



Session 5

Group Exercises

Scenario One Tom
Supervisory Situation 10 -1
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Situation/Exercise 11-1 and 11-2

Individual Exercises

Worksheet 9-1: Rule Violations
Worksheet 7-2: What's Your Theory?
Worksheet 7.3 Assessing the Situation
Cast Studies: Motivation, the Department Veteran, The Deserved Raise

Articles and Materials

What is Accountability Really?
Articles on Coaching Employees
Effective Training: Key to Equitable Performance Appraisals
Performance Improvement Plan Material/Templates
Performance Evaluation Materials/Templates
Career Compass No. 70: How to Handle a Difficult Conversation with a Direct Report
Checklist Materials on Discipline
Basic Human Needs Chart (Maslow and Herzberg)
Various Articles on Motivation
Articles on Employee Engagement
Articles/Worksheet on the Cost of Employee Turnover

Homework

Read Chapters 13 and 14 from the text
Complete the Individual Exercises and read Articles and Materials for Session 6
Write a 1 to 2 page paper on why it is important to have a harassment free and respectful workplace and be prepared to present to the class

Group Exercises

Scenario One

The Setting (#)

Tom, one of your employees, has worked in the office for ten years. He is well liked and knowledgeable about the history of the office and University systems. There is no past history of performance issues that you can see from looking at past performance reviews. What you have observed is that Tom regularly shows up late, (office opens at 8:30am, Tom usually comes by 9/9:15am), takes longer than an hour for lunch, and often is heading out the door by 4:30pm (office closes at 5pm). You notice that this type of behavior seems to happen once in a while for other employees in the office, but seems like a daily practice for Tom. He never records any of this time on his time card as official time off.

Take a few moments to think about the situation and make some notes. What would you do? What would be your first step?

Potential Responses (#)

1. Do nothing; every one seems to be relatively happy and no one has complained to you about this issue.
2. Address the issue with the office as a whole at a meeting, reminding everyone of operating hours and the importance of being on time.
3. Address the issue directly with Tom, explaining your concerns, exploring his understanding of working hours, and being clear about your future expectations.
4. Give Tom a verbal warning for his lack of timeliness, and tell him if it happens again, he will receive a written warning that will go into his permanent discipline record.

Possible Outcome of #1: Do Nothing (#)

- Your boss notices that you have not addressed the time discrepancies in the office and expresses concern with your abilities to manage the office. You now have created a situation in which your boss has concerns about your ability to do the job. You still need to address the issue with your employees and now also need to regain the confidence of your manager.
- Others employees notice that it seems fine with you that Tom keeps casual hours, so every one starts keeping the same hours as Tom. Your response to one employee's behavior has now established office norms that need to be addressed. This could have been avoided by addressing the issue up front with Tom.
- Some of the employees accuse you of discriminatory behavior by having different standards for different employees. When staff feel they are being treated unfairly or that different rules are being applied for different staff, they have a variety of options. In addition to approaching you directly, they could go to your boss, or to the Ombuds Office. What if Tom is the only male reporting to you and the women on staff document the fact that Tom is getting preferential treatment? The issue could become a much bigger concern.

Possible outcomes of #2, Address the issue with the office as a whole at a meeting, reminding everyone of operating hours and the importance of being on time (#)

- Staff ask for your understanding of work time, share theirs and you all come to agreement. This could happen. This still may not solve your problem, in that people may agree to something but not change their behavior. It would give you a point on which to start giving feedback if you see that staff or some staff are not following the guidelines.
- Staff that are following the rules feel de-motivated and frustrated. By addressing an issue as "some of you" or "everyone" and not addressing the person who needs to be addressed, you are punishing the wrong people.
- Nothing changes. The longer you do nothing, the more likely it will become a bigger issue. Since Tom is not being addressed directly, there is no reason to change. Talk to your boss for advice, be clear on appropriate contract language governing time and attendance, and/or call WL&D for a supervisory consultation on ways to approach the issue.

Possible outcomes of #3, Address the issue directly with Tom, explaining your concerns, exploring his understanding of working hours, and being clear about your future expectations (#)

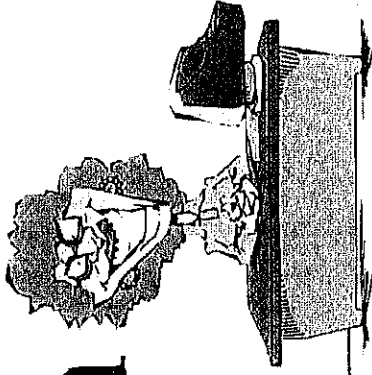
- Tom disagrees with you. Tom may feel he is on time. This is where it is important to have documentation on Tom's behaviors to back up your concerns.
- Tom believes you are picking on him. Tom may not like the idea that you are addressing this issue with him. Yet, it still needs to be addressed.
- Tom doesn't understand the problem; he says, "I work hard and complete my tasks, so what's the issue?" In giving feedback to an employee, it can help to also acknowledge what the employee does well. The issue is not how hard Tom works (though some may wonder if Tom could do more if he worked the expected number of hours), the issues are time, attendance and office standards.
- Tom says no previous supervisor ever addressed this issue. This may be true. Acknowledge that reality and say that what may have been accepted norms in the past don't dictate the future. Acknowledge that it is not Tom's fault no one addressed it earlier. Discuss your expectations of his future behavior.

Possible reactions for #4: Give Tom a verbal warning for his lack of timeliness, and tell him if it happens again, he will receive a written warning that will go into his permanent discipline record (#)

- Tom changes his behavior but will not talk to you beyond what the work requires. It would not be unusual for there to be a period of discomfort after a discipline action. Make sure you are not avoiding or treating the employee in markedly different ways that you have in the past.
- Tom is taken totally by surprise and is angry. Tom most likely will feel that he has been treated unfairly if this issue has not been addressed with him in the past.
- Tom files a grievance. Any time an employee has received discipline, they do have the right to file a grievance. Tom also has the right to have a union representative attend meetings where he is receiving discipline.

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.

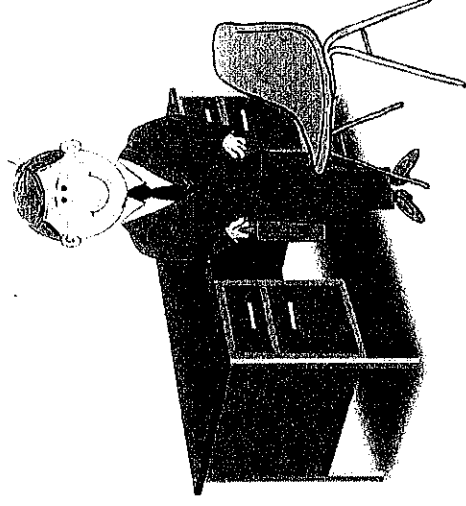
Josie's job also requires focused work at her desk. This involves reconciling funds coming in from various accounts. If Josie doesn't complete her work, others in the office are not able to complete their work. Josie's people orientation has become a major distraction from her more focused desk duties. 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 Josie 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.

Assignment 10-1



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



Situation 10-2



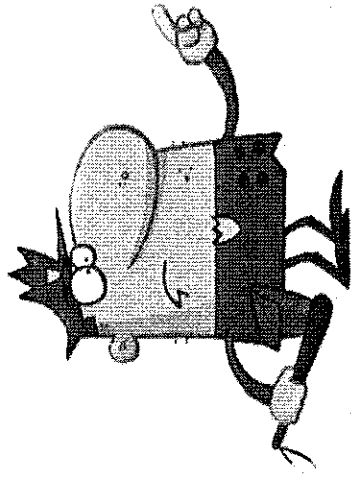
Rob has worked for the Water Billing Department for five years. He is personable and generally does a good but not stellar job. With recent staff cuts and a new computer billing program, team members have been asked to do more than they have in the past.

Jason, Rob's team leader, has noticed that Rob has not kept the 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 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 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.

Assignment 10-2



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



Situation 11-1



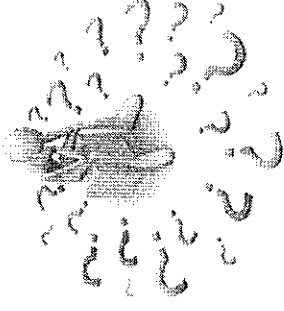
By all accounts, Officer Harry Jones is a talented police officer who rarely applies his talents to the job. If there is an easy way out or a convenient way to avoid work, Officer Jones generally finds it. Beyond his minimalist approach to work, Officer Jones has been known to try to intimidate other 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’ evaluation suggest that he is a high performer.

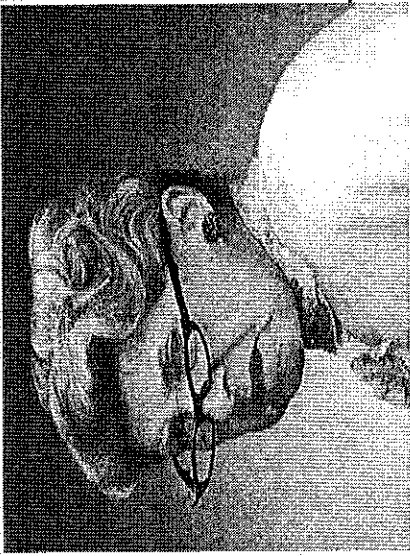
Recently, Sergeant Tom Strickland became Officer Jones’ new shift supervisor. Sergeant Strickland is a firm, fair team leader who is widely respected for his mature judgement and his attention to detail.

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.

Exercise 11-1



- ∞ How should Sergeant Strickland handle the relationship with Officer Jones?
- ∞ What should Sergeant Strickland do at the beginning of the evaluation period?
- ∞ How should Sergeant Strickland deal with Officer Jones if he resists Sergeant Strickland's efforts to change his performance and behavior?
- ∞ What communication should Sergeant Strickland have with his supervisor about his new report?



Situation 11-2

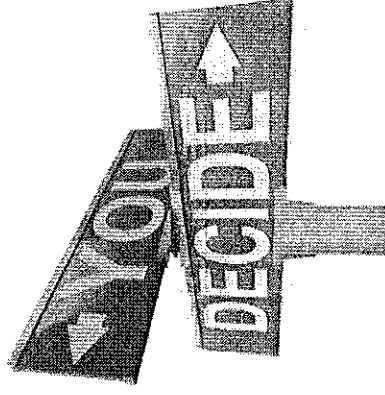


Carolyn has been employed as a community planner in the Recreation Department for 11 months under your supervision. She is intelligent, charismatic, articulate, and honest – qualities that allow her to interact effectively with the community. Her work is always done on time and is high quality. However, you have observed that Carolyn seem 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.

Exercise 11-2



- ∞ What are your options?
- ∞ What, if anything, could you as Carolyn's supervisor have done better?
- ∞ Develop your recommendation on Carolyn's future status?



Individual Exercises

Worksheet 9-1: Rule Violations: What Should You Do?

For each of the following offenses, decide what type of disciplinary action is warranted. Assume that each is a first offense. Your options include *but are not limited to* counseling, oral warning, written warning, suspension, salary reduction, demotion, or dismissal. Then answer the questions at the bottom of the page.

1. Giving a false reason for absence
2. Leaving work of the job site without permission
3. Loafing on the job or wasting time even as work piles
4. "Borrowing" a government vehicle to run personal errands
5. Sleeping on the job
6. Refusing to work overtime
7. Contributing to unsafe or unsanitary conditions
8. Lying about or blaming others for one's own mistakes
9. Failing to report work without notice on three consecutive workdays
10. Calling another employee a derogatory or discriminatory name
11. Ignoring safety procedures
12. Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs
13. Making a bootleg copy of software for use at home
14. Fighting with a colleague
15. Padding a personal expense report
16. Stealing office supplies
17. Routinely taking longer breaks than allowed
18. Making unwanted sexual advances to subordinate
19. Yelling profanities at a citizen
20. Spreading untrue rumors about you, the supervisor

In making your decision, how would you gather information about what occurred? What type of information would you need to know?

How would you document the offense and the action taken?

Worksheet 7.2: Self-Assessment: What's Your Theory?

Use the following scale to rate your agreement with each of the statements below:

- 1 = *Strongly disagree*
 2 = *Disagree somewhat*
 3 = *No opinion*
 4 = *Agree somewhat*
 5 = *Strongly agree*

Part A:

1. Special wage increases should be given to employees who do their jobs especially well.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Job descriptions let employees know what is expected of them.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Employees need to be reminded that their jobs are dependent on the government's ability to provide services effectively and efficiently.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Supervisors should pay attention to the physical working conditions of employees.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Supervisors should develop a friendly working atmosphere among the work team.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Supervisors should recognize individuals for achievement at department meetings or in public settings.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Indifferent supervision bruises feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Employees want to feel that their skills and capacities are used well.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Fringe benefits, such as retirement plans, annual and holiday leave, and health care are essential if you want to keep good employees.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Every job can be made more stimulating and challenging.	1	2	3	4	5
11. All employees want to give their best in everything they do.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Management should sponsor social events after hours to show employees that they care.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Pride in one's work is the most important motivating factor.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Employees want to think of themselves as experts in their jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The quality of the relationships in the work group is important.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Individual incentive bonuses would improve performance.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Recognition from upper management and citizens is important to employees.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Employees want to schedule their own work.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Job security is what really matters.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Supervisors should provide the best equipment they can for their employees.	1	2	3	4	5

Part B:

21. People will avoid work whenever possible.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Self-control is necessary if work is to be done properly.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Employees should be supervised closely.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Employees are willing to accept responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Employees like to be told exactly what to do.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Employees can come up with creative solutions to organizational problems.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Employees are motivated primarily by money and fringe benefits.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Employees are motivated primarily by recognition and achievement.	1	2	3	4	5

Worksheet 7.3: Assessing the Situation

1. Generally, how motivated would you say the members of your work team are?

<i>Not motivated</i>	<i>Somewhat motivated</i>	<i>Usually motivated</i>	<i>Highly motivated</i>
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2. How do you think the members of your work team would rate their motivation?

<i>Not motivated</i>	<i>Somewhat motivated</i>	<i>Usually motivated</i>	<i>Highly motivated</i>
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3. How would you rate your own motivation?

<i>Not motivated</i>	<i>Somewhat motivated</i>	<i>Usually motivated</i>	<i>Highly motivated</i>
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4. How do you think the members of your work team would rate your motivation as their supervisor?

<i>Not motivated</i>	<i>Somewhat motivated</i>	<i>Usually motivated</i>	<i>Highly motivated</i>
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5. What does your immediate supervisor do that motivates you?
6. What does your staff do that motivates you?
7. What do others do that frustrates or demotivates you?
8. What do you do that motivates your employees?
9. What do you do that motivates your supervisor?
10. What do you do that motivates your peers and colleagues?
11. What do you do that may frustrate or demotivate your employees or colleagues?
12. Make a list of personal actions you can take to help motivate your employees. Be as specific as possible.

Case Study: Variations in Motivation

The following three individuals work for Lightning City. As you read the descriptions, determine their level of motivation. Think also about how you can tell whether they are, in fact, motivated. Then, answer the questions at the end of the case study.

Janie Curran

Janie Curran is a native of Lightning City. She began working for the city ten years ago as a clerk in the accounting department and has worked her way up to division supervisor. She does her job very well and is considered efficient, reliable, and well qualified for the position she holds. She currently supervises four accounting clerks who perform their jobs effectively and efficiently.

Janie is rarely late or absent. Her hours are steady, and she usually leaves work at the end of the work day, staying late only when there is an important deadline. When she is at work she is always "on task." Janie is quiet and rarely gets involved in activities that don't directly affect her or her work team.

Janie reports directly to the department head, who has worked with her for most of the past ten years. According to the department head, Janie does her job without much direction or input from above. She praises Janie for her dependability. Her supervisor notes that she and Janie have little day-to-day contact because Janie rarely complains and comes to her only to ask a specific question or present a problem. The department head believes that Janie is satisfied with her job and plans to stay with the city for some time. Janie admits she doesn't have any specific long-term career plans and says doing a good job in her current position gives her a sense of achievement and satisfaction.

Miguel Ruiz

Miguel Ruiz received a master's degree in public administration last May. Immediately upon graduation, he accepted a job with Lightning City as an administrative assistant in the city manager's office. He has been with the city for only a few months but seems to know almost everyone who works in city hall.

Miguel aspires to be a city manager and wants to learn everything there is to know about running a city. Miguel is quick to take on new projects and challenges because he figures the experience will help him advance in his career. The city manager says Miguel is a valuable asset with a lot of potential, but he has done little substantive work for the city thus far. Miguel has done a variety of research jobs, prepared some background information for city council reports, and replied to citizen inquiries and complaints. For the most part his work has been good, but on occasion there have been minor errors or incomplete information. The city manager worries that Miguel sometimes bites off more than he can chew.

Miguel is involved in lots of extracurricular activities in city hall. He is on the city's softball team and has been trying to get a volleyball team organized. He is always rounding up people for lunch or happy hour. Most of his colleagues like his enthusiasm, but he occasionally steps on a toe or two in his effort to get the work done.

Suzi Banshee

Suzi Banshee was hired as a senior planner for Lightning City three years ago. According to everyone who knows her, she is a workaholic. She works long hours and can be found at her desk most weekends. She says there's just so much work that she needs the weekends and evenings to keep up

Continued . . .

Case Study: Variations in Motivation (Page Two)

with the pace. She says that she is satisfied with her job, and she works hard to do good work. When there are additional jobs that need to be done, Suzi always accepts the work and will do whatever it takes to get it done on time.

Not many people in city hall know Suzi very well because she works through most lunch hours and isn't involved in any after-work activities. The director of planning has talked with her several times to see whether there are ways to ease the work load or distribute the tasks among the staff, but Suzi refuses to give up any of her projects. If it takes long hours and weekends to get everything done, that's fine with her. She says she's used to the long hours and would miss the work if she had more spare time.

Suzi's work is precise and thorough—sometimes more thorough than the task demands.

1. In your opinion, which employee is the most motivated? On what do you base your answer?
2. What need do you think motivates Janie Curran? Miguel Ruiz? Suzi Banshee?
3. Based on your answer to Question 2, what techniques would be most effective in motivating each of the employees?
4. If you supervised the employees in this case study, what would you want to know to determine what motivates them and their level of motivation?

Case Study: The Department Veteran

Steve Bennett has been with the county public works department for more than ten years. A longtime resident, Steve loves the community and has moved up the ranks through hard work and dedication. Steve has earned a reputation as a competent, reliable, and fair supervisor.

Two years ago, Steve became the county's highway supervisor. At first, Steve's abilities and performance matched the expectations of his supervisor. Within the last six months, however, Steve has become less accessible and has begun arriving at work later and later. He also has been neglecting the department's schedules for vehicle maintenance, routine department tasks, and employee appraisals. Several employees have been overheard saying they are unhappy with Steve's attitude and inability to make timely decisions. A couple of his colleagues have tried to talk to him to find out whether something is wrong, but Steve says that everything is fine.

Clint Jones, Steve's supervisor, was hired by the county about nine months ago. When he started, he reviewed the records of the people who reported to him and was impressed with Steve's record. But almost immediately he began to wonder why Steve had acquired a reputation for excellence. Clint saw several areas that needed improvement—Steve's attendance and punctuality, his completion of routine tasks, and his relations with his work team.

Clint has taken measures to resolve the problem: he drafted specific performance goals for Steve, talked to Steve about what he expected, and suggested that he take a management class at the university so that he could prepare himself for a promotion. At Steve's annual review two months ago, Clint made sure he got a hefty merit increase and promised he'd do his best to continue to put in for pay increases if he could justify them. But Steve's performance continues to decline.

1. What factors may be contributing to Steve's declining performance?
2. What signs indicate that Steve's performance problems might be related to his level of motivation?
3. What is Clint doing right in his approach toward Steve? What is he doing wrong?
4. What assumptions is Clint making about what motivates Steve? Are these assumptions contributing to the performance problem? How?

