxic, for example, all require special handling to minimize accidents.
- ***Work environment*** Buildings that employees work in, the air they breathe, and the arrangement of work spaces all may contribute to accidents. The design of the work environment, known as ergonomics, has an important impact on employee safety and productivity. Improperly designed workstations can cause back injuries and repetitive motion strain. With so many employees spending significant time working at their computers, you need to pay particular attention to techniques for helping workers avoid office-related injuries.



Regular training and coaching on workplace safety will help ensure that accidents don't happen in your work unit. Your human resources (HR) department most likely will provide organization-wide training on workplace safety. You should regularly supplement formal training with coaching on safe ways to get the job done. OSHA provides a range of resources on workplace safety including training guides that will broaden your knowledge (e.g., Training Requirements in OSHA Standards and Training [OSHA Publication 2254], www.osha,gov/pls/publications/publication.html).

Keeping your workplace secure

Workplace security today means more that locking doors, securing fences, and protecting government property. It requires attention to and preparation for potential terrorist attacks and other violent acts.

In general, workplaces can be at risk for theft, unlawful entry, disputes between co-workers and outside acquaintances or even family, and forcible occupation. As the supervisor, you are responsible for ensuring that your team is alert, aware, and prepared. Security, like safety, is everyone's responsibility. Locking doors and windows is a simple but essential daily responsibility to eliminate targets of opportunity.

The following questions provide a framework for security planning in your workplace.

Does your local government have a security plan with assigned responsibilities?

You should be familiar with any organization-wide plans and policies and then translate those plans to your work unit. That might include designating someone on your team as a security coordinator to work with you to monitor security issues and keep you informed about any concerns. Individual team members should be assigned specific duties and behaviors such as locking all doors and windows at the end of the day or walking in pairs in the evening after a council meeting. In addition, you should have a department or division security plan that defines what to do and who to call if a problem occurs.

Is your workplace a potential security target?

For example, a security risk could arise from an announcement of staff reductions and planned demonstrations by city employees in protest. Pay attention to actions or changes within your unit that might make it a target.

What is the prevailing attitude toward security?

Your team should take workplace security seriously and be aware of guidelines and responsibilities designed to protect both individuals and property. You set the tone by making security a team responsibility.

How are security policies enforced?

Any policies or security requirements—whether organization-wide or within your department and work unit—should be broadly communicated and enforced. That may include establishing consequences for those who regularly disregard security policies.

Is everyone in your department aware of the government's current emergency preparedness plan and their roles in implementing it?

While emergency response in your jurisdiction goes beyond day-to-day security in your unit, it is important that your team knows its roles in case of a natural disaster both outside and within the work unit. Your emergency preparedness plan will also be the guiding document in the event of a major security breach requiring broad response.

The General Services Administration (GSA) has developed security guidelines for the 9,000 buildings it oversees.[1] The guidelines offer good advice for protecting other government workplaces:

- Install key-card access systems at main entrances and on other appropriate doors.
- Issue access-control badges with recent photographs to all employees and authorized contractors.
- Keep master and extra keys locked in a security office.
- Create a back-up communication system, like two-way radios, in case of phone failure.

- Arrange office space so unescorted visitors can be noticed easily.
- Establish and enforce strict access-control procedures without exceptions.
- Keep offices neat and orderly to identify strange objects or unauthorized people more easily.
- Keep closets, service openings, and telephone and electrical closets locked at all times.
- Protect crucial communications equipment and utility areas with an alarm system.
- Advise employees to pay attention to personal security such as avoiding being alone in stairwells and other isolated areas and not working late alone or on a routine basis.
- Keep publicly accessible restroom doors locked, and set up a key-control system.

Create your own quick access to contact information for your team rather than rely on the HR department in an emergency. This confidential employee information file should contain

- Home address and telephone number
- Family members; names, ages, and descriptions
- School schedules, addresses, and phone numbers
- Close relatives in the area with names, addresses, and phone numbers
- Local emergency phone services and hospital phone numbers
- Any code words or passwords agreed upon.

Preventing workplace violence

Although the incidence of workplace violence is small, the consequences of even one violent action can be significant. While it is virtually impossible to predict the potential for violence, experts have identified warning signs based on previous incidents. As a supervisor, you should be alert to changes in employee behavior that could be a warning sign of personal stress or disruption.

Examples of behavioral changes include

- A perception of being picked on

- Significant change in hygiene or appearance
- Belligerence or insubordination from a previously cooperative employee
- Inappropriate communications to co-workers, managers, or customers
- Conflicts with leaders, supervisors, and colleagues
- Social withdrawal and isolation from colleagues
- Low interest in work and poor job performance.