Case Study: The Deserved Raise

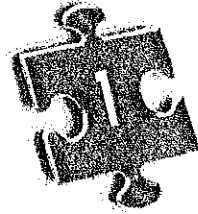
Lynn Chang has been a program manager with the city's department of community development for two years. She caught on quickly and was soon promoted to serve as the coordinator between the city and the state government. She is highly enthusiastic about her projects, pays close attention to detail, and puts in long hours. In fact, Lynn is somewhat of a perfectionist and does well in almost everything she puts her mind to. She won an employee award during her first year on the job.

At her upcoming annual performance review, Lynn plans to push for a significant salary increase. She feels that she deserves a substantial raise—not only has she done well in her current position, but she has assumed significant additional work and responsibilities. If she isn't adequately compensated for what she is doing, she plans to start looking for another job.

Betty Stern has supervised Lynn since she was hired two years ago. She is well aware of Lynn's skills, level of performance, and desire to help reach department goals. Betty also believes that Lynn deserves a substantial salary increase. But the city's finances are tight, and there isn't money in the budget to give Lynn the increase she'd like.

1. If you were Betty, how would you approach Lynn's performance review?
2. How should Betty raise the issue of this year's salary increase?
3. Are there options that Betty should consider to keep Lynn employed by the city and motivated to continue her excellent work?

Articles and Materials



WHAT IS ACCOUNTABILITY, REALLY?

Hypocrisy exists in the space between language and action.

Picture yourself in a meeting. Suppose there are a dozen people seated around a table and someone says, “I’m going to hold you accountable for what we’ve discussed.” What words or feelings immediately come to mind?

Fear? Threat? You may be thinking, “Uh oh, now there are expectations.” Others around the table may experience pressure or stress. Still others sense the tone of the meeting suddenly has changed – leadership is going to be searching for a “gotcha.”

This type of negative reaction to accountability has been earned. Most of us have experienced the word “accountability” as punitive – a “punishment” for not doing something. It is viewed as punishment because that accountability typically lurks at the back end of the

business process. Accountability shows up when something goes wrong and people start to lay blame. They start pointing fingers.

In reality, winning begins with accountability. You cannot sustain success without accountability. It is an absolute requirement!

The secret that successful organizations have discovered is to install accountability on the front end of interactions ... before the outcome is known. Successful organizations front-load accountability into their strategy. When front-loaded, accountability breeds better relationships, eliminates surprises, and vastly improves job satisfaction and performance.

Defining Accountability

Accountability should not be defined as a punitive response to something going wrong.



Webster's Dictionary defines "accountability" as "the quality or state of being accountable; an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions."

Notice the adjectives describing accountability in the dictionary: quality, obligation, willingness and responsibility. Does that sound like punitive response to something that has gone wrong? Of course not. Accountability means preventing something from going wrong.

So, as a first step on the road to creating an accountability culture, we must redefine and streamline "accountability" to carry a more positive connotation:

Accountability: "Clear commitments that –
in the eyes of others – have been kept."

With this new definition in mind, let's put it to work by asking you to write down in the space below two commitments that are important to your success. One for business and one for your personal life.

Business Commitment _____

Personal Commitment _____

Thank you. We'll refer to these later in the book.

People deal with us based on what they think about us, not what we think they should think about us. So, when we make a commitment, we have to fulfill that commitment in the eyes of others. It is not good enough to fulfill the commitment in our eyes – we have to fulfill the commitment in the eyes of others. That is the tricky part.



When we're accountable, it is necessary for us to go to our customers, our suppliers, the people we work for – and yes, the people who work with us – and ask them, "How am I doing?" We allow them to hold us accountable – in their eyes – for our commitments.

Growing up in New York City during Mayor Ed Koch's administration, I remember this: Whenever Koch greeted someone,

he'd say, "Hey, I'm Mayor Ed Koch. How am I doing?" He constantly asked for feedback. He was being accountable in his constituents' eyes.

Was Ed Koch the best mayor in New York's history? That depends on whom you talk to, but he continually asked for feedback ... and the voters loved it!

Accountability is – first and foremost – about being reliable. To get a good picture of your personal accountability, you may want to periodically ask yourself, "Can people count on me to do what I say I'll do, as I said I would do it?"

Recently, at a meeting involving the president, chairman of the board and chief operating officer of a large organization, an executive named Cathy promised, "You'll have the executive summary from this meeting by Friday, December 21, at 5 p.m. CST."

Two of the officers wrote down this information. The president did not; and when one of his colleagues asked him, "Aren't you going to hold Cathy accountable?" the president responded, "I've worked with Cathy for three years. I know she's as good as her word."

It's at that moment Cathy knew she had consistently acted in an accountable way. It was the president's perception and feedback that let her know she had modeled accountability.

Creating an accountability culture is to recognize that wherever you are on the organizational chart, you encourage others to hold you accountable.

For instance, let's say I'm sitting in my office working on a presentation. I asked my assistant to hold all calls and not disturb me while I focus on the presentation for an important meeting.

I hear the mailman leave my mail and, out of the corner of my eye, I see a new issue of a martial arts magazine. I love martial arts so I go over, pick the magazine up and begin leafing through it ... and, as usual, I find an article I'd like to read.

I return to my office and begin reading the article. It's at this point my assistant steps in and says, "Shouldn't you be working on the presentation that you asked me to allow you the time to focus on?"

I slowly close the magazine and smile. "Yes, thank you."

Now, saying "thank you" may not be the first thing that comes to mind at that moment, but my focus is on communicating genuine thanks. She's holding me accountable to my stated commitments because that's the deal we have, and I do appreciate her holding me accountable to getting the important things done.

Accountability is about high performance and not fear or stress.

It's about being willing to hold yourself to a standard that improves the performance of your organization and also having a willingness to be held accountable by others.

So, it's okay that a member of your team walks into your office and says, "Hey, you said you'd have that report on competitive products to me by noon today. It's 1 p.m. When can I expect it?"

In an organization where accountability isn't important, the manager might say, "Wait a minute. Let's get this straight. You work for me. I don't work for you! Now, get out of my office!" But, in a Culture of Accountability, the manager will say, "You know what? I'm sorry I didn't get that to you on time. Here's when I'll have it for you."


When holding someone else accountable we must recognize and respect the power of intention. If our intention is to put someone down or to make them feel badly about themselves, it will be obvious. If, however, our intention is to help them perform at a higher level and to help them succeed, they will be able to see that, too.

Here's an example:

While facilitating a meeting with a client, we were reviewing our performance with them and listening to their feedback. At one point during this discussion, I called a 10-minute break. At the moment the break began, one of my team members walked up to me with her back to the clients, a smile on her face, and very direct eye contact. She said, "Henry, you are being defensive and you have 9 minutes to adjust, okay?"

A couple of hours later when the meeting had ended, we asked the president of the company for feedback on the meeting. He said, "You know, Henry, when the meeting started, I felt that you were being a little defensive, but right after I noticed it, it seems to have vanished. The meeting was a huge success."

I am eternally grateful to my team member for giving me the feedback when she did. I remember trusting her intention in that moment.



"When you're screwing up and nobody says anything to you anymore, that means they've given up on you."

Randy Pausch, author, *The Last Lecture*

Remember: *Hypocrisy exists in the space between language and action.*

If you are ever perceived as a hypocrite, it's because there is a gap between what you said and what you did. Hypocrisy is created in the space between your words and your actions.

This simple example explains the concept well: Erik is a new manager and he's having a team meeting. Chris has joined the group late because of a long meeting with an important client. He quietly asks the person next to him where they are on the agenda.

Erik's saying, "Employee morale is really important to me." Then he sees Chris asking about the agenda and shouts, "Be quiet, Chris!"

In a very short space, a lot of relationship damage has just occurred.

On the other hand, if Erik's been the team leader for awhile and if he's told his team, "If you ever interrupt one of my meetings, I'm going to tell you to be quiet" – and then he does exactly that – Erik's not a hypocrite because he's set a clear expectation.

How to Front-load Accountability

To front-load accountability in your organization, you have to provide the specifics ... and that includes clear expectations. If your team can reflect the essence of what you said to them back to you, your expectations have been clearly stated. If their reflection does not mirror what you are trying to accomplish, you need to start again.

For instance, if I wanted Sam to reflect back to me, I wouldn't ask Sam to repeat what I said because that would be condescending. What I could say is, "Sam, how do you interpret what I just said?"

Another way to invite reflection is by asking someone to paraphrase what they heard you say.

Front-loading accountability begins with clear expectations from both the sender and the receiver. And, it is both parties' responsibility.

For instance, what if your manager told you, "I expect you to do a good job on this proposal."

You could say, "Okay" and take your best shot at meeting the manager's expectations. Or, you could say, "Okay, but exactly what does a good job look like?"

The manager may say, "I want our products to be featured up front, which should be followed by features and benefits. Then, in the summary, show how our products resolve the client's accounting problem."

In this example, the manager provided the details and how the assignment would be measured. By providing the measurements for the project – at the beginning of the project – the manager has allowed you to succeed in doing a good job.

If you are not provided the specifics of what a good job looks like, you probably won't succeed, which makes it important to ask the question, "What does a good job look like?" or "What does it mean when you say, 'Good job?'"

So, what if you make an assignment and you're not completely clear on what the outcome may be? If that is the case, consider this language:

“I’m not 100 percent sure the decision we’re making is going to be the right one. However, everybody needs to be 100 percent sure this is the decision we’ve made and this is the direction we’re going to take. We may have to adjust later.”

To use this language successfully takes trust. It takes honesty for the leader to say, “I don’t have a crystal ball ... and I accept that I may be wrong. But everyone needs to understand that this is our direction and this is how we’re doing it.”

The next step to front-loading accountability is to put into place a high testing standard to measure quality. Just as important, you must be willing to take feedback and make changes that will strengthen your strategy. Part of this feedback will come from team members, and more feedback will come when you ask your customers, “How am I doing?” In doing so, you’re getting feedback from every level throughout the process.

The Benefits of Front-loading Accountability

Remember when we asked you to think about how being asked to be accountable made you feel? Quite often people have feelings of stress, fear or being extremely uncomfortable.

The term “accountability” probably deserves these negative connotations when it is used in a punitive way ... and in Western cultures, we tend to use accountability to determine whom to punish when something has gone wrong.

These feelings of fear, stress and discomfort when we are asked to be accountable are what we call “relationship breakers.” So, when accountability comes at the backend of the business process, we break that very thing that pulls us through tough times and fuels good times: relationships.

Conversely, **when you front-load accountability, relationships will be built, solidified and strengthened.**

When you front-load accountability, you include specificity in your commitment. Unlike the manager who asked team members to “do a good job” on the important client proposal, your commitments include specific language – “I want this proposal to outline our products at the beginning, include features and benefits and, in the summary, to show how our products will resolve their current accounting problem. Here is when I need it to be completed.”

Front-loading accountability is also a hiring function. Many winning organizations make accountability a part of their hiring process, specifically addressing personal accountability in interviews. Those organizations make it policy to only recruit and retain employees who embrace accountability as part of their personal values.

In describing accountability to one new employee, the hiring manager said this: “Accountability in our organization means doing what you said you will do, as you said you would do it. That is the minimum acceptable performance level for our team members. It’s the way we are ... and it’s a high standard.”

When you front-load accountability:

- ◆ Performance increases
- ◆ Resources are better allocated – people don’t have to guess
- ◆ Job satisfaction is increased
- ◆ Relationships are strengthened
- ◆ Results improve, ultimately increasing revenues and profitability

Summary:

- ◆ Accountability is a positive term describing commitments that – in the eyes of others – have been kept.
- ◆ Accountability is continually asking, “How am I doing?”
- ◆ To front-load accountability in your organization, you have to provide crystal-clear expectations.
- ◆ By front-loading accountability, relationships among team members are strengthened because they know they can count on each other. This leads to greater performance, higher quality and better service to your clients.



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How Coaching Enhances Accountability in the Workplace

ARTICLE | Jun 10, 2013

Imagine working in a team or organization where there is no interpersonal or team accountability . . . 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.

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.... 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.

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.

Eight Ways to Improve Your Coaching

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.

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.

Excerpted from "Chapter 10: Accountability in the Workplace," in [Effective Supervisory Practices: Better Results Through Teamwork Fifth Edition](#). ©ICMA, 2013.

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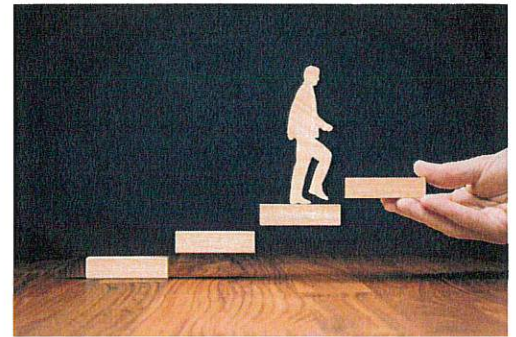
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Building a Better Career Path Through Coaching

A look at the coaching resources available through ICMA

By Cheryl Hilvert, ICMA-CM | Jan 1, 2021 | ARTICLE

We often hear of professional athletes with coaches who help them to maximize their individual and collective performance. Like those sports stars, local government managers can often achieve more when we rely on someone to help us explore our hopes and dreams and assist us in identifying the best way to move toward them.



Dr. Frank Benest, ICMA-CM, long-time ICMA member and ICMA Liaison for Next Generation Initiatives, defines coaching as “a confidential relationship typically between a senior manager and an aspiring leader that aims to help the emerging leader achieve his or her hopes and dreams. Coaching often helps one focus on accelerating career development or addressing problematic work situations.”

Coaching can help an aspiring manager, or even a seasoned manager to:

- Explore their hopes and dreams.
- Identify issues and challenges.
- Consider a variety of options.
- Learn from the relevant experiences of the coach.
- Explore resources and opportunities to grow their “dream team.”
- Receive candid feedback.
- Consider a “big leap.”

While we often see the “player/learner/aspiring manager” as the benefactor of coaching, it’s clear that this process can benefit the coach as well. The opportunity to help another professional aspire toward

greater success allows the coach to:

- Share experiences and expertise with a colleague.
- Help another professional reflect and consider unappreciated opportunities.
- Provide resources and candid feedback.
- Serve as a sounding board.
- Be a part of someone's personal and professional development.
- Create a legacy!

The great thing about coaching is that anyone can benefit—whether you are looking for someone to listen and help you ask yourself the right questions about your career advancement, or if you are a tenured professional and wish to assist and support our next generation of local government managers. As January is National Mentoring Month, take a moment to reflect on mentors you have had throughout your career. Consider how you can help build a better career path for someone in the profession, or aspiring to be in the profession.

Would you like to find a mentor, or perhaps you are inspired to be a mentor? Find all of ICMA's coaching resources at icma.org/coaching! Highlights include:

Coaching Webinars

Each year ICMA offers six complimentary Coaching Program webinars designed to give local government professionals of all career stages the opportunity to bolster skills and learn about new and leading practices, strategies, and tactics, as well as developing issues and trends in the profession of local government management. Participation in free Coaching Program webinars qualifies for the ICMA credentialing program. You can register to attend as a group or individually, and you can also register for all of the remaining webinars of the year at one time. Learn more about [upcoming webinars](#).

CoachConnect

ICMA's CoachConnect is a program that can benefit both the aspiring manager/learner and the seasoned manager/coach. CoachConnect sessions can take on many forms. Some are casual, informal networking and check-ins. Other pairs set up a more formal relationship and continue over time. You also may choose to get perspectives from more than one coach. Learn more about [CoachConnect](#).

Career Compass

ICMA's Career Compass is a monthly column focused on career issues for local government professional staff. Produced by Dr. Frank Benest, this free content covers a variety of topics, including such articles as "Reimagining Leadership," "Coaching and Networking," "Workplace Culture," "Getting the Job," "Advancing Your Career," and "Professional Development." [Learn more](#) about Career Compass, or subscribe to receive it in your inbox.

Speed Coaching

At each in-person annual conference, ICMA holds a fun, fast-paced speed coaching event. During this event, coaches provide quick informal sessions on career and resume tips designed to introduce learners to a variety of coaches and their styles, build relationships, and make introductions for conference attendees. Many state coaching partners also hold speed coaching events in their states, as have some ICMA student chapters. Speed coaching is great for state association conferences, professional gatherings, and gatherings of local area managers. Check out [our guidelines](#) to learn more.

In all its forms, coaching can be extremely beneficial to your career and helping to define its path—or even just the next step. And for those in a position to serve as a coach, there's nothing more rewarding than knowing you've helped a burgeoning local government leader on their way to success. If you haven't already, make 2021 the year you take advantage of these great opportunities!



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Being a great coach, and a winning player

Being a Great Coach. Below are some useful actions a volunteer Coach can take to stimulate a productive coaching discussion. See the video *Being a Great Coach* for illustrations at icma.org/coaching.

Ask “What are your hopes?” Start your relationship by understanding what’s important to the person you are coaching and, most importantly, why. Help them look a little deeper for what truly interests them.

Serve as a generous listener. A generous listener demonstrates curiosity, a suspension of judgment and evaluation, and a desire to understand the meaning and the motivation of the Player.

Identify concerns and tap their experiences. What stands between them and where they want to be? What issues or obstacles need attention? Use reflective listening (paraphrasing what you hear from them) to help them surface underlying concerns. Listening thoughtfully is a big gift. Then, explore how they have addressed similar challenges before.

Encourage growth and resources. How will they need to grow? What resources do they have? Resources and choices encourage and empower people.

Offer stories and experiences...with permission. If you have insights to add to the Player’s own thinking, ask for permission. Rather than telling people what to do, offer stories about what you’ve seen or experienced that may be relevant to them. Stories help people understand the messages more deeply and integrate them into their own thinking.

Invite a stretch. Sometimes people hold themselves back in their careers. They make too many assumptions about what they think can and can’t happen. Tell the person you are coaching what you want for them. Encourage them to consider a big leap.

Target action. Ask them who could help them achieve their objectives and what actions they’d like to take. Most people need a nudge to take flight and really soar. “Would you like to consider [whatever action seems appropriate]?” You’re not telling them what to do, but you are giving them something concrete to which they can react. Always leave the choice to them. Don’t become attached to your own suggestions.

Celebrate the results!

Being a Winning Player. Your self-motivation provides the energy for your success. A Coach can be helpful as a catalyst to stimulate your thinking, but it's your talent story to write. Below are actions you can take to get the most from coaching. See the video *Being a Winning Player* for illustrations at icma.org/coaching.

Select a topic of interest. What will be useful to you now? Instead of "just in case" learning, coaching is "just in time" support. Some of the topics coaching might address include: advancing in your career, how to handle a difficult situation, grappling with a technical issue, and many more.

Reach out to a coach. Although volunteer coaches are busy people, they want to support talent development in the profession. Here are some ways you can connect with them:

- Take advantage of *Speed Coaching* and other networking events to meet informally with Coaches and see who might fit.
- Mine your relationships or someone in your ICMA State Association to suggest a Coach.
- Search for a volunteer Coach in *CoachConnect* at icma.org/coaching.
- Connect with the ICMA Senior Advisors in a state of interest to you to help you find a match and perhaps offer a warm introduction for you to a Coach. You can find them through the state association websites.

Turn your intentions into results. How will you fulfill the actions you intend to take? What has worked well for you in the past to get things done successfully?

Find more resources for you and your agency including a template for a **Talent Catalyst coaching conversation**, and more on on the Talent Development page of icma.org/coaching.

Don Maruska, MBA, JD, Master Certified Coach
Visit the ICMA Coaching Program at icma.org/coaching.

Clarify confidentiality. Are you concerned about confidentiality? Would you like this to be a confidential conversation? How does that fit with the other roles the Coach plays (as your boss, outside advisor, etc.)?

Provide some brief background about yourself. How would you succinctly describe what's relevant for the Coach to know about you and the topic you've selected. Remember, coaching is about writing the next chapter of your talent story (not rehashing the past).

Express your hopes. Coaches need to know what your hopes are about the topic you've chosen and why they are important to you. This anchors the discussion in what will be fulfilling for you not someone else.

Enjoy the discussion – let the Coach do the coaching and you the playing. One of the great joys of coaching for a Player is that you don't need to have all the answers. It's not a quiz. You can be engaged and yet be relaxed to see what new insights and opportunities arise for you.

Thank your coach for the insights and support. How did the discussion help you clarify your thoughts or galvanize you into action? What did the Coach do that served you especially well?



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What Coaching Is and Isn't

ARTICLE | Apr 21, 2017

I have had the opportunity to coach management individuals during my work as an executive coach. What has become apparent to me is the lack of understanding that some might have about what coaching is and how it differs from other leadership development tools.

From what I've experienced though, coaching seems to be gaining in popularity among motivated managers who seek the individual and organizational growth that can result from a positive coaching relationship.

What Coaching Is

An efficient, high-impact process that helps high-performing leaders improve results that are sustainable, coaching:

Involves short meetings that generate important insights and helps an individual gain clarity and focus, as well as make decisions to improve performance.

Is a dialogue where high-performing people need support to perform even better.

Has the goal of improving results in ways that are sustainable over time. Managers want outcomes, career success, organizational effectiveness, and career and personal satisfaction. It is about helping people improve their own capabilities and effectiveness so that results and improvements last.

Allows a leader to get from point A to point B. The coach intervenes and provides advice, when appropriate, and customizes a tool or solution that works for the leader's unique situation.

Works one-on-one with individuals to encourage them to make difficult decisions, step out of their comfort zone, stop destructive behavior, embrace change, and shift performance.

What Coaching Is Not

And, at the other end of the spectrum, coaching is not:

Therapy meant to fix someone. The emphasis is on helping a healthy individual overcome challenges and be more effective. Coaching is asking powerful questions that inquire why people behave the way they do.

The same thing as management. Coaches are not going to step in to do the job for someone. The coach is a "shadow leader," working behind the scenes to help a person succeed and improve.

Consulting. The primary focus is not to analyze and make recommendations. When appropriate and at the right time, coaches can add value by sharing observations and insights. Coaching is more about having people develop their own insights and then take action to improve results. Coaching is not a crystal ball that magically provides an answer.

Training or teaching that focuses on sharing knowledge and best practices. The teaching process usually occurs in a classroom setting and the trainer/teacher leads the session.

Mentoring. Mentors are seasoned professionals who can show less-experienced professionals methods of how to do things. Many mentors, however, also can play the role of coach, and many coaches can have years of experience to share with the people they are coaching.

Progressive discipline. Organizations might use coaching for this reason, which can cause it to be seen negatively. Coaching should be seen as a standard leadership development tool and an investment in the talent the organization wants to develop and retain.

Traits of Coachable Managers

The leader who seeks out coaching will have these five unique attributes:

Commitment to continuous learning and improvement. Coaches enjoy working with people who want to get better and seek ongoing improvement.

High aspirations that are exciting and often lead to great things. Leaders who seek out a coach usually have ambitious goals and want to see great things happen. They hold themselves accountable for achieving their goals, including ongoing gains in performance.

Sense of possibility in themselves and the potential for personal greatness, as well as the potential in those around them. This sense of possibility makes them more attractive to others and gets people aligned toward a common goal.

Vulnerability in ways that allow them to bypass other leaders. It is not easy to actually learn the truth about how we come across to others compared with how we hope to come across to others. It is not easy to hear feedback from our colleagues and then resolve to improve.

It is not easy to allow give-and-take when pushing an idea forward rather than win at all costs. This vulnerability ultimately leads to improved results, relationships, and success. By being able to have just enough vulnerability, effective leaders are able to learn, grow, and get better.

Flexibility in how they get results, which gives them more options. Coaching can often help leaders develop new approaches to handle different situations.

Leaders who are coachable understand the need to be flexible and have a range of styles and approaches for different people and different situations. This allows them to lead more naturally and authentically, rather than relying on long-standing patterns that make them rigid.

What Coaching Can Accomplish

From the perspective of the routine and daily work environment, coaching can help a leader:

Reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed by workload, by complicated and lengthy assignments, by difficult employees, and by power-hungry supervisors.

Be able to deal with the frustrations that occur in the workplace with other supervisors and with employees.

Manage the sometimes lack of clarity that is provided by the governing board or a supervisor.

Get things done effectively and efficiently, in a timely manner, and meet the expectations of the participants and the recipients.

Have some measure of success in a new role that will enhance the work environment and have some measure of future success.

Look good in his or her role, have fewer headaches in a role, and advance a career with matching compensation growth.

Coaching Employees

Disciplining an employee who has engaged in improper conduct should be different from dealing with an employee who is not performing work duties well. In fact, most business people prefer to refer to the latter as coaching, rather than discipline.

In a situation where there are performance problems, employees may not be willfully doing something that violates your policies and may just need some guidance. Some performance problems may even be the result of morale problems.

Effective coaching and giving constructive feedback can be difficult and challenging, but have their advantages:

- Employees learn more about their jobs and perform better.
- Employees develop a sense of loyalty toward you and the business.
- Working conditions are improved.
- Productivity is enhanced and maximized.

The characteristics of a good coach are that he or she is:

- confident in the abilities of individuals
- enthusiastic
- caring
- supportive
- goal-oriented
- knowledgeable
- a good communicator
- patient
- responsive
- an excellent listener

The coaching process has certain perspectives and behaviors that can be duplicated in the workplace. They are:

- **Mutual respect.** Both you and your employees must accept the mutual dependence each has on the other in order for each of you to succeed. From that relationship, respect can grow based on the contributions of each party.
- **Supportive environment.** Where there is respect, it follows that the working environment will be supportive. The opposite is true where there is distrust or conflict.
- **Trust.** Where there is fear, there can be no trust. The workplace must encourage an atmosphere of trust, which includes candor and an acceptance of an initial level of failure.

In order to counsel employees, you must focus your attention on the goals that you are

trying to get the employee to achieve. Those goals may be to increase profits, increase market share, create new products, reduce error rates, or achieve other business-related objectives. In order for employees to know *how* their work can contribute to the goal, they must be taught:

- what the goal is
- how it is achieved
- what part their work plays in reaching the goal

As the coach, you must:

- set clear expectations
- set performance standards
- measure performance
- correct deviations from performance standards
- make it clear that you are on the same side as the employee
- provide guidance while preserving the employee's self-esteem

Once you have an understanding of the philosophy of coaching an employee, you're ready to move on to:

- [the steps involved in coaching an employee](#)
- [giving constructive feedback](#)
- [pitfalls of constructive feedback](#)

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Effective Training: Key to Equitable Performance Appraisals

Organizations must be mindful of internal equity when developing performance standards. [PM Magazine, January 2020]

Jan 1, 2020 | ARTICLE

BY JAMES GRABOWSKI; ROBERT J. GREENE, PH.D.; PETER RONZA; VALERIE JOHNSON; AND LYNN LOHMAN

Employees must view appraisals of their performance as equitable if they are to accept the performance management system. But managers tend to vary in the level of expectations they have for their employees.

The perception that standards are uneven across managers can create significant dissatisfaction and the feeling that the playing field is not level. An additional concern is that uneven performance standards can cause a statistically significant adverse impact on protected classes related to pay and promotion.

Principles Underlying Effective Training

Training managers is the most obvious strategy for gaining consistency, but most traditional approaches that focus on identifying various types of rater error have been shown by research to be only moderately effective. The approach that has shown to be the most effective is using “frame of reference” training.

Frame of reference training focuses on developing a consistent set of performance standards. Managers work in groups on a case that consists of several completed appraisals that have commentary about job-related results and behaviors, but no ratings. During the training, individual managers independently arrive at their own ratings, factor by factor and



overall. Their individual results are compiled and then presented to the group, which is tasked to come up with a common set of ratings. Those whose ratings vary from the majority initially are invited to provide their rationale and through discussion the group arrives at consensus ratings. The dialogue among participants leads to a common frame of reference as to what constitutes adequate performance, performance that significantly exceeds standards, and performance that does not fully meet standards. This consensus is used to develop rich definitions of what performance at the various rating levels looks like. These standards then are used in the future to guide ratings.

When performance rating distributions across managers are first compared, it is often found that significant differences exist. A metropolitan utility that did a “dry run” of a new performance appraisal system found that the percentage of the 1,300 employees receiving “outstanding” ratings varied from one percent to 60 percent across departments. Even though it is likely that distributions will have some legitimate variation, due to the mix of the workforce in each unit, this large difference is also likely to be caused by a significantly different understanding of what rating levels are intended to mean. If these differences are not analyzed and addressed, the result will be inequitable ratings across departments and a resulting inequity in the administrative consequences. Employees are inherently suspicious that peers working for other managers are getting higher ratings for the same level of performance, due to differences in the level of expectations held by managers. This can erode satisfaction and can lead to legal action if pay or other outcomes are tied to appraisal ratings.

An Application of Frame of Reference Training

A city with a population of 50,000 in the western part of the Chicago metropolitan area implemented a frame of reference training program. The city of Elmhurst and Pontifex Consulting had worked together to develop a new classification and compensation system to ensure pay administration was equitable and competitive. The city then created a new performance appraisal format that would be used for all employees. Management was committed to ensure that equivalent performance standards were being used by all managers, so that appraisals were equitable across departments. Employees not covered by a collective bargaining contract had their pay actions tied to performance appraisal ratings, thereby making equity even more important.

Elmhurst management decided on using a three-level rating system, using the following descriptors:

It is common to have five rating levels, which necessitates having an “Outstanding” and an “Unacceptable” rating. However, some believe that unacceptable performance should be dealt with during the year and result in performance improvement plans that should either correct the deficient performance or initiate administrative action if it does not improve. If an Outstanding rating is used, it can be described as: “Individual regularly made exceptional contributions that had a significant and positive impact on the performance of the unit/organization. Results consistently exceeded performance standards and objectives significantly over a sustained period. Employee has mastered all job-related skills and possesses a broad range of capabilities. Provides a model for excellence and helps others to do their jobs better.”

If a three-level approach is used, the organization should ensure that an employee performing consistently in an outstanding manner is acknowledged in other ways, in order to communicate that extraordinary contributions are valued. In the private sector, cash awards may be used, but in public sector organizations, this is less common. The culture of the organization will have an impact on the approach used to reward those contributing at the highest level. And some jobs are controlled by set procedures, making it difficult for an employee to produce results that necessitate an “Outstanding” rating.

The Training Process

A two-part training program was developed. Part one consisted in a series of group sessions with managers and employees in attendance at the same sessions. The principles of sound performance management were presented, and open discussion was encouraged. The decision to have all types of employees in the sessions together was based on the desire to openly discuss the challenges associated with performance appraisal and to ensure everyone knew that they had all heard the same thing. Organizations often train managers and employees separately, leaving the door open to the suspicion that not everyone heard the same thing.

Once the fundamentals training was completed, the consultants and HR met with department heads and their key staff members to begin work on part two of the training. The Police, Fire, Public Works, and Administrative department directors were each provided

with an explanation of the frame of reference approach and were asked to develop a set of dummy appraisals that could be used in the training. The appraisals were written with commentary provided on job-related results and behaviors but no ratings. They consisted of examples of performance at all levels, which would require participants to decide how an overall rating would be arrived at. Once the models were completed for each department, they were distributed to the members of the management/command structure (everyone who would be doing appraisals). The managers rated each of the model appraisals based on the commentary provided for each rating factor and for the overall rating. The results were used in the frame of reference dialogue sessions with all managers of each department participating in the same session. The objective for these sessions was to establish a common understanding of how each of the rating levels should be interpreted and to ensure that the descriptions of what each level of rating meant on the appraisal form were adequate to promote consistency across raters. The appropriate approach to combining individual factor ratings to produce an overall rating was then agreed upon.

In order to ensure the departments were aligned with each other, a review session with the city manager and department heads participating was then held. Definitions of each level of performance were developed through dialogue. It was agreed that forced distribution of ratings should not be imposed, since a different mix of employees performing at the various levels is expected across smaller units. Forced distributions are arbitrary and have not held up in legal proceedings. On the other hand, expected distributions may be communicated as guidelines.

Managers should be informed that if their actual rating distributions vary significantly from the guidelines, supporting evidence will be needed to support them. A further step that can improve alignment is the use of “calibration sessions” at each level. Supervisors meet with their manager as a group and align their ratings; managers meet with their director to align their ratings; and so on. During these alignment sessions, everyone has an opportunity to recommend refinements to the rating level descriptors to make them as clear and consistent as possible.

Conclusion

Each organization must concern itself with internal equity when performance standards are developed and then used to appraise performance. Individuals vary in their interpretation of

what constitutes adequate, superior, and poor performance, and in order to minimize the inconsistency across raters, steps must be taken to moderate these differences.

Gaining acceptance by employees that ratings are fair and accurate will always be a challenge. Cognitive bias leads to people believing they are better performers than they are. This form of bias cannot be completely corrected. Recognizing that the bias exists and discussing it with employees can help to alleviate some unwarranted dissatisfaction with ratings that are believed to be too low. People can accept to some degree the difference of opinion between raters and themselves, but suspicions that inequity exists across raters will erode acceptance. When inconsistency across raters is apparent, this reality (or perception) elicits strong feelings of inequity, but organizations can take steps to minimize the amount of distortion it causes. Frame of reference training has been shown by research to be the most effective way to do that.



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Keywords:

Human Resources, Employee Performance, performance appraisal, performance appraisals, employee training, performance rating, rating employee performance

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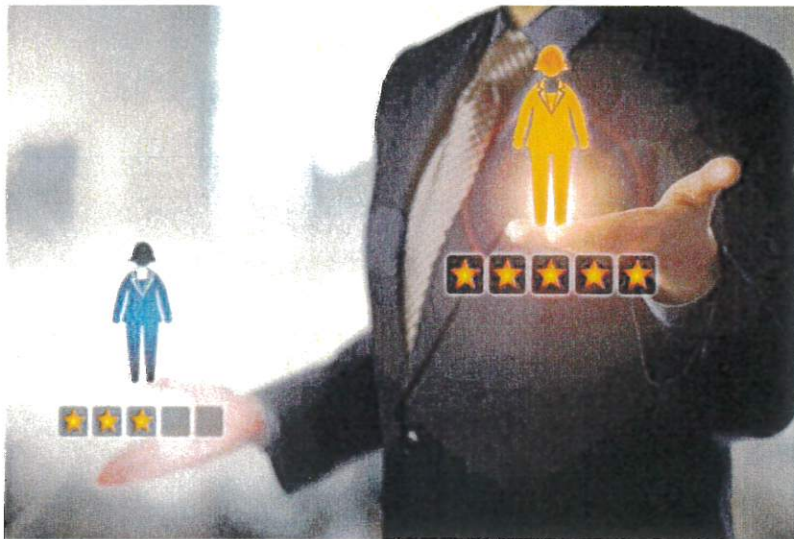
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How to Use Expectations and Feedback

How Public Employers Are Reevaluating the Employee Review

Local governments are changing the frequency of performance evaluations, who receives them and what they're assessing.

by [Katherine Barrett & Richard Greene](#) | May 28, 2019 AT 4:00 AM



(Shutterstock)

There's not a lot that people like less than getting criticized. For many, it's the least favorite part of their job.

In National Research Center surveys, local government employees pan the way their employers deal with employee performance. Only roughly a third think they do a good job of handling low-performing and high-performing workers. And although 72 percent believe supervisors treat employees with respect, only 55 percent approve of the way their employers evaluate performance.

"The ratings have been low since I started doing this 10 years ago," says Michelle Kobayashi, the National Research Center's vice president. "Local governments are not getting better at evaluating performance."

But they're trying to. There's no silver bullet, though ample experimentation in the public sector provides hope for better ways of giving feedback to workers.

One of the biggest problems with employee evaluations, says Scott Lazenby, who has spent four decades managing cities, is that they tend to take place only once a year. This leaves the potential that a staffer contentedly goes to work every day, only to find at the end of 12 months that his efforts have been systematically unsatisfactory. Equally problematic is the deferred validation for a superior worker.

"What a silly idea it is to store feedback up for one big review at the end of the year," says Lazenby, currently the city manager for Lake Oswego, Calif.

That's slowly changing.

Last year, Charlottesville, Va., started emphasizing ongoing communication between supervisors and employees about performance, and formal reviews are now done at least twice a year.

"Employees should expect no surprises in a performance review," says Galloway Beck, the city's human resources director. "If someone has been performing in a less than satisfactory way, they should already know that."

In San Mateo County, Calif., a performance evaluation experiment is now in its third year, currently involving 600 of the county's 5,000 employees. The new process abolishes formal annual reviews, doesn't include a rating component and encourages constant communication between supervisors and employees, including meetings every other week.

The infrequency of performance reviews isn't their only problem. They're also often inconsistent. That's something Minneapolis is addressing.

In the past, "some did performance reviews and some didn't," says Patience Ferguson, the city's chief human resources officer.

Now, no Minneapolis staffers are exempt from an evaluation -- not even department heads.

While the city still does annual evaluations, it's updated what workers are being assessed on. It aligned reviews with the strategic goals of its 22 departments, helping individuals see how they're contributing. The city also created a new category called "cultural agility." This considers whether an employee is aware of cultural differences and is open to people with different backgrounds.

Whatever reforms are made, it will likely take time to find ones that stick. In Memphis, managers have been regularly readjusting a new evaluation system for the past three years.

The city created a five-point rating scale and tied it to end-of-the-year bonuses. Employees liked the bonuses, but complaints flowed in about the rating system.

Many didn't like that a "3" meant "meets expectations." That sounded "too average," says Eric Sabatini, senior manager of HR analytics and performance for Memphis. The city changed the definitions in 2018 -- so that a 3 is now considered "strong performance," a 4 is "exceptional performance" and a 5 is "superior performance" -- but managers had a tough time distinguishing between them. Who wouldn't?

Memphis has gone back to the drawing board. It's now considering removing numerical ratings altogether.

"We haven't figured this out yet," says Sabatini. "We're looking at options."

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Home / Blog Posts

Four Steps to Improving Your Organization's Performance Review Process

The performance review process is an important part of managing a workforce; however, local governments can have a process that needs to be updated.

BLOG POST | Aug 15, 2018

Editor's note: This content is Powered by [NEOGOV](#). For more content like this, check out the [human resources topic page](#).

by Lauren Girardin, marketing and communications consultant, [laurengirardin.com](#)



The performance review process at local government agencies is often outdated and disconnected from employees' important day-to-day responsibilities. According to [Gallup](#) research, only 2 in 10 employees strongly agree that their performance is managed in a way that motivates them to do outstanding work. If this is the case in your organization, giving the performance review process a thorough overhaul can radically rejuvenate employee engagement.

Leading your organization to revamp its entire performance review process isn't simple, but the rewards can be significant. It can improve organizational culture, give high-performing employees recognition that can reduce turnover, and support struggling employees toward professional and personal growth.

How can you lead your organization to change your performance review process for the better? Here's an easily manageable four-step process.

1. Start with a clean slate.

Starting with a clean slate means you can lead your organization to accomplish something greater than simply changing your performance review process. You can create an all-new process that prioritizes the future over the past. You get to cleanse your performance review process of the negative legacy of bad habits and false assumptions that are often associated with outdated performance practices.

Outdated performance review processes and disengaged employees are budgetary drains. **Gallup** estimates that a lack of engagement among government employees costs U.S. taxpayers an estimated \$18 billion per year.

To start with a clean slate, open and honest communication is crucial. Explain to your staff that you want to hear any and all ideas, tools, methods, and structures that may be able to motivate people to constantly improve their performance. Partner with your human resources director for research and data gathering about employee engagement. Take the opportunity to strengthen trust in your leadership by engaging everyone in changing the performance review process for the greater good. Be ready to squelch the "that's not how we do it here" attitude that keeps valuable new ideas from being voiced and implemented.

2. Engage employees in defining the purpose.

If you haven't communicated the purpose of performance reviews clearly, there may be discrepancies in how people perceive and use the reviews. A lack of clarity can also influence your workforce into believing performance reviews are pointless. If performance reviews haven't led to purposeful action at your organization, this conclusion may be correct.

In a **survey of chief executives of mid-sized U.S. city governments**, researchers examined why performance measures met or exceeded expectations. They found that "the single most important factor that helped to explain the gap between expectations and actual experience was the extent of 'buy-in' of performance measurement by line managers and administrators."