These warning signs are only examples and not indicators of a dangerous employee. When changes in behavior affect employee performance, you should intervene quickly to deal with the performance problem. If the performance discussion points to personal issues, you can refer the employee to your organization's employee assistance program (EAP). Your responsibility is to seek assistance for employees in need and protect others in the workplace.

An effective violence prevention program consists of, at a minimum, written policies and procedures and ongoing training for supervisors and employees.

Workplace health and wellness

Investing in employee health and wellness can pay significant dividends for the organization and individuals. A workplace wellness program can

- Reduce absenteeism and improve productivity, saving the organization both money and downtime
- Help control health premiums by creating a healthier employee profile
- Reduce on-the-job injuries because healthy employers are generally lower accident risks
- Improve morale and retention by communicating how valuable employees are to the organization
- Eliminate "presenteeism" in which employees are at work but not productive due to stress, depression, injury, or illness.

Your organization's health insurance provider may offer employee wellness programs. When an organization sponsors wellness programs, it sends a clear message to employees that management cares about their well-being. Typical wellness activities include

- Classes on health-related topics such as smoking cessation, weight control, back care, nutrition, and stress management
- Subsidized memberships at health clubs
- Policies that promote healthy behavior
- Environmental improvements to deal with potential health risks.

In addition to organizational programs, you can influence how your team approaches wellness by

- Serving as a role model for a healthy lifestyle
- Supporting employee participation in wellness programs even when those activities may require some adjustments in work schedules
- Creating a healthy environment in your work group, including congratulating employees on their wellness efforts, Identifying programs for your team that promote healthy living, and being a champion for a healthy workforce.

An effective health and wellness program can improve you and your employees' quality of life, and can also enhance workplace success because employees are motivated and able to accomplish their daily tasks.

Summary

Workplace safety, security, and wellness will help you excel as a supervisor and ensure your employees achieve agreed-upon goals. Employees are less likely to worry about safety and security if they know and understand their responsibilities and are confident that the organization cares about achieving a safer environment in which to work. Your employees will look to you for guidance in matters of health and safety and expect you to protect them from potentially hazardous situations. Being aware of this important role and being prepared to support your work team will contribute to a positive and productive work environment.

CHECKLIST

- Remember that safety is everyone's responsibility and your attitude toward safety sets an example for your team.
- Take advantage of resources provided by expert organizations to increase your knowledge and skill as a safety, security, and wellness leader.
- Be familiar with all organizational policies, procedures, and resources related to safety, security, and wellness.
- Involve your employees in ensuring sustained attention to safety and security in the work unit.
- Support employee participation in wellness programs and recognize accomplishments.
- Be a model for safe work performance and healthy living.

Endnote

1 Public Buildings Security, U.S. Government Services Administration, www.gsa.gov.

Supervisory situation 15-1

A major renovation is planned for the second floor of the municipal building. Before the renovation can begin, the interior must be demolished, including removing old furniture, carpet, and walls. The chief administrative officer (CAO) wants to save money by having city workers do the initial removal work. He knows that the crew hasn't performed this kind of work in the past and has asked you to prepare a safety plan to include training on areas not previously addressed.

1. What resources would you use to find out what training would be required for this assignment?
2. What information do you think should be included in a safety plan?
3. What safety concerns about this project, if any, would you bring to the CAO's attention?

Supervisory situation 15-2

You've been Jack's supervisor for three years and, until recently, have found him to be a hard worker who is dedicated to the organization and the community. Previously prompt and reliable, he has recently been arriving late almost daily. When you asked him about his tardiness, he told you to mind your own business. At the time you thought it best not to confront him about his statement. Instead you decided to gather more information about what might being going on before intervening further.

1. How would you go about gathering more information about Jack's change in attitude without violating his privacy?
2. What might be some of the likely causes for Jack's change in behavior?
3. What resources do you have to seek help for Jack if his behavior continues?
4. What is your likely next step?

Supervisory situation 15-3

You recently went to your health care provider for a checkup. While you are generally in good shape, your provider urged you to focus on developing a healthier lifestyle. You return to work the next day and realize that many of the managers, supervisors, and employees you work with may be in the same situation as you. You decide to focus more on wellness in your unit as a goal during the next year to improve your lifestyle and help others in the process.