Achieving buy-in begins with your workforce feeling they have been deeply listened to. Lead your team in an open, honest dialog that allows all employees to be heard. Create collaborative conversations that break down team silos and eliminate leadership echo chambers. To give purpose to your performance review process, listen to your employees' ideas about the ways that performance reviews can support both their professional and personal growth, as well as the overall success of the organization.

3. Find the solution that fits the purpose.

There's no universal performance review process, and the best technology solutions can be adapted to meet a variety of needs. To bring about transformational change, you'll want your team to carefully evaluate the technology solution the organization will use to track and manage the performance review process. Involve human resources, information technology, and even finance leadership to create a robust evaluation team.

If your organization chooses a rigid solution, it will be forced to compromise in ways that can result in a less effective performance review process and outcomes. A flexible cloud-based **talent management system** is ideal because it allows human resources to function more effectively, helps control costs, keeps your organization in compliance, and **mitigates risk**.

Have your staff choose cloud-based software for government that can be adapted to fit your purpose. Make sure they look for a set of methods and tools that can evolve and scale as the organization's performance review process becomes more sophisticated.

4. Match measurements to purpose.

The Urban Institute, a government research organization, observed, "A key problem...in effectively using performance information is getting agency personnel to take the performance information seriously and use the information to help monitor and improve their programs."

Your performance review process will be more effective when what you measure fits your purpose. Change your process, so your data gives you, your leadership, and your employees the information needed to spot skill gaps, make important decisions, change future behaviors, and improve organizational outcomes.

As you change your performance review process, guide your team to measure only what the organization can act on to avoid a data dump of overwhelming and irrelevant information. Lean on human resources to collect data that will be useful in recognizing employee performance and motivating employees to grow and develop in the future. Assess performance regularly so you can give employees the opportunity to do their best every day.

NEOGOV is an ICMA Strategic Partner that provides a high-quality and easy-to-use talent management system to service the public sector market.

Related Resources

View and Review: Questions for Performance Reviews. This 2013 blog post provides sample questions to use in performance reviews.

It's Your Performance Review. Own It. A 2015 *Public Management (PM)* article gives specific actions that can be taken to make a performance review a positive one.

Maximizing Employees' Performance. In another *PM* article from 2017, the focus is on how to get the most from employee performance, including how to give good feedback.

How to Engineer Public-Employee Engagement. A 2017 blog post that focuses on how to improve employee engagement, including three tips to actively engage your workforce.

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Performance Improvement Documentation Performance

As we move forward with the development of our leaders and a culture of accountability our processes will continue to be evaluated and changed as appropriate. We want to ensure that all documentation is consistent and is presented in a positive and clear manner.

The templates for Performance Improvement documentation with respect to addressing performance driven concerns have been modified to ensure we are communicating performance expectations and accountability in a manner conducive to our employees' success.

There are three levels of documentation for Performance – Verbal Warning, Written Warning, and Final Written Warning. Please find attached the templates for each level of documentation and examples of written documentation for each level. The tone for each remains positive and demonstrates our commitment to the employee's development and growth; however, there is a slight difference in the approach as we move forward in the documentation process.

In addition, it is important to ensure that we remain focused on the behaviors being demonstrated and the documentation should be competency based. For your reference we have included below the leadership competencies, definitions for each, and observable actions that demonstrate one's ability to master the competency as outlined by The Fresh Market.

Performance Improvement is our opportunity to address concerns with employees, focus on behaviors, and demonstrate our commitment to their development. Performance Improvement documentation does not take the place of regular and on-going face to face dialogue with employees and should be presented in a manner that is positive, constructive, and professional.

Leadership Competencies (Definitions and Observable Actions)

Building & Maintaining Relationships – Develops trusting relationships with others inside and outside the company.

- Engages employees individually, expressing interest, care and appreciation as well as recognizing individual and team performance and providing positive reinforcement around their contributions
- Listens to employees' questions, concerns, and complaints and responds to or seeks to resolve in a timely manner
- Seeks others' opinions and viewpoints, asking for input about products, programs and processes, considering new or competing ideas and promoting a warm, safe, and inclusive work environment
- Builds relationships across the organization, with customers, and vendors and maximizes those relationships to ensure effective impact and performance

Directing and Developing People – Manages work flow process and improves employee capability and engagement.

- Engages in the development of Assistant Store Managers by partnering on development plans and training assignments designed to increase technical skills and leadership competencies
- Uses Situational Frontline Leadership to partner with employees and drive performance on new tasks, delegated tasks and routinely performed tasks
- Shares responsibility and accountability by effectively delegating tasks where appropriate, and follows up on delegated tasks to verify accuracy and timely completion
- Delivers specific, positive, and constructive performance feedback to employees on a regular basis
- Actively engages with employees to establish understanding and ensure compliance around the Code of Business Conduct and Ethics
- Empowers employees to succeed as well as make errors as a part of the learning process

Confronting and Managing Conflict – Promptly and effectively addresses performance problems, interpersonal conflict between employees or with others and customer concerns, issues or complaints.

- Promptly addresses performance concerns (silence is endorsement)
- Remains neutral when handling interpersonal conflict, focusing on the behaviors being demonstrated, soliciting information from all involved parties and seeking to resolve the conflict in a timely manner
- Remains focused on and committed to the employees success when tasks are performed incorrectly or policies are not followed
- Follows up and holds managers and employees accountable for ongoing performance improvement, using Performance Improvement Documentation in a consistent and timely manner (consults HRC as needed)
- Speaks in a candid and direct manner about performance improvement needed and the potential ramifications if improvement is not achieved or maintained

Being Organized – Implements processes or routines for accomplishing work, ensures employees have the resources and information needed to perform their jobs and orders and prioritizes tasks at hand.

- Implements regular routines/processes, prioritizes tasks, and manages time in order to maximize business impact
- Communicates information and goals clearly and respectfully to all necessary individuals in a timely manner for action to be taken or work to be completed
- Sets a plan of action for accomplishing daily tasks, establishing realistic timeframes and deadlines, distributing assignments and allocating sufficient resources to complete all tasks on time
- Organizes paperwork and electronic correspondence associated with routine tasks and procedures
- Maintains organization of all physical workspaces (backroom, coolers, manager's desk area, department head desk areas)

Action Oriented – Takes action on and ownership for decisions, without requiring guidance from upper management. Engages in the business and urgently responds to critical issues. Maximizes productivity and persists amidst unexpected challenges.

- Makes timely decisions, re-prioritizing tasks and shifting focus in the midst of an ever changing environment, often without the benefit of complete information
- Maximizes productivity, efficiency and service levels by quickly shifting resources between departments as business needs change throughout the day
- Prioritizes customers' needs by temporarily setting aside completion of routine tasks to attend to customers but delegating the tasks to others or returning to complete the tasks
- Adapts to new demands, priorities, and challenges, and incorporates new information when it is available
- Stays engaged in, aware of, and responsive to the store conditions, personnel concerns and service level being delivered throughout the shift

Self-Management – Solicits performance feedback and intentionally develops opportunity areas. Conducts oneself professionally, displaying a positive work ethic, modeling desired behavior and adhering to all policies.

- Seeks and is receptive to feedback, and intentionally applies energy to improve opportunity areas
- Takes initiative to increase knowledge and/or skill on topics or in areas that are less familiar or comfortable
- Follows organizational guidelines and policies
- Demonstrates professional composure in speech/ tone, maintaining a positive, solutions-oriented perspective at all times and modeling the Code of Business Conduct and Ethics
- Displays confidence and persistence and remains approachable to staff in the midst of a challenge or opposition
- Supports company initiatives and champions change, being able to clearly explain to others the reasoning behind new initiatives or programs
- Models employee-initiated engagement when servicing customers
- Sets personal goals and takes ownership of goals
- Allows self to commit errors as a natural part of the learning and development process but seeks to learn from the experiences

Decision Quality – Analyzes situations to identify core issues, draws accurate conclusions based on data, and anticipates potential problems and consequences. Solves difficult or unfamiliar problems, providing sound explanations for decisions.

- Uses objective information/ data and draws accurate conclusions in a timely manner when making decisions about driving all aspects of the business
- Evaluates multiple options and considers resulting outcomes before choosing a course of action
- Seeks input from others and uses all available resources in the decision making process

Despite flaws, survey finds employers sticking to performance evaluations

August 15, 2014 at 5:00 am by: [Tammy Binford](#)

If it's not review season at your organization, you probably aren't thinking about [performance evaluations](#). Often review time comes around just once a year, and it's not top of mind any other time—possibly because so many people dread the process.



"Your evaluation is based on the next 30 seconds. Go!"

For human resources professionals, that process can be even more stressful than it is for others because HR often is tasked with making sure managers give thoughtful time and attention to reviewing their subordinates—a tough job since many managers and supervisors consider time devoted to performance reviews as time lost for what they consider their real work. In addition to being review enforcers, HR professionals also may bear the responsibility of designing—and defending—their organization's performance review process, a thankless task.

Thankless or not, the vast majority of employers participating in a recent survey report that they regularly conduct performance appraisals, and three-quarters rate their evaluation practices as average or above. The survey, conducted by Business and Legal Resources and released in June, found that 91.9 percent of the 1,481 respondents said they conduct performance appraisals. Most of the employers surveyed, 51.2 percent, rated their review system average, 21.9 percent called their process above average, and 2.1 percent considered their system excellent. But nearly one-fourth, 24.8 percent, rated their evaluation system as below average, in need of improvement, or even terrible.

Evaluation flaws

Besides gauging what employers think about their approach to performance reviews, the survey collected data on the worst errors employers see their evaluators making. Here's the list of problems cited:

- Raters who don't follow up with employees after an evaluation to check on progress was named as a problem by 40.1 percent of the respondents.
- Raters who don't want to hurt employees' feelings or overrate them, so they put all employees in the middle of the scale was named by 40.0 percent.
- Raters who focus on recent events rather than the entire review period, 38.9 percent.

- Raters who are late completing evaluations, 38.3 percent.
- Raters who are too lenient, 37.6 percent.
- Raters who don't include details on why employees are rated a certain way, 37.4 percent.
- Raters who don't include a plan for improvement, 25.5 percent.
- Raters succumbing to the halo effect—evaluating overall performance based on a single area in which the employee excels, 18.6 percent.
- Raters giving in to perceptual bias, meaning they base ratings on their own perception of what is right or wrong or acceptable, 16.4 percent.
- Raters who don't complete evaluations, 13.8 percent.
- Raters who focus on a good or bad incident from when the employee first came under the rater's supervision, 13.8 percent.
- Raters who overrate employees who share the rater's interests/beliefs, 12.6 percent.
- Raters who underrate overall performance based on a single negative impression of the employee, 12.3 percent.

What reviews measure

When tweaking a performance review system, or starting from scratch, it may be helpful to know what other employers measure. The survey found that 80.7 percent of respondents measure employees' overall performance in their review systems. Specific attributes are measured by 47.2 percent of the survey respondents, and completion of specific goals is an area measured by 50.9 percent.

For nonexempt employees, the top five factors used when evaluating performance were shown to be quality (89 percent), attitude/cooperation (74.5 percent), communication skills (72.9 percent), [attendance and punctuality](#) (69.9 percent), and dependability/reliability (68.1 percent).

The five least used factors in nonexempt reviews were interpersonal relationships (55.3 percent), [safety](#) (42.9 percent), flexibility (38.4 percent), resourcefulness (30.3 percent), and creativity (25.6 percent).

For exempt employees, the top five factors included in performance reviews were communication skills (79.1 percent), job knowledge (75.5 percent), achieving goals (72.5 percent), leadership (67.2 percent), and decision-making ability (66.7 percent).

The five least used factors for exempt employees were organizing ability (44.5 percent), attendance/punctuality (41.1 percent), financial management (37.2 percent), creativity (33.8 percent), and staff utilization (25 percent).

More harm than good?

Although the survey results show a level of satisfaction with the performance appraisal methods, the stereotype of dreaded reviews persists. And a recent university study suggests that negative feedback communicated during reviews can be discouraging even to strong performers interested in improving their performance.

The research, spearheaded by Satoris Culbertson, a management professor at Kansas State University, looked at how different personalities take criticism. The researchers separated a group of 234 employees at a large university into three groups—those who are motivated by focusing on learning and developing their skills, those who try to show their competence and gain positive feedback, and those who avoid negative feedback by avoiding tasks in which they might fail.

The researchers hypothesized that people who strive to learn and develop their skills would take criticism better than the other groups, but their research found that even those motivated by a desire to learn and improve were discouraged by criticism. Therefore, they remind managers and HR professionals to keep in mind how the person being evaluated interprets the review. Evaluators need to make sure what they're trying to communicate isn't misunderstood.

Performance Improvement Templates
Template for a Verbal Warning for Performance

To: Member of Management

From: Upper Management

CC: Human Resources
Next Level of Management

Date:

Re: Verbal Warning – Performance

Employee name, as you are aware The Fresh Market has established performance standards for the {Title of Position} role. As we have discussed, it is my expectation that you meet or exceed the requirements for the position.

As we discussed recently {Dates are preferable} you need to improve your performance in the areas of _____ . More specifically you should place a strong focus on _____ . As you begin to develop a plan of action to address the concerns noted above you should be aware of your strengths in the areas of _____ in order to leverage these skills to assist you in your development.

{Next two paragraphs need to define the competency not being met, provide specific examples of where the competency was not met, provide the result of the action or non action, and then specific actions that can be taken to address the area of opportunity.}

In order for you to improve in the areas we have discussed we will continue to engage in on-going discussions regarding your demonstrated performance. You are encouraged to seek feedback, guidance, and coaching in order to remain focused on your needed improvement and on-going development.

We are confident in your ability to demonstrate the performance improvement required in order for you to be successful at The Fresh Market.

Employee Signature

Date

Upper Management

Date

Human Resources Signature

Date

Employee Comments:

Template for a Written Warning for Performance

To: Member of Management
From: Upper Management
CC: Human Resources
Next Level of Management
Date:
Re: **Written Warning – Performance**

Employee name, as you are aware The Fresh Market has established performance standards for the {Title of Position} role. As we have discussed, it is my expectation that you meet or exceed the requirements for the position. During our discussion regarding your performance on {Date}, we administered a Verbal Warning regarding the need for improvement in the areas of _____.

As we discussed most recently {Dates are preferable} you need to improve your performance in the areas of _____. More specifically, you should place a strong focus on _____. As you begin to develop a plan of action to address the concerns noted above you should be aware of your strengths in the areas of _____ in order to leverage these skills to assist you in your development.

{Next two paragraphs need to redefine the competency not being met, provide specific examples of where the competency is still not being met, provide examples of the result of the action or non action, and then specific actions that must be taken to address the area of opportunity.}

In order for you to improve in the areas we have discussed we will continue to engage in on-going discussions regarding your demonstrated performance. As previously stated in your Verbal Warning, you are encouraged to seek feedback, guidance, and coaching in order to remain focused on your needed improvement and on-going development.

We are confident in your ability to demonstrate the performance improvement required in order for you to be successful at The Fresh Market.

Employee Signature

Date

Upper Management

Date

Human Resources Signature

Date

Employee Comments:

Template for a Final Written Warning for Performance

To: Member of Management
From: Upper Management
CC: Human Resources
Next Level of Management
Date:
Re: **Final Written Warning – Performance**

Employee name, as we have discussed on several occasions The Fresh Market has established performance standards for the {Title of Position} role. It is our expectation that you meet or exceed the requirements for the position.

During our discussion regarding your performance on {Date} we administered a Written Warning regarding the need for improvement in the areas of _____.
In addition we specifically discussed you placing a strong focus on _____.
However, you have not met the expectations and maintained the required performance levels required by the Company. **{Or if this Final Written Warning addresses behavior that is different from that addressed in the earlier Written Warning, replace the previous sentence with the following: Most recently {Dates are preferable}, we discussed your need to improve your performance in the areas of _____, as detailed more specifically below.}** You must take the initiative to improve your skills, maintain the required performance levels, and demonstrate the required ability to perform the leadership competencies as outlined to you in order to succeed.

{Next two paragraphs need to redefine or explain the competency not being met, provide specific examples of where the competency is still not being met, provide examples of the result of the action or non action, and then specific actions that must be taken to address the area of opportunity. If this is the first warning addressing a behavior, there should be an explanation of the severity of the concern.}

We will continue to engage in on-going discussions regarding your demonstrated performance; however, you must take the initiative to demonstrate the required performance and maintain that performance. We continue to encourage you to seek feedback, guidance, and coaching in order to remain focused on your needed improvement and on-going development; however, failure to demonstrate overall performance improvement will result in further action up to, and including termination.

You must demonstrate a clear focus and the required improvement regarding your professional development.

Employee Signature

Date

Upper Management

Date

Human Resources Signature

Date

Employees' and supervisors' rights and responsibilities

Employees' rights

The employee is entitled to

1. A timely review
2. A review based on documented facts and previously set standards and goals
3. A review that lasts a reasonable length of time
4. The opportunity to present the employee's own understanding of his or her performance in the job, and the right to a dialogue on points that have been raised
5. Privacy during the formal discussion, and confidentiality regarding the content of the review
6. A respectful expression of disagreement with the supervisor
7. An appeal.

Employees' responsibilities

The employee is responsible for

1. His or her own performance

2. Listening to the supervisor's point of view
3. Recording examples of his or her own key activities and accomplishments during the year
4. Taking an active role in the review discussion and in setting goals
5. Meeting reasonable standards and goals
6. Thinking about past problems and working toward improving performance
7. Examining personal and professional factors that impede more positive performance
8. Identifying career goals.

Supervisors' rights

The supervisor is entitled to

1. Provide honest feedback based on observable behavior
2. Disagree respectfully with the employee
3. Present factual information to defend a review.

Supervisors' responsibilities

The supervisor is responsible for

1. Providing realistic, precise examples of good and deficient performance over time
2. Facilitating, monitoring, acknowledging, and documenting the employee's performance

3. Listening to the employee's point of view
4. Setting reasonable standards and goals
5. Helping the employee develop a realistic plan to meet goals and to sustain or change performance
6. Identifying resources for the employee's career development
7. Ensuring that all items of interest and concern to the employee are addressed.

Performance reviews will probably continue to be an area in which both supervisors and employees can improve. It is up to each supervisor and employee to use the existing system as well as possible, pointing out aspects of the system that can be refined. Staff can play a role in the organization's evaluation of its system's fairness, ease of use, and effectiveness. However, the key to the success of performance reviews as a motivational tool does not lie in the brilliance of the system and the forms but rather in the commitment of staff to make it work through communication built on trust and mutual understanding.

Action Plan for Performance Improvement

For non-bargaining unit employees

Employee Name: (name) Job Title: (title) Dept/Division: (dept/division)
 Supervisor: (name) Action Plan Begin Date: (date) Action Plan End Date: (date)

Reason for Action Plan: (i.e., the employee's performance evaluation for FY16 is rated at the Needs Improvement level, etc.)

Required Performance Outcomes: (How will you know that this employee is Successful?)

Note: All areas below must be performed at Satisfactory or higher.

(list measurable outcomes here)

Steps for Improvement: (What specific actions are recommended to help achieve the Required Performance Outcomes?)

(List specific actions here)

Resources and Support: (list training, coaching, mentors, tools and resources here).

Note: Failure to meet and sustain improved performance may lead to initiation of corrective action.

Employee Comments: _____

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____ Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Action Plan Approved: Next Level Mgr Name: _____ Manager Signature: _____ Date: _____

Follow-up Meeting Dates	Improvement Observed	Improvement Still Needed	Perf Results Met? Yes/No	Employee Initials	Supervisor Initials

cc: (name, director title)
 (name, manager title)
 Human Resources File

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

EMPLOYEE NAME: _____ PERSONNEL #: _____
JOB TITLE: _____ POSITION #: _____
CABINET/DEPT. NAME: _____ DIV./BRANCH: _____
SUPERVISOR'S NAME: _____ REVIEW PERIOD: ____/____/____ to ____/____/____
FIRST INTERIM REVIEW: _____ SECOND INTERIM REVIEW: _____ THIRD INTERIM REVIEW: _____ OTHER: _____

(PLEASE INDICATE FOR WHICH INTERIM REVIEW THIS PERFORMANCE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED)

This is to provide you with a formal Performance Improvement Plan in order to correct performance in areas that need improvement. To meet the expectations established for your position, you must improve in the specific area(s) noted below and continue successful performance in all other areas.