1. What steps will you take to begin to achieve your goal?
2. How will you go about engaging your employees in this goal?
3. What resources might you look to both inside and outside the organization to help you achieve your goal of a healthier lifestyle for you and your employees?


RESIDENTS BUSINESS GOVERNMENT ONLINE SERVICES DEPARTMENTS
yourcountygov.gov
NEWS
COUNTY EXEC
COUNCIL
SENIORS
JUDICIARY
I WANT TO...
WELCOME TO YOUR COUNTY'S WEBSITE
CAN-DO CUSTOMER SERVICE
GOVERNMENT OFFICES
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
FIRE PREVENTION SEMINAR TONIGHT 7-8PM
ENGINE CO. 9
ROADWORK
9-2 TO 9-8
EXPECT DELAYS
STOP

16

QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

James R. Lewis

A customer is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not an interruption in our work. He is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider in our business. He is part of it. We are not doing him a favor by serving him. He is doing us a favor by giving us an opportunity to do so.

Mohandas Gandhi, political and ideological leader of the Indian Independence Movement

SNAPSHOT

This chapter focuses on a supervisor's role in making sure all customers get the best possible service from their local government, and the chapter defines the various types of local government customers. Chapter objectives are to

- Establish the connection between exceptional customer service and positive perceptions of local government
- Provide guidance on what customers expect from their local government
- Identify factors that are essential to providing exceptional customer service
- Offer approaches to establishing service standards and measuring customer satisfaction.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- Who are your primary customers?
- What do citizens really want from their local government?
- How can you ensure that your employees provide professional, courteous, and responsive service to every customer?
- How does the workplace environment affect customer service?
- What is continuous improvement, and how does it relate to customer service?
- How do you deal with tough service situations and difficult customers?

Citizens have higher expectations for their public agencies today than in the past. The media routinely publish reports on government shortcomings and on increased demands from the public despite shrinking resources. Citizens have easy access to information on the Internet and the ability to provide instant feedback. Competition for goods and services has made branding, product quality, and customer service essential.

In today's highly connected world, people can easily research and choose where they want to live, shop, dine, or do business. As a result, local governments must

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Author Jim Lewis appreciatively recognizes the contributions of Sherri K. Lawless, who wrote the version of the chapter included in the previous edition.

work to make sure the community is attractive and that there is a sense of community pride and identity. Most importantly, a local government must commit to providing the best possible customer service.

Quality customer service is often defined as meeting or exceeding customer expectations. In other words, when you are providing quality customer service, there is a noticeable difference between what customers expect to receive and what they actually receive. This view of quality customer service leads to three important questions:

- Who are your customers?
- What are their expectations?
- How can your work unit meet or exceed those expectations?

Good service isn't good enough. People expect a level of service that is so good it is worth telling others about—service that is *exceptional*. This should be your goal.

Internal and external customers

Customers are people who pay to receive goods or services. Refuse collection, clean water, functional streets and traffic controls, maintained parks, and emergency response are all goods and services. Taxes, fees, and assessments are forms of payment. Citizens are considered local government customers because they pay for the services that their government delivers.

However, citizens are not your only customers. Visitors and business owners are customers, too. So are other government employees who depend on you for information or work products. In fact, almost everyone you come into contact with is a customer.

Your customers are either external or internal. External customers include citizens, visitors, business owners, developers, and civic leaders. Internal customers include co-workers, your supervisor, executives, and elected officials. Your employees are also your customers. They are particularly important customers because your work, and ultimately your success, is accomplished with and through them. For some departments, such as finance, human resources, information technology, and building maintenance, all of the local government's employees are internal customers.

At times it may seem more important to provide quality customer service to external customers, even at the expense of an internal customer. But internal and external customers are often connected. For example, a co-worker's request may be associated with a citizen or citizen's group that he or she is attempting to assist. When you don't respond to a co-worker promptly, you may be providing poor service to an external customer.

Everyone you come into contact with, inside or outside your organization, is your customer and deserves prompt attention, courtesy, and professionalism.

Citizen expectations

Citizens who live in the community and pay taxes usually have strong opinions about government services and high expectations for services. They may frequently be your most outspoken and demanding customers. At a minimum, citizens expect

- Good value for the taxes and fees they pay
- Prompt, efficient, effective, and courteous service from government employees
- Easy access to services and information about government operations through a variety of resources including the Internet and social media.