Performance Improvement Areas:
Specific areas which need improvement.

Performance Improvement Plan:
Corrective action to be taken and dates for conferences. (Additional sheets may be added if needed).

What resources or support, if any, will be provided to assist the employee in making the required improvement? (Additional sheets may be added if needed).

DATE OF NEXT CONFERENCE: ____/____/____

Performance Improvement Plan Outcome:
Specific results or outcome of performance plan, details on next steps.

Lesson 5



Home / News

ICMA Career Compass No. 70: How to Handle a Difficult Conversation with a Direct Report

The goal of the conversation is not only to correct the negative behavior but to conduct the conversation in such a way to preserve the relationship

ARTICLE | Mar 19, 2019

I'm a new supervisor in a county parks department. I was a team member before I was promoted, and I now supervise my team.

I enjoy my new position and am learning a lot. However, I am having several problems making the shift from peer to supervisor. I was friends with many of my peers and

generally had good relationships with my team members. Now I'm the boss. I want to be liked, but I feel the need to assert my authority.

I'm getting to the point of having a difficult conversation with a direct report who is not meeting my performance expectations. Another direct report who has longer tenure than me seems to challenge my ideas in staff meetings on a regular basis.

How do I conduct these difficult conversations, so I don't ruin relationships?



It is a rough transition from peer to supervisor. Supervising others requires a shift in mindset and behavior. The more conscious you are about the shifts, the less difficulty you will experience in making the shifts. As a supervisor, you now operate in a different world requiring different attitudes and behaviors.

Shifts in Mindset and Behavior

Here are some of the common shifts:

<u>Before</u>	<u>After</u>
Peer	Supervisor
Team member	Team leader
Self-centered	Other-centered
My picture	Bigger picture
Individual contribution	Team contribution
My responsibility	Our responsibility
Do work	Do work + work through others

Typical Situations That Require a Difficult Conversation and Action

There are many rewards and joys moving up to a supervisor or manager position. However, there are some challenges as well. Given your new responsibilities as supervisor, one challenge is confronting certain situations requiring correction.

Having difficult conversations with subordinates is now part of your job description. Typical situations requiring such conversations include those with team members who

- Are not performing as required (for instance, their work is messy, late and/or incomplete).
- Arrive late to work or leave early.
- Constantly question your authority, approaches, or ideas but don't provide their ideas or proposed solutions.
- Do not contribute to team discussions or are actively disengaged.
- Regularly create tension or conflict with other team members.

Since anticipating a difficult conversation causes us anxiety, stress, and trepidation, the usual default behavior is to avoid the difficult conversation. Avoiding the conversation usually allows the negative behavior to continue, which impacts other team members and you.

Overcoming Our Fears

There are many rewards and joys moving up to a supervisor or manager position. However, there are some challenges as well. Given your new responsibilities as supervisor, one challenge is confronting certain situations requiring correction.

You won't be liked.

More conflict will arise.

You or the employee will get emotional and you won't know how to handle the emotions.

The employee will turn others on the team against you.

You won't be competent in successfully conducting the conversation.

Everyone has fears. Courageous people confront their fears, challenge the fears, and then act anyway. (See [Career Compass #58--"Overcoming Deep-Seated Fears."](#))

You overcome fears by acknowledging them and then asking yourself: How likely is my worst fear? Can I handle it? If I do nothing, what is the outcome or the cost to the team, or the organization or the people we serve?

For instance, if you fear that you will no longer be liked, you may conclude that respect as a supervisor is more important than being liked.

In terms of fearing an escalation of the conflict, it is often the case that avoiding the conflicts enables the negative behavior to continue and usually get worse.

With respect to people getting "emotional," you can ask questions and model behaviors to help the conversation be productive. See the tips below.

If you deal with the poor behavior, others on the team will appreciate it. They will respect that you took action.

Choosing the Problem

In the scenario described below, a former peer and now a subordinate is questioning every idea you propose as a new supervisor. You fear that the staff person is undercutting your authority as a supervisor.

As a supervisor, you have two possible problems. If you act and conduct the difficult conversation, you may be disliked by the employee. If you don't act, the nay-saying and opposition will continue and get worse, threatening your authority as a supervisor, promoting disengagement among others, and generally undercutting the team.

Which problem do you choose? You can't avoid a problem.

Deciding What Matters Most

Another way of deciding how to deal with an oppositional employee is to decide what matters to you the most.

First, ask yourself what matters: I want to be liked or I want to develop a great, highly functioning team.

Second, ask yourself "how can I...?" For example, "How can I effectively confront the nay-saying employee so he doesn't undercut my authority as a supervisor and my ideas and solutions to enhance team effectiveness?"

What matters most to you? Being liked or being effective as a team leader? (See David Dye's post "[Do You Struggle to Manage Your Emotions? You Are Not Alone](#)" in the *Winning Well* blog, Dec. 8, 2018.)

Getting Ready for the Conversation

For any important task, you must prepare. You are ready for the difficult conversation if you are:

Certain that standards and expectations are understood by the employee.

Compassionate and have considered what may be happening or motivating another person.

More focused on the future than the past.

Willing to listen, reflect, and explore what the other person is experiencing and are open to the possibility that you could be wrong about your perceptions or conclusions.

Prepared to work with another person moving forward.

Clear about the issue and what you want. Ask yourself:

What is the specific behavior that concerns you or the team?

What is the impact on the team, you or others?

What is the cost of doing nothing?

What is the desired outcome?

What are non-negotiables for you?

Tips for the Conversation

Here are 15 suggestions to facilitate the conversation:

1. Don't avoid difficult conversations; confront your fears and act.
2. Focus on one issue only (save another issue for another conversation).
3. Be ready for the conversation; select an appropriate place; conduct the conversation when you are not stressed out.
4. Be present; avoid distractions (close your office door, mute your phone and computer); focus on the other person.
5. Don't "ambush" the other person; let the other person know in advance about the one-on-one meeting and the topic so they can anticipate the conversation.
6. Use open-ended questions to explore what is happening and what can be done (see below for sample questions).
7. Acknowledge the other person's perspective (even if you do not agree).
8. Be calm; manage your emotions.
9. Be comfortable with silence (since many people are uncomfortable with silence, silence after asking a question often prompts the other person to respond).
10. Don't dwell on past problems; be forward-looking.
11. State your clear expectations going forward.
12. Support well-intentioned mistakes; if a staff person is trying to do good work, a mistake offers an opportunity to learn.
13. Explore how you can support the other person.
14. Leave responsibility with the other person; don't jump in to solve the problem; let the other person figure it out; ask "how are going to address the problem?"
15. End with an action item or two and schedule a follow-up meeting.

The goal of the conversation is not only to correct the negative behavior but to conduct the conversation in such a way to preserve the relationship.

Using Powerful Questions

In a difficult conversation, you want to use open-ended questions (not "yes" or "no" type questions) to elicit responses from the other person.

Here are some powerful questions:

- I want to understand what is happening from your perspective. Can you help me understand?
- What happens if you continue with this behavior and don't take any action? What are the consequences?
- What would you like to do about this situation? What are some options?
- What would be the best outcome for you?
- How can I support you?
- How will we be accountable to each other?
- What does success look like for you?

Getting Guidance from a Coach

To correct the negative behavior as well as maintain the relationship, it is a good idea to get guidance and advice from a formal or informal coach. The coach can be your current manager, a former boss, or a trusted colleague inside or outside the organization. Getting advice on how to conduct the difficult conversation will also strengthen your resolve to actually confront the situation.

A Sample Conversation

Let me demonstrate how these tips can be put into action. Here is a typical situation demanding a conversation:

The Situation:

Tom used to be a peer but now is a subordinate. He is a long-term employee but did not get the supervisor job that you recently won. Now, Tom is questioning your ideas and proposed approaches on a regular basis in team meetings. You feel that Tom is questioning your new role and authority as team leader. You are trying not to react defensively in staff meetings, but it is becoming increasingly difficult. Tom's behavior is causing some team members to feel uncomfortable and you even fear that others may be emboldened to join in and question your authority.

The Conversation:

Frank

Tom, thanks for having coffee with me. As I mentioned yesterday, I wanted to meet with you to discuss our interaction in team meetings. You are a long-time county employee, so you have a lot of knowledge about how to do things around here. And I have my own ideas as a new supervisor.

My observation is that at staff meetings you frequently question my ideas. For instance, you questioned the way I proposed to handle budget preparation by forming a working group. The staff meeting before that you raised objections to how we should provide office coverage.

I want to encourage all staff to bring forth ideas and solutions, even if they are different from my ideas. However, I sense there is something going on between you and me that contributes to you questioning me in public on a regular basis. How do you see this situation?

Tom

I'm just trying to tell you when things won't work out, that's all.

Frank

(Pause.) I understand that you have a lot of institutional knowledge and have ideas about what will or won't work. I would like to understand your perspective about this friction we seem to be having. Is it because we were previously peers on the same team and now I'm your supervisor?

Tom

You are relatively new, but I've been here a long time. And I know what will work and what won't.

Frank

How do you think I have reacted, and other staff members have reacted, to your fairly frequent objections in our staff meetings?

Tom

I don't know.

Frank

(Pause.) The way I react to frequent objections to my proposed solutions is that I perceive you as questioning my role and authority as a supervisor. I sense that it may also cause others to feel uncomfortable.

Tom

I don't see a problem.

Frank

As your supervisor, I can tell you that I feel there is a problem. I have also had several staff members come to me and indicate that our apparent friction makes them uncomfortable. So, there is a problem that we need to address. Going forward, how could you contribute yet not appear that you are opposing me on a lot of issues? What's one suggestion that you could offer?

Tom

I don't know. What do you think?

Frank

You must have one idea. (Silence.)

Tom

Well, I could try to suggest another approach or idea instead of saying that your idea won't work.

Frank

Yes, that is a good approach for sharing your institutional knowledge.

What else might work? (Silence.) May I suggest another option?

Tom

Ok.

Frank

One possibility is that you pick your spots and only object in public to proposed solutions that are especially important to you or to the team. (Pause.)

Tom

Well, I could do that.

Frank

Do you have another option when you disagree with my approach in a staff meeting?

Tom

I guess that I could bring it up to you in private.

Frank

Yes. I know that sometimes I may be off base, and I would be thankful for your feedback in private.

I appreciate your openness to consider different approaches. Going forward, which options feel best to you?

Tom

Well, I'd be willing to offer another idea instead of an objection. And if I really object to something, I'll bring it up at a one-to-one meeting in private.

Frank

Good. How can I help or be of support?

Tom

If I come off as too strong, you could let me know in private.

Frank

That makes sense.

Moving forward, let's talk about what "success" looks like for each of us. For me, success would be that my role and authority as supervisor are respected and that all team members contribute their good ideas as we try to address the problems that we face.

Tom, how about you? What does success look like?

Tom

I want you to respect my knowledge of how this place works and the opportunity to share my ideas.

Frank

Okay. We will both support each other to be successful.

Let's both monitor our interaction and see how we're doing. Let's talk at our next one-to-one meeting.

Tom

Okay.

Debriefing the Conversation

In this conversation with Tom, I used some of the tips above. For example, I

Let Tom know in advance that I wanted to have a conversation about our interaction in team meetings.

Made an observation and asked Tom for feedback.

Provided a few specific examples.

Asked open-ended questions.

Used silence to prompt a response from Tom.

Acknowledged Tom's perspectives.

Asserted that there was in fact a problem.

Asked Tom for options.

Focused on the future.

Asked how I as the supervisor can help.

Identified the follow-up.

Practicing and Improving

Effectively conducting difficult conversations is like any other activity. With practice, you get better at it. So, the process is to:

Prepare for conversation.

Do it.

Debrief with yourself or a trusted coach or colleague (What went well? What did not go so well? How can I improve the conversation next time?)

Practice another conversation.

Debrief again.

The Joys of Formal Leadership

As you make the shift from peer to supervisor, you take on more responsibility. And periodically you will need to have difficult conversations with subordinates.

While some conversations in your new role may be difficult, the upside to taking on a formal leadership role is great. The role of supervisor provides a tremendous opportunity to

- Build a better team and enhance the group's performance.
- Develop others.
- Develop yourself.
- Improve the lives of staff and service recipients.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to lead. You will be blessed, too.

Readers:

What are the difficult conversations that you need to have with others?

What is your biggest fear?

To conduct the conversation, what are one or two tips that you can use?

To answer these question and be part of the conversation, join us on [Facebook](#)





Sponsored by the ICMA Coaching Program, *Career Compass* is a monthly column from ICMA focused on career issues for local government professional staff. Dr. Frank Benest is ICMA's liaison for Next Generation Initiatives and resides in Palo Alto, California. If you have a career question you would like addressed in a future Career Compass, e-mail careers@icma.org or contact Frank directly at frank@frankbenest.com. Read past columns at icma.org/careercompass.

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(Manager to Complete)

Employee Name: _____ Department: _____

Current Date: _____ Date of Employment: _____

Title: _____

Current Evaluation Period: From: _____ To: _____

Current Evaluator Name/Title: _____

Work Performance

Work Performance	1. Unacceptable	2. Fair
	3. Good	4. Superior
Client Service Skills	Comments	1 2 3 4
The ability to develop client relationships by making an effort to listen to and understand the client. The ability to anticipate and provide solutions to client needs and give high priority to client satisfaction.		
Team Work Skills	Comments	1 2 3 4
The ability to develop relationships with co-workers and to contribute to group solutions. The effort put forward to making our company a better place to work for everyone.		
Quality of Work	Comments	1 2 3 4
The value of work produced by the employee and the thoroughness, accuracy, neatness, and acceptability of the work completed. Ability to work under pressure and learn from previous mistakes. Accurately checking processes and tasks and handling issues in a timely manner.		
Quantity of Work	Comments	1 2 3 4
The quantity of work produced by the employee and accuracy and acceptability of the work completed. The ability to work at quick rates of speed, under pressure, while producing accurate outcomes.		
Judgment and Decision Making	Comments	1 2 3 4
The ability to think logically and practically before making decisions. Use of independent thought, originality, and reasoning. Ability to prioritize work and timely implementation of workable solutions to problem. The ability to handle confidential information.		

Checklist

Before Serious Discipline or Firing

Discipline or Termination Checklist

If you can't answer "Yes" to every one of these statements...don't act against an employee without consulting an attorney familiar with employment law.

- ✓ 1. Have we in the past informed the employee of the expected, acceptable behavior and of unacceptable behavior, and the consequences of unacceptable behavior?
- ✓ 2. Is this (#1) documented in our Employee Handbook and in memos and on written Performance Review forms? Is the documentation accurate?
- ✓ 3. In the present matter, have we informed the employee of his or her unacceptable behavior, and the consequences of it continuing?
- ✓ 4. Have we done this (#3) privately?
- ✓ 5. Have we given the employee an opportunity to explain what he or she did or did not do, and the cause?
- ✓ 6. Have we done this (#4) privately?
- ✓ 7. Is this (#3 and #5) documented? Is the documentation accurate?
- ✓ 8. Have we provided the employee with assistance and training to achieve acceptable behavior?
- ✓ 9. Are we treating this employee in the same way we would treat any other employee in a similar circumstance?
- ✓ 10. Are we treating this employee in a way that does *not* violate any of the employee's legal protections, such as:
 - ◆ Protection from sexual harassment.
 - ◆ The right to family and medical leave.
 - ◆ Protection from discrimination because of a disability.
 - ◆ Protection from age discrimination.
 - ◆ Minimum wage and overtime pay protection.
 - ◆ Protection from arbitrary and discriminatory drug and alcohol testing, and protection of privacy involving testing and test results.

◆ Protection from discrimination because he or she is a member of a legally protected class (such as age, sex, race, color, national origin, religion, veteran status, disability).

◆ Protection from defamation.

◆ Protection from constructive discharge.

◆ Protection from wrongful discharge.

✓ 11. Have we avoided abrupt, spur-of-the moment statements to the employee and action against the employee?

✓ 12. Have we followed our unwritten precedents and our written policies?

✓ 13. Have we reviewed the employee's entire personnel records (from application and interview notes to performance appraisals and warnings) to assure that we are complying with the employee's legal rights and with our own policies?

✓ 14. Have we kept all of these matters confidential, sharing information only with persons who have a business-related need to know?

D-O-C-U-M-E-N-T

Excerpted from Utah Employment Law Letter, written by attorneys at the law firm Wood Crapo LLC

by Mary Anne Q. Wood

Whenever you go to a program on employment law, the presenters probably emphasizes the importance of documentation, but you need to know when and how to document.

Employers need to do a better job of training supervisors in the proper documentation of workplace events. Also, well-advised employers should have simple and easy-to-use tools to assist in documentation.

One of my clients has a form that can be used by supervisors to document. It is preprinted in triplicate so that a supervisor can write down what occurred and can provide a copy to the employee, another to human resources, and keep a copy in the supervisor's file. The form is called an Event Record and has a place to check for positive or negative events, to write a brief description of the event, and for the supervisor and the employee to sign.

This simple tool makes documentation a less daunting task. The following is a brief summary of why and how to document using such a tool.

Daily.

Or as often as necessary. Documentation should not be reserved for culminating events that lead to firing or other discipline. Instead, it should be made as often as necessary for a supervisor to stay on top of minor problems in the workplace that, if not corrected, could lead to a significant problem. For example, employees who are consistently a few minutes late to work or back from lunch or breaks or leave early may not initially appear to have a problem. But if a supervisor monitors those small problems, she can help the employee correct tardiness issues early before they become a burden on the employer or a basis for firing.

Cumulative. Documentation should be cumulative. Often, supervisors wait until their patience is tried before issuing any form of discipline. Regular documentation that establishes a pattern of conduct, such as absenteeism, tardiness, barely missing productivity guidelines, and so forth, may not seem important in an isolated incident but can be shown to be significant if documented on a regular basis. Similarly, employees who are quiet but regularly assist others, are timely, and conscientious, may be overlooked for workplace awards or other recognition, but their consistent pattern of productive behavior should be noted in their files and be available when it comes time for employee evaluations or a promotion.

Uplifting and positive as well as negative. Documentation should be uplifting and positive, as well as negative. A supervisor who sees and acknowledges good, consistent

performance will have a better workforce. Many times, supervisors are so busy with the few bad apples that they forget about the good ones. Regular acknowledgment of good behavior reinforces that behavior in the entire work group.

Management tool. Documentation is primarily a management tool. Often when documentation is discussed, it is in the context of defending an adverse employment action or in a lawsuit. While good documentation certainly assists employers in defending their job actions, that is not the primary reason for regular documentation. The primary reason for documentation is to manage and direct positive employee conduct and correct misconduct.

Evaluation. Regular, consistent documentation is an outstanding tool for annual employee evaluations or performance appraisals. Too often, annual appraisals are done based on the last event that the supervisor remembers because he hasn't kept sufficient records to review an employee's performance over an entire year. If a supervisor has kept effective documentation of an employee's performance, he is better able to prepare an accurate evaluation to justify the evaluation that the employee receives.

Notice. Regular documentation that is shared in the manner suggested by this article provides notice to the employee of conduct in the workplace that has both a positive or negative impact on co-workers. To the extent that the documentation points out negative behaviors, early identification and notice to the employee that behaviors need to be corrected will cause a conscientious employee to improve her behaviors and will identify employees who are not willing to change negative behavior.

Truthful. Documentation is not helpful unless it is truthful. It also needs to be factual and accurate. Supervisors should describe the behavior but not draw conclusions. For example, if a cashier's till was short \$10 on a given day, the documentation should state "cash drawer short \$10," not "this employee is a thief." Supervisors should practice unemotionally describing the positive or negative events that occur and any impact on the work group, while avoiding inflammatory language or exaggeration. For example, it is much better to state that the employee was 10 minutes tardy on identified dates than to say that the employee is always late or doesn't care about his job or the impact of the tardiness on the work group.

Consistent, regular, factual documentation is an important management tool to direct workplace behavior as well as a significant resource should the employer face litigation.