It might seem that local government is a monopoly, and that citizens have no choice but to use its services. But citizens and other customers do have choices. If citizens think that their tax dollars are not being well spent, they can move to another town, city, or county. Business owners can choose to move to another community if they don't feel government services are up to par. Citizens may also turn to private sector alternatives for some fee-based services, which can impact agency revenues. And with each election, citizens vote to retain or replace elected officials, which could result in new leadership. A new administration may have different ideas about how a well-run local government should do business or be organized.

Directly or through their elected representatives, citizens and other stakeholders make choices

SUPERVISORY TIP: PAY ATTENTION TO DETAILS

Focusing on the details of quality service every day can have a significant impact on citizens' attitudes toward their local government. For example, your customers expect their refuse to be picked up regularly on the scheduled day. They may also expect that their containers will be returned to the curb in front of their residence with the lids on or closed. If the refuse is not picked up according to schedule, if containers are not returned to the expected location, or if the lids are not put back on, your customers will not be happy. If they call your office and don't receive prompt and courteous responses, they'll be even more disappointed. They may even complain at a public meeting or post comments online which can erode confidence in the agency. Ensuring that your employees focus on the details of their service commitments *every day and for every customer* will have positive results for individual employees, your unit, the government, and the entire community.

at many levels. By providing quality customer service, you help to ensure that your local government and your work unit will be the citizens' choice and that the citizens will be proud of and committed to their community.

Customer service starts with you

All local government employees are ambassadors who represent their government to its citizens. Every day, you and your employees take actions—both on the job and off—that affect the way people feel about your government. Many people in your community may never meet the mayor or the chief administrative officer, but they will form an impression of local government through their contact with you and other frontline employees. To citizens and visitors alike, the traffic officer who responds to an accident, the clerk who collects tax payments, the inspector who enforces fire safety regulations, the supervisor who approves a business license, and the receptionist who provides directions to the right office are the local government.

Your job is to ensure that the impressions you and your employees make are positive—which leads to public support for what you and your government are trying to accomplish. Public support may lead to political support and adequate resources to get the job done.

Providing exceptional customer service

Exceptional customer service revolves around the golden rule: treat others the way you want to be treated yourself. As a supervisor, it is critical that you set the example by treating all internal and external customers with courtesy, respect, and professionalism. There are also a number of factors that are essential to providing high-quality customer service.

Accessibility Providing exceptional customer service means that you are accessible and responsive. That means being available for customers to make appointments

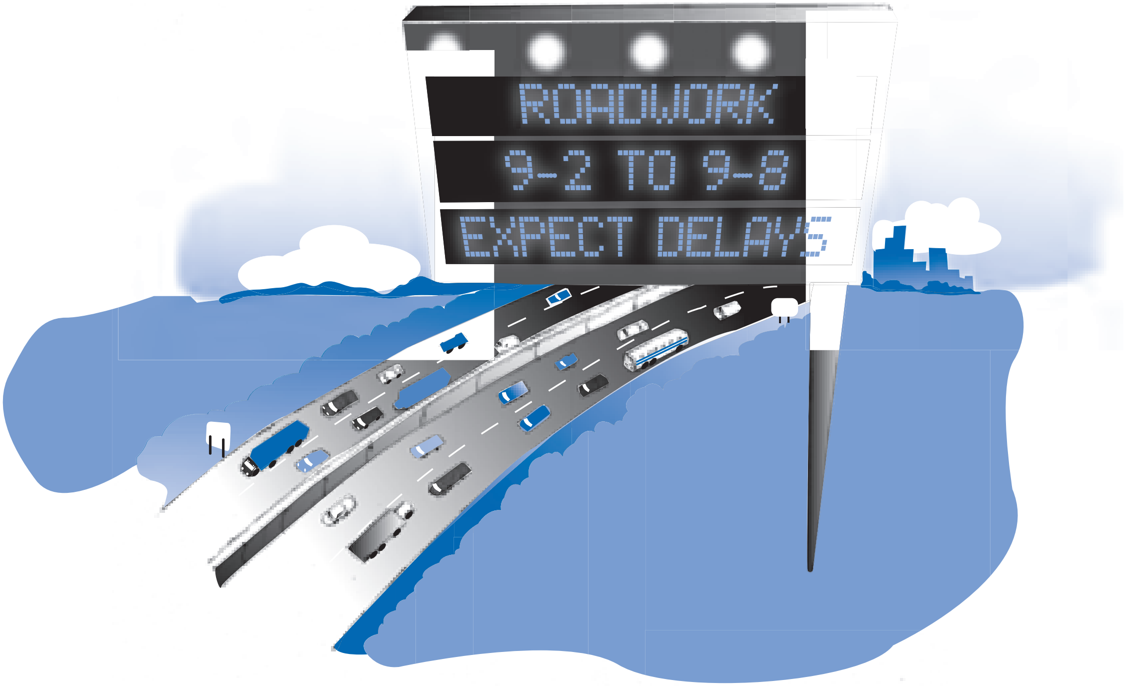
with you, share ideas, and ask questions. It also means being visible in the community at events and meetings. You can also take advantage of e-mail, blogs, interactive websites, and social media to respond quickly to citizen inquiries and to stay connected to their concerns. Your local government may provide portable computers, tablets, or smart phones to facilitate prompt and efficient customer connections. If these resources are available, be sure that you are familiar with their use and keep them with you at all times to respond to customer needs.

Professional work environment As a supervisor, you should make sure your immediate workplace is professional, clean, and welcoming to customers. Desks and workspaces should be organized, and trash, papers, or boxes should not litter common areas. Neatness is also important in a service vehicle. Other tools for creating a welcoming work environment include clear signage that makes it easy for customers to find their way to appropriate service areas, a directory or map at the street level of your building, and names or numbers on your office doors.

Make sure that equipment is functional, up-to-date, and easily accessible for use when needed. If employees are taking breaks, make sure they don't take those breaks in public spaces. Emphasizing the importance of a professional work environment at all times helps keep staff focused on providing exceptional customer service.

Courtesy Common courtesy is a measure of professionalism and good service. When customers visit your workplace, greet them as soon they arrive. If you or your staff cannot assist them immediately, let customers know how long it will be before someone will be available to assist them—and be truthful; a fifteen-minute wait time should not be described as five minutes. Most people don't mind waiting as long as they are greeted promptly and are given an honest estimate of the wait time. If your team fails to greet customers warmly, treats them as if they are interruptions, or keeps them waiting far beyond what they were told, you have the recipe for customer dissatisfaction.

When you talk with a customer you have not met before, identify yourself and your department. You may want to prepare a simple script, if you don't already have one, for employees to use when they greet a customer. In addition, you should establish a policy about how quickly phones will be answered or when answers can be expected by e-mail or online posting.



Courtesy also involves being considerate by keeping customers informed about government actions that will affect them. That includes scheduling, notifications, and announcements about work actions. For example, building inspectors are unlikely to receive a friendly welcome if they knock on a door unannounced. When a water line must be repaired or extended or when streets must be closed for repairs, announcements in newspapers, on the radio, or on your government's website or social media pages should inform residents in advance. In addition, large easy-to-read signs should be posted on and near any streets that will be closed.

Organizational culture The culture you create and promote in your work unit can have a positive impact on customer service. Happy employees smile, and smiles promote good service. Celebrate accomplishments and recognize your staff frequently.

Promote an open and safe atmosphere for entrepreneurialism and sharing of ideas. Embrace training and personal and professional development. Constructively learn from your mistakes. As the positive culture builds, you may decide to share your unit's values with your customers. Posting a mission and value statement in a public place can strengthen pride among employees and let your customers know what is important to your team.

Team appearance You and your team represent the local government. Appearance is an important part of first impressions. Citizens and visitors will judge the attitude and abilities of local government employees by the way they dress and how well they are groomed. This doesn't mean that designer clothes and an expensive haircut are required; it does mean that being neat and clean are essential. When employees appear to lack pride in their personal appearance, they may be viewed as lacking pride in their work. For example, dirty or torn uniforms on a work crew may say that these employees do not care about themselves or others. First impressions feed expectations. You and your team should always dress appropriately. Make sure your clothes, uniform, and body language convey that you are committed to your agency's mission and that you are qualified and committed to providing exceptional customer service.

Interpersonal communications and engagement An essential part of providing customer service is being able to communicate clearly, correctly, and politely. Communication involves not only how you speak but also your expressions and body language. In today's connected environment where information moves rapidly, it is critical to engage citizens in meaningful conversation and collaboration through meetings, events, workshops, and online discussions. Your customers want to tell you what is on their minds. If you don't listen, they will find someone who will. Engagement results in new ideas, feedback, and builds relationships.

Listening skills Taking the time to understand customer needs, expectations, problems, or complaints is essential to exceptional customer service. That requires taking as much care when listening as you do when speaking. When someone is talking, do not interrupt. Let the person finish what he or she is saying. Give the speaker your full attention. If you don't pay attention, you will not completely understand the message coming to you. Ask questions and if you're not sure that you are following what is being said, repeat the information and ask the speaker if you've understood correctly.