Avoid liability through sound recordkeeping

November 2, 2007

Excerpted from South Carolina Employment Law Letter and written by attorneys at the law firm of McNair Law Firm, P.A.

by Susan Maupin

Although there's no sure-fire method to prevent a disgruntled employee from filing a lawsuit against you, there's a readily available tool that can help you defeat the majority of lawsuits: documentation.

Employment lawsuits often are won or lost on the soundness and completeness of an employer's recordkeeping practices. Here are a few tips to ensure the reliability and credibility of your documentation and to help you defend yourself if an employee sues.

Write it all down

Contemporaneous documentation. Nothing undermines your credibility like a document that was created long after the relevant event occurred. Even though there may have been no ill intent behind your delay, the implication is that you're trying to cover up a mistake. It's imperative to document incidents at or very near the time they occur.

Just the facts. Avoid embellishments or exaggerations in your documentation. Your statements are often admissible as evidence against you, so be concise and accurate, and stick to the facts.

Keep in mind that you may end up having to prove what you said in your documentation or defending the language you used. A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself if you would feel comfortable testifying to the truth of your statements. If you have any hesitation, revise the document to reflect a more accurate version of what happened.

No personal opinions. Avoid stating any personal opinions that may not be supported by the facts. Documenting your dislike of someone or your disapproval of a particular situation may lay the foundation for liability. Depending on the situation, both the company and the employee who created the document could be held liable, so always maintain a fair and objective viewpoint in your records.

Policies and procedures. If the document is supported by or created under a certain company policy or procedure, refer to that policy in your writing. That will help you demonstrate your familiarity with company policies and procedures and your adherence to them. It also illustrates the attention to detail and thought that went into crafting the document, which typically lends an air of automatic credibility.

Signature and date. A document is most useful when you know when it was written and by whom. Make it a practice to date every official document created in your organization, and have the preparer sign it and print his name and job title. Train every supervisor, manager, and executive in your organization on the significance of this practice. Also be sure to advise your employees to sign documents in their official capacity or on behalf of the company.

Explanations. Provide a clear explanation of the document's purpose if it isn't apparent. For example, if the document relates to a particular meeting, state the date and reason for the meeting, the names of the employees who attended, and the issues discussed. Similar information should be recorded for business-related telephone calls and other communications. If any type of follow-up is required, document why and when you expect to do it.

Performance and disciplinary documents. Take special care when documenting performance issues and disciplinary actions. Require an employee whose performance is being reviewed to sign and date the document. If he doesn't agree with your assessment of the situation or his performance, ask him to note his

objections and sign below his statement. If he refuses to sign anything, document his refusal to sign the document and impose appropriate discipline if that's your policy or practice.

The person who prepared the document should provide a clear explanation of the performance issue, the disciplinary action decided on, and the action that's generally taken in similar circumstances. If there's any difference between the disciplinary action taken in this case and the action that's usually taken, provide a detailed explanation of the difference.

No promises. Avoid promissory language in your documents. As we've learned from court cases interpreting employee handbooks, promissory language can support a contract claim against your company. Therefore, it's always advisable to include a disclaimer at the bottom of any documents your company disseminates to applicants and employees that says something like "NOT A CONTRACT" or "EMPLOYMENT IS AT WILL" or "THIS COMPANY IS AN AT-WILL EMPLOYER."

Final thoughts

Your retention practices are just as important as what you say in your documents. Your employees may be well versed in the art of complete documentation, but if you can't locate your records when the need arises, they'll be of little use to your company.

In the age of electronic discovery (the exchange of information before trial), the inability to locate documents like e-mails and other computer-based information can be extremely harmful to your defense. Therefore, it's critical to have a well-organized and well-publicized document-retention policy.

At its most basic level, your policy should address the general categories of documents to be maintained, who's responsible for maintaining them, and where they will be kept. It also should state how long a given type of document must be maintained. Your policy should identify who must be familiar with it, how frequently it's reviewed, and who's responsible for reviewing it.

Drafting an effective policy often requires the combined efforts and commitment of management, HR, and IT. Make sure that everyone who's in any way responsible for documentation is properly trained to follow your document creation and retention policies, and you'll help protect yourself from liability.

10 Sins of Termination (#1 Time to Prevent Lawsuits)

Here are our 10 sins of termination:

Sin #1. Terminating Rashly in a Fit of Anger

Boss: That's the last straw, you're out of here—and I mean now!

There are at least three things wrong with an on-the-spot termination:

- People don't make good decisions this way.
- There are many factors to be considered before terminating.
- Being disrespectful encourages people to sue.

Bottom line, wait until you talk to HR.

Sin #2. Terminating in Public, Especially in a Humiliating Way

Boss: [in front of many employees] Johnny, you're a little too slow and a little too lazy to stay in this job. I'm making an example of you—you're fired.

Public humiliation is a lawsuit magnet. There's no good reason to treat people this way, and a host of reasons to avoid it. Another similar problem is the "perp walk," that is, very publicly marching someone to the door carrying a box of belongings with a security escort.

Sin #3. Terminating Without Checking with HR

Boss: HR's going to take forever on this—I want this nut job gone today.

Boss: Your last day is today—I'll talk to HR to manage the administrative details.

HR needs to be able to evaluate a number of factors before there is any termination:

- **Consistency.** Have other similarly-situated employees been fired? If not, there's a lawsuit brewing.
- **Appropriateness.** Is this a significant enough infraction that termination is reasonable?
- **Contract.** Is there a contract or agreement that terminating would violate? Or maybe an implied contract of good faith and fair dealing?
- **Special circumstance.** Perhaps the whole department is going to be let go, or maybe there's some situation of which the manager is not aware, for example, a complaint filed.

Sin #4. Termination that Looks Like Retaliation

Boss: I don't care if you just filed a suit, you're fired.

Boss: You think you can complain about me to management and keep this job?

Boss: Well, you are fired for your performance, and I'll just add that you're not much of a team player, having complained to my boss and then gone to the government agencies.

Whenever a termination closely follows a protected act, there will be an obvious suggestion of retaliation. That's a tough one to defend, unless there is very strong documentation. It's best to do a thorough evaluation in these situations. Frustrating as it is, people who file complaints do have, at least to some extent, an "umbrella of protection" over them.



What's "closely follows"? Of course, it's a grey area, but most experts agree that "weeks" is close and "months" not so close. However, if there is any other evidence linking the two acts, all bets are off, no matter how great the time difference.

Sin #5. Offering a False Basis for a Termination

Boss: I'm very sorry to tell you this, John, but we have severe budget cuts and I have to let you go. [Thinking: The budget cuts aren't all that severe, but I don't want to tell him his performance was poor—it's bad enough he gets fired.]

Managers often want to soften the blow of a termination by blaming it on "budget cuts," or "department reorganizations," or "the company is going in a different direction."

The problem comes when you rehire, and the former employee finds out about it. He or she will assume that since the given reason was false, the termination was because of discrimination or retaliation. The jury needs to ponder, Was the manager lying then, or is the manager lying now? Either way, the manager's a liar.

Sin #6. Terminating Without a Reason on the Basis of "At-Will"

Boss: I don't have to give you any reason why I'm firing you—you're "at will."

It's true that unless there's a formal contract of some kind, most employees are employees at will, and that means they can be terminated at any time for any reason or for no reason. And the flip side is that they can leave at any time.

But here's a news flash—people don't like to be fired, and they're not going to blame themselves. They typically have no reason to think their performance is subpar; so the reason must be because of their protected status—that is, their race, sex, age, or disability. Now your company is in trouble; you have to begin your defense by proving that, yes, your managers are so stupid that they fire employees for no reason. And then you have to explain why "no reason" is more likely than the illegal reason. It's not going to go well.

Sin #7. Terminating Without Proper Documentation

Boss: Documentation, schmockumentation; this guy's a poor performer and I want him gone today.

The trouble with this scenario—terminating with no backup evidence of poor performance—is that there is usually documentation that shows good performance. Typically, since the person hasn't been terminated before, his or her performance reviews read "good" or "satisfactory."

Now, this is like the "offering a false reason" problem—you are essentially saying to the jury, "Trust me when I say that I lied on the performance reviews."

Sin #8. Not giving the employee a chance to explain

Boss: You're fired—that's the third time you're late.

Employee: I know I was late, but ...

Boss [interrupting]: It doesn't matter why; the time for excuses is gone—you're out of here

REPLAY

Boss: You're fired—that's the third time you're late.

Employee: I know I was late, but I just found out my 4-year-old daughter has bone cancer and I had to ...

True, there's no legal requirement to give employees a chance to explain, but juries will view it as a basic element of fairness. In a situation like the one in the scenario, the jury's sympathies are not going to be with the manager.

Here's another scenario. A young woman transferred into a new position at her company. She was late the first few mornings and the new boss wanted to fire her. HR suggested he talk to the employee. Come to find out, she was actually coming in an hour early to train her replacement at her old job and then rushing to the new one.

Sin #9. Terminating on Your Own

Boss: I don't need to check with anyone—it's a termination offense and that's it.

It's generally better to have a group involved in deciding on a termination, for a number of reasons:

- There may be other people on the team (like the HR manager) in a better position to judge the appropriateness of the termination.
- A group decision shows that careful consideration was given to the matter.
- Since litigation can go on for years, and since managers can come and go, it's in the organization's best interest to have several managers familiar with the case.

Sin #10. Terminating Without Preparation

Boss: I don't care about checklists and benefits, I want this person gone, now.

Boss: [floundering] Well, I guess we need to talk ... ah ... well, it's like this ... ah ... you see ... sometimes we wish ...ah...

Let's face it, terminations prompt many lawsuits, and experience suggests that the decision of whether to sue is often influenced by how the person was treated during the termination. So take the time to be prepared. Know what you are going to say. This enables whoever is handling the termination to better control the conversation and keep it from becoming too long, too emotional, or unclear in delivery and message. Also determine who is going to do what, what documents need to be available, what procedures need to be followed, what references will be given, final pay, and so on.

Workforce

MANAGEMENT

Legal Insight: Editor's Choice

Employers' Biggest Legal Mistakes

Ten things that can explode into costly lawsuits, unionization and an unhappy workforce.

By Rob Gilmore

What are the biggest employee-related mistakes employers make these days? And how can you defuse these potential time bombs before they explode into costly disputes? Here's a quick overview of the top 10 employer mistakes and how to avoid them.

1. Failing to establish an effective sexual harassment policy. Recent Supreme Court decisions hold employers liable for their supervisors' actions unless complaining employees fail to take advantage of company complaint procedures. In light of these rulings, implementing policies and procedures for dealing with sexual harassment is more important than ever. It is essential that supervisors be trained on these policies and procedures. Finally, an employer must act in a timely manner to investigate all sexual harassment complaints that are brought to its attention.

2. Failing to pay overtime to nonexempt employees. Many employers pay employees a salary regardless of the number of hours they work and whether they are subject to the wage and hour laws. Unless they are exempt as administrative, executive or professional employees, you must pay them time-and-a-half their regular hourly pay for all hours worked in excess of 40 per week. When in doubt about whether an employee is exempt, pay him or her hourly wages. This will avoid having to pay back wages if you're audited by the Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division.

3. Failing to complete I-9 forms for new employees. Many employers merely photocopy employee-produced documents without filling out the parts of the forms that describe the documents. This can be a costly mistake if the Immigration and Naturalization Service audits you. (One employer was reportedly fined \$100,000.) You are not required to photocopy employee-produced documents, but even if you do, you must fill out the forms completely.

4. Failing to take and document disciplinary actions. Supervisors, not wanting to be perceived as villains, hate to write up employees. Then, when the company can no longer tolerate unsatisfactory performances, the files do not document the poor records and you have no grounds on which to justify discharges. This leaves you open to lawsuits alleging discrimination. Employees who have been discharged for poor performance often have glowing evaluations in their files. This can expose you to lawsuits.

5. Failing to quickly discharge poor performers. Employers are advised to progressively discipline employees and to give one warning too many rather than one too few. But often a time comes when failure to act is as bad as overreacting. If you have retained employees for many years despite poor attendance records, multiple infractions and even several "final" warnings in their files, you are asking for trouble. These employees are most likely to sue when finally discharged. The best course is to discharge a poor performer as soon as prudently feasible. The more seniority an employee has, the harder to justify discharging him or her.

6. You must be sure that laying off a group of employees has no disparate impact on any protected group. To avoid lawsuits, verify that the group doesn't contain a disproportionately high percentage of age-protected employees or employees of a particular ethnic or racial group or sex compared to the rest of the work force. The decision of who will be laid off should be based on objective criteria, such as qualifications, experience, and ability to perform certain work essential to the company. If the decision to lay off one employee as opposed to another is based on such criteria, make sure the file support this decision.

7. Failing to get a signed release from a terminated employee. As an employer, you may have a legitimate reason for terminating an employee. However, you fear a lawsuit if the employee is a member of a protected class. Many employers are reluctant to use releases because they fear the release may educate the employee about rights and litigation possibilities of which he might otherwise be unaware. But this may be a case of sticking your head in the sand. In light of media attention

given to employment discrimination verdicts, employers should not rely on a hope that workers do not know their rights. The right approach to avoid litigation often is to get signed releases from departing employees, particularly if any severance or separation pay is provided to the employees.

8. Conditioning employment offers on medical exams. The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) bars employers from asking applicants about their disabilities or requiring medical exams before offering employment. You can ask applicants to take job-relevant medical exams only after offering jobs. The burden is on you to establish the medical exam's relevance to job requirements. In addition, employers often fail to accommodate their employees' disabilities after they are hired. The ADA requires employees to reasonably accommodate their employees' disabilities.

9. Failing to take proactive steps to keep your work force union free. Employers must constantly communicate with the employees to deal with their grievances. If employees do not believe their employer is interested in their issues, they may look outside the workplace for representation.

10. Failing to retain labor and employment counsel to avoid making the first nine mistakes. The proliferation of complex statutes prevents most employers from keeping on top of employment law without professional help.

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Workforce Management Online, July 2003 – [Register Now!](#)

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FIRING A POOR PERFORMER

Even when you must fire an employee who is a poor performer, you can leave yourself and your company open to a lawsuit. The frequent claim by those discharged? Discrimination. Various federal, state, and local laws protect individuals from discrimination based on sex, race, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital status, and sexual orientation. Thus, you must survive the test that you treated the terminated worker as you would any other employee.

The time for you to protect yourself, however, is not on the eve of the firing. You must take preventive measures early on. Here are the areas to watch for:

■ **Evaluate manuals.** You must ensure that any personnel manual is free of language that could be interpreted by an employee as a contractual promise. For example, if a manual states that an employee will be terminated only for "gross misconduct," failure to adhere to that standard might result in a court requiring the employer to reinstate the

employee or pay the person damages.

■ **Establish performance standards.** Establish written rules such as how many latenesses or unexcused absences will warrant some form of disciplinary action.

■ **Apply standards equally.** Barring extenuating circumstances, two employees involved in the same incident should be treated equally.

■ **Build a written record.** If you reprimand or warn the employee orally, keep a written record of the time and place of the warning, as well as the employee's response.

■ **Use progressive discipline.** Some infractions, such as theft, are generally serious enough to warrant immediate discharge. In most cases, the infraction is less serious. But keep in mind that discipline should start with verbal warnings, then elevate to written warnings, suspension, and ultimately discharge.

■ **Accurate performance reviews.** Don't fail to give each employee the performance review his or her performance

requires. Don't be too quick to check the "satisfactory" column. Two years later, when the decision is made to terminate an unproductive employee, those performance reviews will come back to haunt you.

■ **Communicate with your employees.** Inform an employee when his or her performance, attendance, or attitude is unsatisfactory. To fire an employee for excessive absenteeism, for example, when the employee has never been told such behavior is a problem, only invites litigation.

■ **Think before you speak.** All too often, comments made in jest or in kindness are misinterpreted or misunderstood. Always bear in mind the implication of what you are saying.

■ **Observation:** Be careful how you break the news of the firing to other workers. The best strategy is to present the termination as a separation without going into any of the details. Any editorial comments you make may create problems for you. □

Progressive Discipline

Table of Contents

1. Definition and Guidelines of Progressive Discipline
 2. Essential Elements of Each Progressive Discipline Step
 3. Typical Progressive Discipline Steps: Oral, Written, Suspension, Termination
 4. Key Points of Personnel Policy Manuals
-

Definition and Guidelines of Progressive Discipline

Progressive discipline is the process of using increasingly severe steps or measures when an employee fails to correct a problem after being given a reasonable opportunity to do so. The underlying principle of sound progressive discipline is to use the least severe action that you believe is necessary to correct the undesirable situation. Increase the severity of the action only if the condition is not corrected.

Some guidelines to consider are:

1. Thoroughly investigate the situation which includes obtaining the employee's explanation or response prior to administering discipline.
2. Document the process and results of your investigation.
3. It is acceptable to repeat a step if you feel that it will correct the problem. This may be the case if some time has passed since it was last necessary to address the issue and the situation has only recently reappeared. Or perhaps, the employee misunderstood or you feel there is value in doing it again in a clearer fashion.

If repeating the step works, the situation has been resolved without escalating it unnecessarily. However, be aware that an employee may be led to believe that nothing worse will happen if you continually repeat a step.

If repeating a step does not resolve the problem, you can then move on to a higher step.

4. The goal is to modify the unacceptable behavior or improve the performance. The goal is not to punish the employee but to more strongly alert the employee of the need to correct the problem.
5. There is no rigid set of steps nor is there an inflexible rule that all steps must be followed before terminating an employee. The circumstances of each case and your judgment as to the least severe action that is necessary to correct the situation will help determine which step to use.
6. Early, less stringent, measures are skipped for serious offenses such as theft, fighting, drug or alcohol use or sale. All steps are typically used for attendance or general work performance problems.
7. While usually unnecessary, it is acceptable to have a witness or note taker present when meeting

7. While usually unnecessary, it is acceptable to have a witness or note taker present when meeting with the employee during the progressive discipline process. Your witness/note taker should never be a peer of the employee. University policy permits the employee to have a witness if he or she wishes.
8. Human Resources is available for consultation at any step of the process, but it is especially important at the steps of suspension and termination.

Essential Elements of Each Progressive Discipline Step

Disciplinary actions are often overturned completely or reduced to a lesser level when any of the essential elements of progressive discipline are missing.

1. The employee is explicitly informed of the unacceptable behavior or performance and is given specific work-related examples. It is not sufficient to assume that the employee knows what the problem is.
2. Explain acceptable behavior or performance standards and give the employee reasonable time to comply. This may be a longer time frame if a skill needs to be learned or a shorter time frame if it is a behavior to be changed.
3. The employee is informed of the consequences of failing to comply. This is not a threat, rather it gives the employee reasonable expectations of the consequences if change does not occur.

These three essential elements need to be present at each step of progressive discipline and are discussed prior to taking disciplinary action

Typical Progressive Discipline Steps

Counseling

Counseling is typically the initial step.

- Conduct the whole counseling session in a "low-key" manner. Be friendly, yet firm.
- This discussion should be done in private. Tell the employee the purpose for the discussion. Identify the problem.
- Try not to be mechanical or read from a piece of paper. Have documentation available to serve as a basis for the discussion.
- Seek the input from the employee about the cause of the problem.
- Where possible jointly identify a solution to the problem; otherwise, identify your desired solution.
- Clarify the employee's understanding of your expectations concerning the situation.
- Let the employee know that possible disciplinary action may follow if the problem is not corrected.
- Try to get a commitment from the employee to resolve the problem.

- Schedule follow up with the employee. Provide feedback. Let the employee know how he/she is progressing on solving the problem.
- Notes:
 1. Counseling sessions are used to bring a problem to the attention of the employee before it becomes so serious that it has to become part of a written warning and placed in the employee's file.
 2. The purpose of this discussion is to alleviate any misunderstandings and clarify the direction for necessary and successful correction. Most "discipline" problems are solved at this stage.
 3. If some progress is seen, this counseling step can be repeated to allow the employee full opportunity to correct the problem.
 4. It is not necessary to document the counseling session as it is considered an informal step in progressive discipline. However, a brief statement confirming the subject matter discussed and the agreed upon course of action to correct the problem can be noted in a short memo to the employee.