Empathy Sometimes you may deal with customers who are angry or frustrated. Worse, they may have expectations that are unreasonable or wrong. Nevertheless, demonstrating that you hear their concerns, care about their issues, and are sorry they are frustrated can go a long way, even if you won't be able to deliver the answer they want.

Credibility and competence Your customers will often have lots of questions. What's being built over there? When will you repair my street? Why does my water bill seem so high? To ensure high-quality service, you and your staff need to be aware of what is going on throughout the organization and know where to find answers. Take the time to follow what other departments are doing and to understand the agency's priorities and operations. In your own field, make sure you are up-to-date on best practices and your department's finances, operations, and challenges. Being able to answer a customer's questions confidently is good service and builds credibility for the organization. If you don't know the answer, don't guess. It is best to say "I don't know, but I will find out" and get back to the customer promptly.

Use of technology Technology makes it easy to interact with your customers and provide service to them. Make sure your agency website is up-to-date and easy to navigate. In most local governments today, customers can conduct business through the website and share feedback and ideas. In addition to a website, social media provides a resource for sharing information and soliciting comments and feedback. For example, you can use Twitter, Facebook, or blast e-mail to send out notices about upcoming community meetings, remind people about a street closure, or alert drivers to a traffic emergency. Of course, you should follow established policies and use caution when interacting with customers using social media, but it can be a valuable resource to find out what customers are thinking.

Ownership Being bounced around a call center or talking to multiple people without finding anyone who can help is frustrating and is the antithesis of quality customer service. When contacted by a co-worker, citizen, or other customer with an issue, owning that issue, even if it may not be one that is under your scope of service, leads to exceptional customer service. For example, if you are a public works superintendent and a citizen asks you a question about a police matter, don't simply tell him or her to call the police department. Listen to the person's question, get the contact information, call the police department, and ask the appropriate employee there to follow up. Let your co-worker know you'll call back at the end of the day to confirm that the information was provided or the problem solved. By touching base at the end of the day, you are modeling a shared commitment to customer service rather than checking up on your colleague. Not only are you serving as an agent of the entire agency by responding to the citizen, but you may learn something that will help you serve your customers more effectively in the future.

PROFESSIONALISM AND SERVICE: QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

As a check on your professionalism and service ethic and that of your work unit, periodically ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I dressed appropriately for the tasks I am expected to perform today?
- Does my work unit have a dress code? If not, should it?
- Do I communicate pride in my work and in my government?
- Do I understand my agency's mission and priorities, and can I articulate them to others?
- Do I have the expertise and resources to perform my work to the level expected of me? If not, where can I get what is needed?
- Does my team share a commitment to customer service?
- Are we following through on the commitments we have made to others?
- Is our work area clean and well organized? Is my desk or individual work area neat?
- When someone approaches me, do I always acknowledge that person's presence, either by speaking or nodding? Do I do this even when I am involved in some other important task and cannot talk to the person immediately?
- Is the culture in our workplace fun, challenging, and service-oriented? Are team members engaged and happy to be at work? If not, what can I do to change the culture?

Dealing with tough situations

Despite all of your efforts to deliver exceptional customer service, you undoubtedly will experience situations in which a customer will create a challenge. For example, if a customer calls to ask if he or she can pay a parking fine after your office closes, offer alternatives instead of simply saying no. For instance, give the hours that the office is open and explain that the customer can also pay online, by mail, or by using the after-hours drop box. You are more likely to get a positive response by saying what you *can* do or what the policy allows rather than focusing on what you *can't* do. Make each encounter positive.

If you must refuse a request outright, it's important to say no in a way that the customer understands and accepts and to explain *why* the request can't be accommodated. Be clear and direct while remaining positive and courteous. Suppose, for example, a resident wants permission to build within five yards of the property line, and you know that the minimum zoning setback is ten yards. Instead of simply saying, “No, you can’t do it,” you might say, “Five yards from your property line? Let’s take a look at the code and see what it says.” At this point, you and the customer should review the regulations together to find the specific requirement for a ten-yard setback. Even more important than confirming the setback requirements, you should focus on why the code is written the way that it is, and what options the customer has for pursuing the request, such as seeking a variance. For example, you might explain that building too close to the property line could interfere with buried utility lines, future utility improvements, or your neighbor’s property use. It might also create inconveniences for the customer in the future.

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

Despite efforts to deliver the best customer service possible, sometimes there will still be a difficult customer who is unhappy with the answer or service being provided. Here are a few tips for dealing with difficult customers:

Recognize the issue Restate the concern to the customer to demonstrate that you clearly hear the problem and understand the suggested resolution.

Empathize Sometimes a frustrated customer just wants someone to listen. Communicate that you understand the problem, and you are sorry it has caused frustration.

Own the situation Clearly tell the customer that you will do all you can to resolve the issue. Assure the customer that you won’t pass the problem on to someone else.

Gather information Get the facts regarding the issue and review them carefully. Share these facts with the customer and use them as a basis for explaining why the suggested resolution may or may not work.

Achieve clarity Be clear in your explanation and make sure the customer understands the facts as you see them and what options exist for resolution.

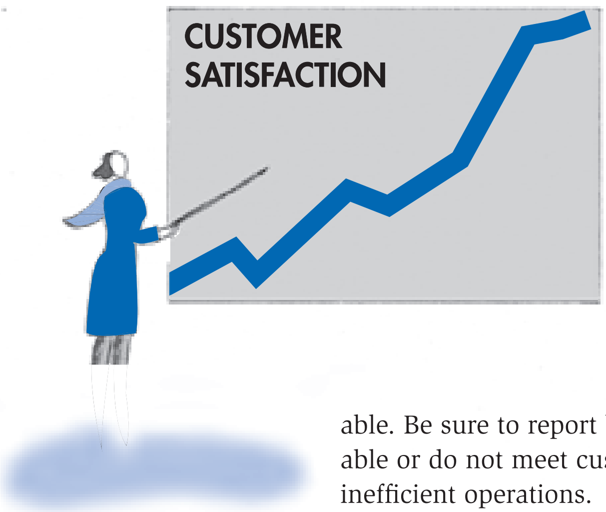
Stay calm and friendly Maintain a warm, friendly, helpful demeanor, particularly if the customer becomes angry or upset. If appropriate, sometimes a little humor can disarm or reduce pressure in tense situations. Just make sure the humor is appropriate, and that the customer is in a place to appreciate it.

Close the loop Once you have arrived at a resolution, share it with the customer and explain how action will proceed. If the solution involves staff from other departments, alert the customer to that possibility as well.

Going through this process helps the customer understand why the request cannot be granted and demonstrates that you have done all you can to provide information and alternatives. In addition, it helps the customer see that your decision is based on legally adopted code, not your preference or choice.

Measuring customer service

Local governments use service standards to define customer service. To be useful, however, service standards must be reconciled with customer expectations. For example, one service standard for residential solid-waste pickup might be no more than 5 percent of residences will be missed on any pickup day. While a 95 percent success rate may seem like good performance, a citizen whose trash is missed on a given day may not agree. To most customers, any missed pickups are unacceptable.



Assessing the standards

It is important to stay on top of the service standards your work unit uses. If setting service standards is your responsibility, make sure that there is a match between the standards and customer satisfaction levels. If it is not your responsibility to set service standards, you should monitor how well your employees achieve the standards and whether or not the standards are reasonable. Be sure to report back to your supervisor when service standards are unreasonable or do not meet customer expectations, or when adhering to standards leads to inefficient operations.

To find out how citizens are rating local service delivery, some local governments use comprehensive customer satisfaction surveys. You will probably need the support and cooperation of your department or your entire organization to undertake a comprehensive survey, but you may be able to create brief questionnaires periodically to find out how citizens feel about the quality of your unit's work. A simple checklist that can be easily distributed or made available on a countertop where citizens conduct their business with you can provide valuable feedback. Citizens will see that you care about what they think, and you will gain valuable information about the level of service quality you provide. This kind of information can be especially useful in budget preparation and for developing short- and long-range work schedules and plans.

Some local governments engage private firms that send out “mystery shoppers” to rate the quality of service they receive. Still other local governments have comprehensive continuous improvement programs in place. To find out more about the formal programs your government has in place, ask your supervisor or department head. Many methods are effective for gathering customer feedback, and it is important to choose the ones that work best for your unit.

Feedback that isn’t positive is useful information. Complaints are especially important because they are signals that something is wrong. Some organizations consider complaints “gifts” because they provide useful information about how to provide better service and can improve the government’s reputation among citizens.

As a supervisor, it is your job to monitor how work is being done and to look for ways to improve service within available resources. You and your employees must keep in mind that everything matters to your customers—from an upright trash can to the correct amount due on a bill to a polite phone conversation.