Written Warning

- Initiate this step by repeating the process used in the counseling step, i.e., talk before preparing any written action.
- After this discussion, prepare the written warning. Build in information, responses, and commitments made in the discussion.
- The written warning will have three parts:
 1. A statement about the past, reviewing the employee's history with respect to the problem.
 2. A statement about the present, describing the who, what, when, etc. of the current situation, including the employee's explanation.
 3. A statement of the future, describing your expectations and the consequences of continued failure.
- The warning is addressed to the employee.
- This step may be repeated with stronger consequence statements. Examples range from a statement that failure to correct this situation "may lead to further disciplinary action" to a statement that "this is a final warning and failure to correct the problem will lead to discharge."
- Sample Written Warning Memorandum

Suspension Without Pay

- On the Bloomington campus this step is not a part of the "Corrective Action" policy for Clerical/Technical or Professional employees except for infractions of safety rules of major significance. For these groups of employees a final written warning is used instead of the suspension step. If you are on another campus, contact your campus Human Resources Office to clarify usage of suspension without pay on your campus.

- When suspension without pay is used, see the sequence described under counseling section. Again the situation is discussed with the employee first. The employee's explanation is obtained and, then, a decision is made about the appropriate disciplinary step.
- The length of the suspension is not as critical as the step of suspension. One to three days emphasizes the seriousness of the situation. Under the Fair Labor Standards Act Professional employees must be suspended in one week (40 hour) blocks of time.
- The written record of the suspension is prepared after the discussion with the employee. It specifies the start and end dates, emphasizes that it is a final warning, states the reason, and is given to the employee at the start of the suspension so that the reasons for not working are clearly understood.

Termination

- This is the last step of any progressive discipline system and is used when earlier steps have not produced the needed results.
- A discussion with the employee must occur before a final determination is reached. Inform the employee about the nature of the problem. See sequence described under counseling.
- The employee must be given an opportunity to explain his or her action and to provide information.
- If the employee takes this opportunity, you must investigate where appropriate and give consideration to the information provided.
- A written notice of termination is prepared after the discussion and consideration of all available information.

Indiana University-Bloomington Personnel Policies

Clerical/Technical Staff - Policy 6.4

-Key Points:

- Final written warnings are used in lieu of suspensions
- The employee may have a representative present during the discussion
- A twelve month limit exists on old discipline. The policy states: "Provided there has not been a corrective action for an offense of a similar or related nature in the interim, corrective action reports which are twelve (12) months or more from the date of the current offense will not be used for the purposes of imposing additional corrective action on an employee."

Service Maintenance/Food Service Employees - Policy 6.4

-Key Points:

- Suspensions without pay may be used or a final written warning may be substituted.
- A supervisor is expected to notify the employee of a workplace problem within ten days of its event or of the time that the supervisor reasonably became aware of it.
- A twelve month time limit exists on old discipline. The policy states: "After twelve (12) months, any Staff Incident Report in an employee's file cannot be used to support disciplinary action. Any Staff Incident Report dealing with attendance problems will be removed from the files after one year."

Professional Employees - Policy 6.4

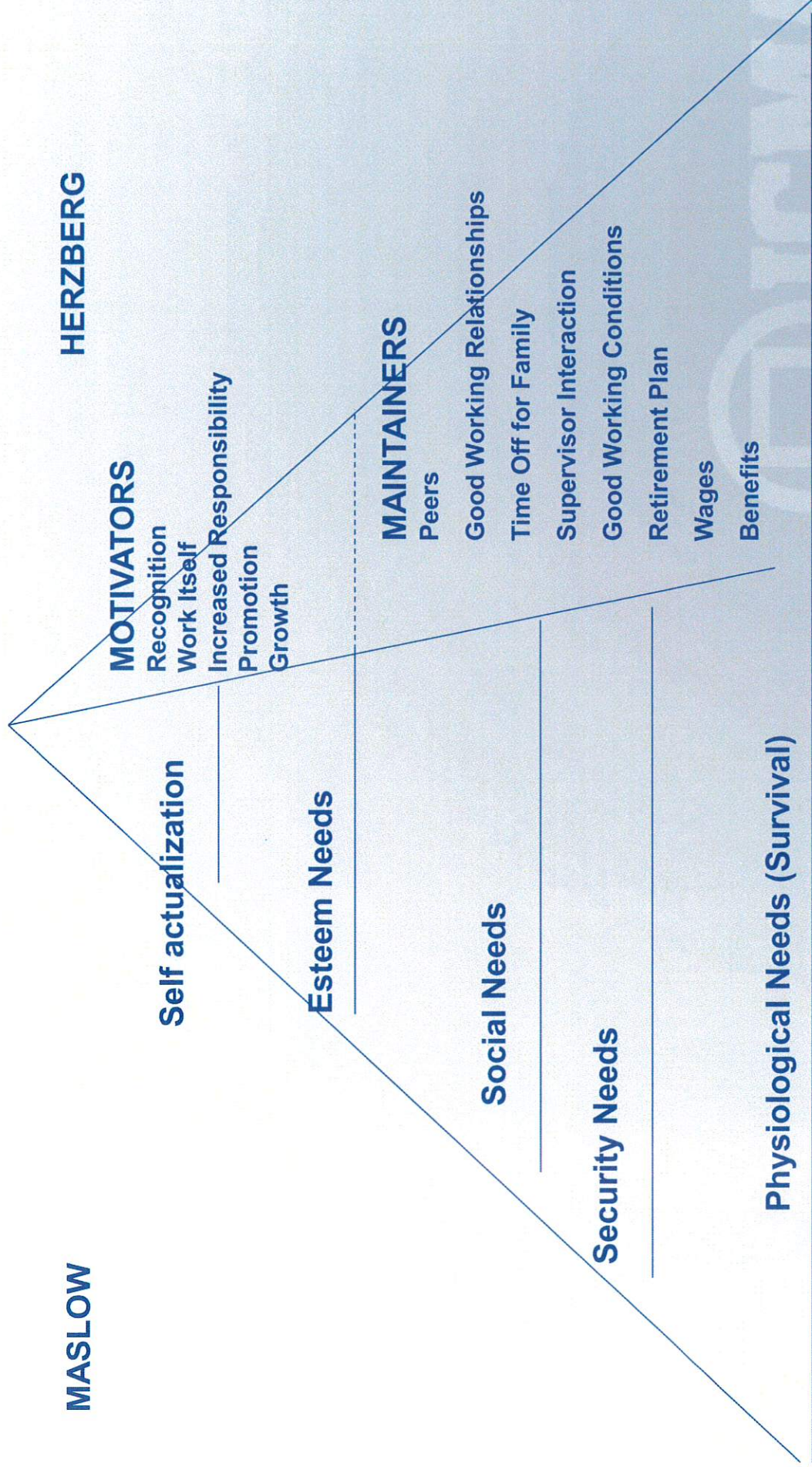
-Key Points:

- Suspensions without pay of five work days are used only for infractions of safety rules of major significance. Final written warnings are to be used for all other infractions.



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Basic Human Needs and Motivation



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5 Things All Employees Want. How Many Do You Offer?

Leaders should pay close attention to the following needs their teams are afraid to negotiate.

By [Eric 'ERock' Christopher](#) July 7, 2022

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

A study from Oxford University found that employees are 13 percent more productive when they are happy — even when their mood is affected by things unrelated to their job, such as the weather.

Many organizations have seen all too well what happens when workers are dissatisfied, while the job market continues to see record-breaking resignation rates, largely fueled by the hope of landing a better gig.

As an employer, you shouldn't wait for your team to ask for the things they want — because they might assume the benefits are never coming and quit.

1. A path to promotion

Managers are often unaware of their teams' goals and aspirations. Employees are often afraid to ask for a promotion or raise because they fear that the organization views them as replaceable.

To counteract this, leaders should give their workers a clear path toward promotion. Clearly lay out what needs to be done for a team member to earn a position with greater responsibilities. Even more importantly, when a worker fulfills this criteria, follow through on your promises.

Related: [Here Is the Best Time to Ask for a Promotion](#)

2. The right tools for their talent

All too often, employees aren't given what they need to complete their job as efficiently as they could. This can become especially frustrating when workers are told they need to

do a better job, but then their requests for resources that would improve efficiency are denied.

Managers should actively seek input regarding which tools could assist them in their tasks. Simply telling an employee that a particular tool is not in the budget could send the message that they aren't a priority. Careful consideration of such requests — and understanding how they could improve productivity — will enable a stronger evaluation.

3. Better benefits

Fifty six percent of U.S. employees said that liking their health benefits is a key factor in deciding to stay at their current job. Workers expect health insurance, sick leave and other key perks to maintain the high quality of life that is crucial to productivity.

It's just as important to ensure that benefits are easy to understand.

"We've found that 66% of employees need help understanding their health coverage," says Guy Benjamin, co-CEO of Healthee. "A full 60% will delay or even avoid treatment because they don't know if their work plan covers their expenses...keeping your workers healthy is one of the most cost-effective ways to enhance your bottom line."

4. Respect

There are far too many instances where employees are mistreated and the business eventually finds itself subjected to lawsuits, (the controversy surrounding video game maker Activision Blizzard is just one recent example).

Harassment, bullying and other forms of mistreatment have no quarter in the workplace, but when such behavior comes from a manager, employees may feel they have no way to get the relief they deserve. This creates low morale and high turnover. Leaders should always be ready to assess their own actions to determine if changes need to be made. Clear reporting mechanisms and support resources should be made available to all, without the risk of negative consequences for whistle-blowers.

5. Give them a break

After the shift to remote work, many employees find that the traditional 9-to-5 no longer applies. Emails and phone calls often come at all times of day, with the expectation that workers are always available to respond to any request.

Especially when considering a recent survey of 2,000 office employees, commissioned by Zimbra, in which 58% of respondents admitted their work emails were connected to a personal device.

While your team may not complain directly, blurring the line between work and home can quickly lead to stress and burnout.

As a study by the Academy of Management explains: "An 'always-on' culture with high expectations to monitor and respond to emails during non-work time may prevent employees from ever fully disengaging from work, leading to chronic stress and emotional exhaustion."

By providing the tools that your team needs to achieve the best possible results and giving them meaningful personal goals to work toward, they will be more motivated to give you their best efforts.

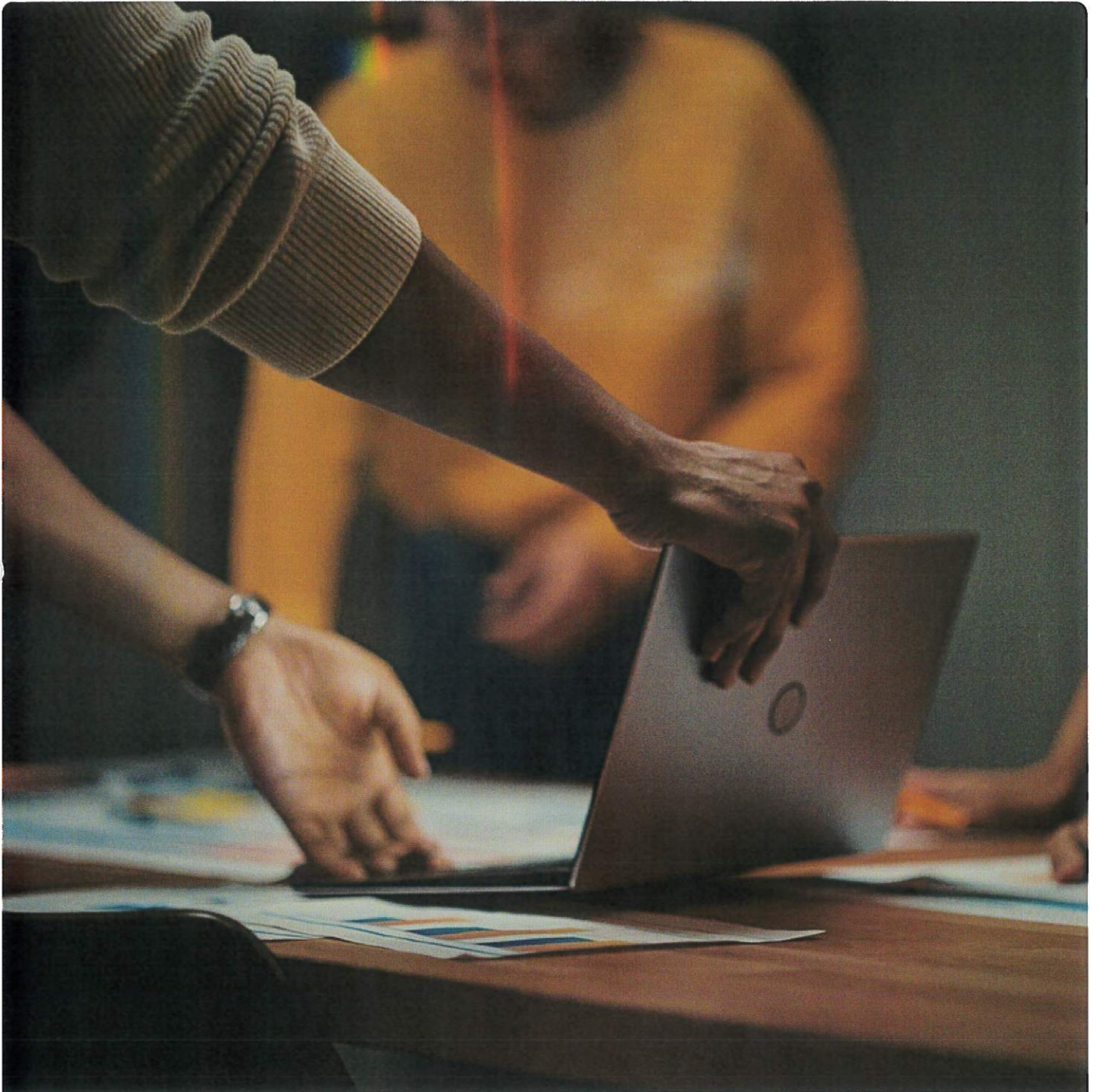
In today's competitive environment, retention is one area where no company can afford to fall behind.

Related: 3 Workplace Habits Every Entrepreneur Needs to Survive the 'New Normal'

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10 Things Extraordinary Bosses Give Employees

BY JEFF HADEN

Good bosses care about getting important things done. Exceptional bosses care about their people.

Good bosses have strong organizational skills. Good bosses have solid decision-making skills. Good bosses get important things done.

Exceptional bosses do all of the above--and more. Sure, they care about their company and customers, their vendors and suppliers. But most importantly, they care to an exceptional degree about the people who work for them.

That's why extraordinary bosses give every employee:

1. Autonomy and independence.

Great organizations are built on optimizing processes and procedures. Still, every task doesn't deserve a best practice or a micro-managed approach. (I'm looking at you, manufacturing.)

Engagement and satisfaction are largely based on autonomy and independence. I care when it's "mine." I care when I'm in charge and feel empowered to do what's right.

Plus, freedom breeds innovation: Even heavily process-oriented positions have room for different approaches. (Still looking at you, manufacturing.)

Whenever possible, give your employees the autonomy and independence to work the way they work best. When you do, they almost always find ways to do their jobs better than you imagined possible.

2. Clear expectations.

While every job should include some degree of independence, every job does also need basic expectations for how specific situations should be handled.

Criticize an employee for offering a discount to an irate customer today even though yesterday that was standard practice and you make that employee's job impossible. Few things are more stressful than not knowing what is expected from one day to the next.

When an exceptional boss changes a standard or guideline, she communicates those changes first--and when that is not possible, she takes the time to explain why she made the decision she made, and what she expects in the future.

3. Meaningful objectives.

Almost everyone is competitive; often the best employees are extremely competitive--especially with themselves. Meaningful targets can create a sense of purpose and add a little meaning to even the most repetitive tasks.

Plus, goals are fun. Without a meaningful goal to shoot for, work is just *work*.

No one likes work.

4. A true sense of purpose.

Everyone likes to feel a part of something bigger. Everyone loves to feel that sense of teamwork and esprit de corps that turns a group of individuals into a real team.

The best missions involve making a real impact on the lives of the customers you serve. Let employees know what you want to achieve for your business, for your customers, and even your community. And if you can, let them create a few missions of their own.

Feeling a true purpose starts with knowing what to care about and, more importantly, why to care.

5. Opportunities to provide significant input.

Engaged employees have ideas; take away opportunities for them to make suggestions, or instantly disregard their ideas without consideration, and they immediately disengage.

That's why exceptional bosses make it incredibly easy for employees to offer suggestions. They ask leading questions. They probe gently. They help employees feel comfortable proposing new ways to get things done. When an idea isn't feasible, they always take the time to explain why.

Great bosses know that employees who make suggestions care about the company, so they ensure those employees know their input is valued--and appreciated.

6. A real sense of connection.

Every employee works for a paycheck (otherwise they would do volunteer work), but every employee wants to work for more than a paycheck: They want to work with and for people they respect and admire--and with and for people who respect and admire them.

That's why a kind word, a quick discussion about family, an informal conversation to ask if an employee needs any help--those moments are much more important than group meetings or formal evaluations.

A true sense of connection is personal. That's why exceptional bosses show they see and appreciate the person, not just the worker.

7. Reliable consistency.

Most people don't mind a boss who is strict, demanding, and quick to offer (not always positive) feedback, as long as he or she treats every employee fairly.

(Great bosses treat each employee *differently* but they also treat every employee *fairly*. There's a big difference.)

Exceptional bosses know the key to showing employees they are consistent and fair is communication: The more employees understand why a decision was made, the less likely they are to assume unfair treatment or favoritism.

8. Private criticism.

No employee is perfect. Every employee needs constructive feedback. Every employee deserves constructive feedback. Good bosses give that feedback.

Great bosses always do it in private.

9. Public praise.

Every employee--even a relatively poor performer--does something well. Every employee deserves praise and appreciation. It's easy to recognize some of your best employees because they're consistently doing awesome things. (Maybe consistent recognition is a reason they're your best employees? Something to think about.)

You might have to work hard to find reasons to recognize an employee who simply meets standards, but that's okay: A few words of recognition--especially *public* recognition--may be the nudge an average performer needs to start becoming a great performer.

10. A chance for a meaningful future.

Every job should have the potential to lead to greater things. Exceptional bosses take the time to develop employees for the job they someday hope to land, even if that job is with another company.

How can you know what an employee hopes to do someday? Ask.

Employees will only care about your business after you first show you care about them. One of the best ways is to show that while you certainly have hopes for your company's future, you also have hopes for your employees' futures.



Giving Thanks: How to Show Employees They're #1 Without Breaking the Bank

This is the month of Thanksgiving, and every good HR professional knows that it's important to give thanks and show your employees that you appreciate them. High employee morale has positive effects on productivity and retention and just generally makes your office a better place to work. Year end is usually a time when employers begin to consider and distribute holiday bonuses and prepare for employee appreciation parties. Other means of communicating thanks have traditionally included benefits, stock options, and 401(k) profit-sharing matches. But what can you do if the economic crisis has cut into your budget, and those sorts of things just aren't an option? This white paper will explore inexpensive and free ways your company can show employees they are appreciated and help you build an inclusive culture where you don't necessarily have to spend big bucks to make employees feel welcome.

Employee Relations Programs: Supervisors Make the Difference

All too often, supervisors don't realize the impact they have on employee morale and just how important their role is in a positive employee relations program. But it's true – employees who have no confidence in their supervisors and feel they have no voice in the workplace are far more likely to listen to union sales talk and sign union cards. They're also far more prone to be unproductive and file lawsuits when things don't go their way in the workplace.

A recent survey hammers the point home. Seven hundred thirty supervisors in 24 large companies were

asked to rank 10 workplace morale factors in the order they thought their employees would rank them. As you might expect, most of the supervisors believed good wages and job security were the most important factors in determining employee morale. Here's what they said:

1. good wages;
2. job security;
3. promotion or advancement in the company;
4. good working conditions;
5. interesting work;
6. personal loyalty of company to employees;
7. tactful discipline;
8. full appreciation for work performed;
9. sympathetic help on personal problems; and
10. feeling "in" on things (letting them know, to the extent that you can, what is going on with the business, how the company is doing, and any changes that might be coming).