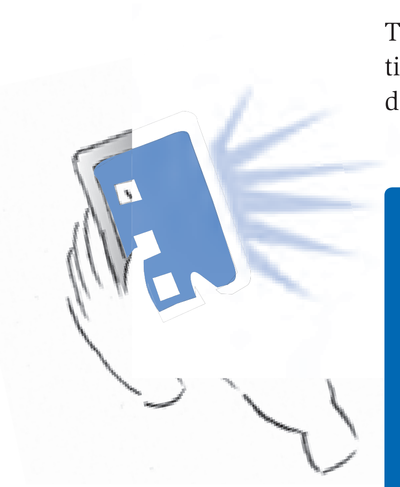
Striving for continuous improvement

Regularly monitoring service delivery and analyzing current service standards to meet customer expectations is an important part of your supervisory job. Do your service standards truly reflect what customers want?

Constantly looking for better and more cost-effective ways of getting the job done is continuous improvement. It has two main principles:

- Finding better, faster, smarter, and cheaper ways of doing the work is everyone’s job.
- The effort to improve customer service is a continuous process: you can always do better, so the process never ends.

In addition to constantly looking for ways to improve, your department should try to anticipate problems and prevent them. For example, the fire department helps people learn how to prevent fires and to recognize fire hazards. The building inspector’s office advises people on how to construct a safe, solid home or office building.



The recreation department encourages physical fitness. The police department gives tips on ways to prevent burglaries. Is there a preventive or educational service your department or work unit provides now, or that it could provide in the future?

CHECKLIST

- Remember that everyone you come into contact with, inside and outside the organization, is a customer.
- Make it your goal to exceed customer expectations.
- Think of every interaction with a customer as an opportunity to create a new supporter for your agency who will tell others about the good service she received.
- Whenever possible, match service standards to customer expectations.
- Practice good listening, and be aware of what you say without words.
- Make each encounter positive.
- Foster a feeling of pride in your work unit.
- Create a clean, orderly, and positive work environment.
- Use complaints as learning opportunities.
- Always keep in mind that you and your employees are the government: treat every customer with respect, concern, honesty, and courtesy.
- Engage the community through events, meetings, workshops, and technology.

Supervisory situation 16-1

As the supervisor of the billing division of the county water department, Dave is constantly in contact with citizen customers. He supervises three billing clerks. These employees also have frequent customer contact, either on the telephone or with walk-in customers. Dave's staff frequently deals with angry or frustrated customers who are upset about their water bills. Dave knows that the stress of the job can take a toll on his staff. At the same time, he firmly stands by the principle that the customer is always right. Dave has noticed that his employees don't always follow this principle.

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(chesterfield.gov/content.aspx?id = 3525)

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Effective Supervisory Practices:
Better Results Through Teamwork
Fifth Edition

Text type
Interstate, ITC Slimbach

Printing and binding
United Book Press

Design
Charles Mountain
ICMA, Washington, D.C.

Illustration
Gloria Marconi
Silver Spring, Maryland

For example, last week a citizen entered the billing office about twenty minutes before closing and was visibly upset while waiting in line. Finally, when it was her turn, the customer fumed at Maria, one of the billing clerks: "My name is Linda Smith, and I do not understand why my bill has doubled for this period. You've obviously made a stupid mistake. Somebody had better have a good explanation for this." Maria looked up at the clock, then replied, "Well, if it's such a big problem, why did you wait until so late in the day to come in? I'll take a look at your bill, but I can't promise to resolve the problem today. We close in five minutes."

The customer looked at her watch and snapped, "I've been waiting in line for more than fifteen minutes. Can I help it if you people are so slow? I want an answer today. I don't have the time to come back because of your mistake."

"Okay," Maria said. "Let me take a look." Maria quickly reviewed Ms. Smith's bill, added some figures on her calculator, and replied, "Looks like you've got a real problem controlling how much water you use. This bill adds up okay to me."

At that point, Ms. Smith grabbed the bill and quickly turned to walk out. "I've had enough of this. I'll be back tomorrow to talk to your manager," she called over her shoulder as she headed for the door.

Maria shrugged her shoulders. "It takes all kinds. What a day this has been."

1. Did Maria do right in dealing with this customer? What could she have done differently or better to avoid having the customer leave the office angry?
2. What customer service skills, if any, is Maria lacking?
3. What approaches can Dave suggest to his staff to help them deal effectively with customers like Ms. Smith?
4. How do you think Dave can help his staff adopt "the customer is always right" principle even when the customer isn't right?