In the same survey, 34,000 employees in the same 24 companies were asked to rank the same 10 factors in order of importance to them. Here's what the employees said:

1. full appreciation for work performed;
2. feeling "in" on things;
3. sympathetic help on personal problems;
4. job security;
5. good wages;
6. interesting work;
7. promotion or advancement in the company;

8. personal loyalty of company to employees;
9. good working conditions; and
10. tactful discipline.

Interestingly, the supervisors' ranking of the top 10 workplace morale factors is almost upside down from their employees' ranking of the same factors. It's a mistake to believe economic issues like wages and benefits are the primary motivators of high employee morale. What do the first four issues on the employees' list have in common? Communication. And these are issues totally within the control of frontline supervisors. Employees want recognition for a job well done; they want to feel they have a stake in what's going on; they want someone to talk to who will listen and be sympathetic to their concerns; and they want the kind of job security that comes from their supervisors treating them on an even keel day in and day out.

Good Supervisors Are Essential

So what does it take to be a good supervisor? What are the characteristics? To find out, have your supervisors answer the following questions:

1. Do you know your job?
2. Do your employees have confidence in your ability to do your job?
3. Do you know your employees' jobs?
4. Are you able to provide instruction and guidance, and do you do so in a positive way?
5. Are you a good leader?
6. Do you enjoy your employees' respect? And how do you gain your employees' respect? By being firm but fair, honest, impartial, and consistent. Do you exhibit these characteristics?
7. Do you respect your employees both for the work they do and as individual human beings?
8. Do you listen to your employees?
9. Do you spend time with them?
10. Are you accessible?
11. Do you encourage your employees to express their ideas and speak out even if you may disagree?

12. Do you communicate clearly with your employees?
13. Do you give credit where credit is due?

Supervisors who answered yes to all or most of those questions are doing a great job. But they probably didn't or can't answer yes to all of these questions:

1. Do you argue with your employees?
2. Do you speak harshly when a more positive tone will do?
3. Do you curse your employees?
4. Do you exhibit a superior attitude?
5. Do you give your employees the brushoff?
6. Do you play favorites?
7. Do you take credit for your employees' ideas, suggestions, and good work?
8. Do you retaliate when employees disagree with you?

Tips for Being a Better Supervisor

Supervisors who answered yes to all, most, or any of these questions, need to make some changes. Here are some suggestions to give supervisors:

- **Get to Know Your Employees.** Find out their interests and what motivates them. Show an interest in and ask about their families, especially their kids. Think about it. The people you tend to appreciate the most are the ones who ask you about your children, their ball games, how they're doing in school, and the like. Your employees aren't any different.
- **Keep Employees Informed About What's Going On in the Company.** This doesn't mean you should reveal confidential company information. But don't surprise your employees by holding back information when there's no reason to do so. For example, if you know a turnaround or a big overtime project is coming up, let your employees know about it in plenty of time so they can plan ahead. They may need to make adjustments at home – for example, who will drop the kids off at school in the morning and pick them up in the evening – and they'll appreciate you more if you give them plenty of time to make the necessary adjustments.
- **Encourage Teamwork.** Stress the importance of the team goal rather than individual achievement. You don't necessarily want your employees competing with each

Modernization Strategies to Attract and Keep Talent

BY: | December 27, 2018

Governments are facing increased pressure to modernize what they offer their prospective and current employees. Younger generations are demanding better technology, better work/life balance, and more opportunities for growth, but the public sector has been slow to react. In a recent report released by the [Center for State and Local Government Excellence](#) (SLGE) titled [Workforce of the Future: Strategies to Manage Change](#), it states that “as a greater number of younger and more diverse workers enter the job market, local and state governments are adapting their recruitment strategies to reach them. They participate in job fairs and use social media, YouTube videos, and infographics in their advertising.”

Improvements made to modernize government and the way they view their workforce can come in a variety of scenarios. For example:

- **Employee Engagement** – Attracting a younger generation is difficult for the public sector because they can't pay them the same high salaries that private sector does. However, many still are interested in a career in serving their community. Getting creative in other ways, such as implementing mobile policies, can be an added driver. According to Mike Brinker, global Deloitte Digital leader, [Deloitte Consulting LLP](#) in a recent article called [The Untethered Workforce](#), “For most people, technology in their personal lives is actually better than the technology they use at work.”
- **Streamline Processes with Technology** – Too many workforce management processes are still being done manually. The days of outmoded pencil & paper aren't over yet for many organizations. Government is struggling with keeping up with demand while their antiquated systems hold them back. Check out how Denver's time-off request process went from 21 steps to 10 in the whitepaper “[Achieving a Lean Government Workforce](#)”. It's unrealistic to think you can attract a younger, tech-savvy workforce when your processes for simple requests are complicated.
- **Recruitment & Retention Strategies** – A recruitment and retention strategy forces government organizations to think outside the box to keep staffing levels where they need them. Gone are the days of attractive pensions. Governments are adopting modern policies like telecommuting, additional paid leave (some are adding parental leave), and flexible work schedules/hours to name a few. In a [blog post](#) from Neil Reichenberg, Executive Director of the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) he says “It's great to see state and local governments hiring and expanding, but the low rate of unemployment coupled with the increasing number of retirements will make it a challenging environment for state and local governments to compete for top talent.”

One example in the Workforce of the Future research done by SLGE comes from the State of Michigan around employee engagement surveys. “The State of Michigan has conducted employee engagement surveys every eighteen months since 2002. In response to survey feedback, Michigan established a leadership development program and a new employee recognition program. The response rate to the survey has continued to go up every year. Michigan credits its focus on taking actions on issues employees raise as the reason the rate has climbed.”

[IDC's recent Digital Transformation \(DX\) Executive Sentiment Survey](#) of 157 public sector decision makers indicates that digitally transforming their organization is a priority for 100% of public sector responders. And 59% of respondents indicate that their agency executives are facing pressure/significant pressure to execute a DX strategy. Digital transformation is one strategy to

modernizing government. Looking at modernizing all aspects of your entire workforce is impractical. A more sensible approach is to look at best practices, like the one in the State of Michigan, and identify two or three to adopt for your organization.

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MANAGEMENT FUNDAMENTALS MOTIVATION

Top Ten Ways To Motivate Today's Employees

By Bob Nelson

Today's employees may not need a pay raise as much as they need a personal thanks from their manager for a job well done. Following, in priority order, is the top-ten things to do to motivate today's employees.

- Personally thank employees for doing a good job -- one on one -- verbally, in writing or both. Do it in a timely manner, often and sincerely.
- Be willing to take the time to meet with and listen to employees -- as much as they need or want.
- Provide specific feedback about performance of the person, the department and the organization.
- Strive to create a work environment that is open, trusting and fun. Encourage new ideas and initiative.
- Provide information about how the company makes and loses money, upcoming products, strategies for competing in the marketplace and how the person fits in with the overall plan.
- Involve employees in decisions, especially when those decisions affect them.
- Provide employees with a sense of ownership in their work and the work environment.
- Recognize, reward and promote people based on their performance. Deal with low and marginal performers so they either improve or leave.
- Give people a chance to grow and learn new skills. Show them how you can help them meet their goals within the context of meeting the organization's goals. Create a partnership with each employee.
- Celebrate successes -- of the company, of the department and of individuals in it. Take time for team- and morale-building meetings and activities.

■ ■ ■

Bob Nelson is vice president of Blanchard Training and Development Inc. in San Diego and author of "1001 Ways to Reward Employees" (Workman Publishing) -- now in its 14th printing. E-mail



Hits since Sept 1, 1996: **53**

List AE5 Category: AE: Management, Staff Development, Projects, Delegation, Leadership 6/10/97

The Top 10 keys to getting people/employees to actively participate more.

- 1. Design/build work/jobs around the individuals strengths vs slot people into jobs.**
 - 2. Have lots of contact with each person, either individually or in a group setting; contact/presence equals participation.**
 - 3. Set a target, vision or goal which is naturally motivating or compelling -- the 'gap' creates a vacuum.**
 - 4. Put everyone on email, the webs, conference calls, Lotus Notes, etc., so they each person motivates the others, vs just you doing that.**
 - 5. Identify the mavericks/performance stars and help them develop workarounds to existing bureaucracy, limits, etc.**
 - 6. Keep people so busy and that don't have time to slack off.**
 - 7. Budget time to hear/listen to the troublemakers, complainers, envelope-pushers -- they often have the wisdom you need even if the packaging is torn.**
 - 8. Change meetings to be creative sessions vs reporting/boring sessions -- automate that type of thing.**
 - 9. If you're not a good motivator/exciter/manager, find someone on team who is and delegate this part to them.**
 - 10. Remove the employees who just don't get it, are too negative, aren't helpful -- don't spend too much time trying to fix or convert them.**
-

Three Ways to Make Initiative Flourish

Initiative — that magic quality that constitutes the difference between an employee who works for his paycheck and an employee who works for his company. Here are three time-tested methods for cultivating initiative in your employees:

1. **Don't supervise them too closely.** Subordinates with initiative will respond better, perform better, grow faster and gain more job satisfaction if they get general direction rather than minutely detailed instructions by eagle-eyed bosses. Give your employees a number of short-range objectives and give them free rein to achieve these objectives in their own way.

But don't make a common mistake by treating all the objectives alike. Every job, without exception, has its crucial components and those that are less than crucial. Let your subordinates know what is the most important to you. And even if you do make clear what objectives are priorities, it won't be enough unless you also provide frequent updates. Remember that department and company goals are constantly changing and the employee who is kept apprised will contribute the most to his company.

2. **Don't blind yourself to their potential for growth.** Managers are sometimes too preoccupied with their own development opportunities to worry about finding opportunities for their subordinates. In some cases, this may be because the manager is afraid of competition. One thing is certain, though. If a manager is so worried about his own chances of moving up that he doesn't let those below him do anything challenging, he will wind up so busy, so ineffectual, that he will draw negative attention to himself — hardly his intent.

3. **Don't forget that you are as accountable to your employees as they are to you.** Picture these examples:

- You go looking for your boss to tell him of an angrily complaining client — one of the biggest your firm has. Your boss isn't there. He went off on a three-day weekend.

- You ask a staff member for a comprehensive report involving a lot of work and when you get it fail to even acknowledge its receipt, let alone how useful it was.

- You call a meeting on a critical subject, ask staff members for views and suggestions, and then after that day never refer to the subject again.

These lapses of communication are easy to dismiss as instances in which someone just didn't have the time to brief everyone involved, or just didn't think it was important enough. But they give subordinates the feeling that they are not part of the company, and a feeling of belonging is a crucial ingredient to fostering initiative.

4



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Tips for Motivating Employees without Raising Salaries

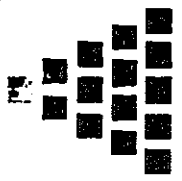
When business is booming, company owners can afford to be generous with raises. The challenge, according to Donald J. Fletcher, president of the management consulting firm of George S. May International Co., lies in creating motivational rewards when budgets are tight.

Fletcher offers the following tips for motivating your work force when money is scarce:

- **Be flexible** -- The long-term employee who wants stock options doesn't have the same concerns as the new parent, who would be happier and more productive with more time off or a flexible schedule.
- **Provide positive feedback** -- Don't talk to your employees only when there's a problem. Give them a public pat on the back for a job well done so they'll keep up the good work and others will see that you appreciate extra effort. And do it in person -- it sends a much stronger message.
- **Ask the experts** -- Your employees often know more about parts of your company than you do. Solicit their input on how to improve the company, and reward them if their ideas result in savings.
- **Share the wealth** -- Give your employees the incentive to perform better. If they know they'll receive bonuses when profits rise, they'll work that much harder.
- **Be part of the team** -- Promote from within whenever possible, and help employees gain the necessary skills to advance. Your employees will be more productive if you demonstrate that you're on their side.



The management consulting firm of George S. May International Company, with offices in Park Ridge Illinois, San Jose California, Montreal Canada and Milan Italy, has helped more than 420,000 companies, in 3,000 business categories, worldwide since 1925 - more than 11,000 in 1998.



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Five Principal Reasons People Change Jobs

1. It doesn't feel good around here. This is a corporate culture issue in most cases. Workers are also concerned with the company's reputation; the physical conditions of comfort, convenience, and safety, and the clarity of mission.
2. They wouldn't miss me if I were gone. Even though leaders do value employees, they don't tell them often enough. If people don't feel important, they're not motivated to stay. No one wants to be a commodity, easily replaced by someone off the street. If they're no more valued than being thought of as expendable, they'll leave for a position where they're appreciated.
3. I don't get the support I need to get my job done. Contrary to opinions heard all-too-often from management, people really do want to do a good job. When they're frustrated by too many rules, by red tape, or by incompetent supervisors or co-workers, they're looking for other opportunities.
4. There's no opportunity for advancement. No, we're not talking about promotions, although a number of deserving people would like to move up. The issue here is learning. People want to learn, to sharpen their skills and pick-up new ones. They want to improve their capacity to perform a wide variety of jobs. Call it career security. The desire here is for training and development. If workers can't find the growth opportunities with one company, they'll go to another employer where they can learn.
5. Compensation is the last reason people most leave. That's a brash statement, but it's true. Workers want fair compensation, but the first four aspects have to be present. If they're not strong, but money's high, you'll hear people say "you can't pay me enough to stay here." Even with these values in place, there are a lot of employees who feel they can better themselves just by chasing more income.

This excerpt was taken from Roger Herman's best selling book, *Keeping Good People* (Oakhill Press, 1997). Roger Herman is a Strategic Business Futurist and author with a consulting and speaking practice based in Greensboro, NC. For more information refer to The Herman Group website at www.herman.net or call 336/282-9370.



other – you want them bonding together against your company's competitors. If you can convince your employees to work together in harmony, you will have created a workplace that far exceeds the sum of its individual parts.

- **If There's a Problem, Don't Let It Stew.** Don't be afraid to weed out a marginal employee or take disciplinary action when appropriate, but be consistent and fair. Your employees won't respect you and they'll lose confidence in you as their supervisor if you allow a marginal employee to continue sloughing off so your good employees always have to take up the slack.
- **Always Emphasize the Positive When Talking with Employees About Company Policies.** Consider the following: Your company comes out with a new policy. One supervisor says to his employees, "I don't know what the bosses were thinking about when they came out with this policy. I don't see how it can possibly work. But they're the bosses, so we have to do what we're told." But another supervisor tells his employees, "A lot of people have put a lot of work and thought into this new policy to try to make things better around here. And I want all of you to work with me to do everything we can to make this new policy work. If you've got any ideas on how to improve the policy or make it work better, I want you to tell me about it, and I'll be sure to pass your ideas up the line." Which of these approaches do you think will increase the likelihood that the company's new policy will be a success? Remember, supervisors are leaders, and employees will follow their lead. If you're negative, your employees will be negative and unproductive and will cause problems for you and the company. If you're positive, your employees will be positive, more productive, and more satisfied in their work.

One of the first lines of defense against poor employee morale is your frontline supervisors. Consider printing off the following list and giving it to your employees who manage and supervise others.

15 Keys to Being a Good Supervisor

1. Know your employees as individuals.
2. Be approachable and a good listener.
3. Be responsive to questions and concerns.
4. Always follow up with your employees.

5. Apply policies and practices consistently.
6. Keep your employees informed about the business.
7. Communicate employee concerns up the line.
8. Recognize employee efforts.
9. Train your employees in all aspects of their jobs.
10. Seek ideas on how to do things better.
11. Develop your own technical job skills.
12. Expect, believe in, and encourage good work.
13. Constructively counsel your employees.
14. Use your authority with reason and restraint.
15. Admit your mistakes and correct them.

Inspire Camaraderie

The workplace isn't meant to be a play zone, but workers who feel a sense of camaraderie tend to be more effective and satisfied. Try to promote that sense of camaraderie through occasional company-sponsored events. Here are some ideas that will be free or relatively cheap for you while encouraging your employees to have fun together and build relationships within your company:

- Have potluck lunches with a theme.
- Have a game day where employees come dressed in sports team gear. Have employees bring in hot dogs and hamburgers and pasta salad. Maybe you could afford to buy a small grill or someone could volunteer to bring one.
- Encourage management to straighten up their areas and offer to help each individual "get organized." Work together to get things filed and organized.
- Put up a brag board. Employees can pin up pictures of their kids, pets, new homes, or cars or announce events like musical performances or plays they'll appear in. This will allow your employees to share the things that are important to them, generate conversation, and help create a sense of community.
- Get local retailers and businesses to give your employees discounts on their services or items.
- Have small contests, and give employees a free paid day off. Contests don't have to be work-related – you could do a "Guess Who" picture contest where people bring in baby pictures and you have to guess who's who. If you

can't offer a paid day off, that's OK. The prize doesn't have to be significant – you can buy a small trophy for under \$10 at a local trophy or sporting goods store.

- Set up a trivia board in the break room on which employees during their free time can write trivia questions for others to answer as they walk by. Everyone has a chance to test his or her knowledge of trivia.
- Hold a "Who can dress in the most colors?" day.
- Develop a "fun calendar." Schedule fun events on a regular basis, and get your employees to carry them out. Or better yet, let your employees decide what events belong on the "fun calendar."
- Select (or ask your employees to select) and promote a theme for the year. Build store events, perks, and awards around the theme.
- Have a cookie (or cake, or dessert, or any other dish) contest. Tell entrants to bring enough for everyone (if possible, or if you are a larger operation, encourage entrants to at least make a double batch) and make "secret ballots" on which your other employees can vote for categories such as "Best Traditional Cookie," "Most Unique Cookie," and "Best Chocolate Cookie." Have small kitchen-related awards for the winners (a set of measuring cups, a cookie cookbook, or a kitchen apron).

Show Your Appreciation of a Job Well Done

Cash may be king, but – as the survey ranking the top 10 morale factors revealed – a "Thank You" and some public recognition goes a long way towards showing employees that you appreciate their hard work and efforts on your behalf. When employees do a good job, reward them with praise and appreciation. Let them know that their efforts haven't gone unnoticed. When they step up to the plate and provide leadership, encourage their efforts. Praise costs nothing, but it can offer significant rewards.

In addition to offering praise, here are some ideas for showing employees you appreciate their efforts:

- When you reach a goal, have company executives make breakfast for the employees.

- Allow employees to take flex time. This shows both trust and appreciation.
- When you are meeting your goals, allow employees to take a half-day on the company on the first or last Friday of the month or leave early every once in a while.
- Have your executive team scrub and buff the employee of the month's car.
- Build a "Wall of Fame" and decorate it with pictures of team members, thank-you notes from clients, and news clippings about the company.
- Spotlight employees who are doing well in your company newsletter. Allow individuals and departments to submit "kudos" praising others to the newsletter.
- Send your employees "Thank You" letters to their homes when they have done something exceptional.
- During particularly stressful times, hire a masseuse for a few hours to give employees chair, hand, and neck massages.
- Give employees their birthdays off with pay.

Consider Alternative Benefits

Oftentimes, employees are just waiting for you to ask them what they want. Employees who feel that their ideas are valued develop more loyalty and satisfaction. Encourage them to make suggestions about how to build a better mousetrap or boost morale. An old-fashioned suggestion box in your break room or other common area is a great way to show employees you care about their ideas. Showing a willingness to listen can go a long way toward increasing employee satisfaction. While you don't have to adopt every idea that employees submit, you should be ready to take action on the feasible options or employees will see quickly that you aren't serious about their input, which will only drive morale down.

One of the biggest benefits a company can offer employees to increase morale is working to ensure they like their jobs and the employer they work for. Some simple, not-too-expensive ways to do that include the following:

- **Career Management.** Work with your employees to make sure the jobs they're working in best fit their skills and interests. A transfer within the organization can rejuvenate a long-term employee, and you get the payoff of an engaged workforce.



- **Succession Planning.** Let employees know what their advancement possibilities are within your organization. Many consider the sense of security that comes with knowing that their hard work will be rewarded a great benefit.
- **Giving Back.** Allow your employees to volunteer for worthy causes on the company clock (an hour a month will do). They'll come back to your workplace renewed and ready to work to contribute to an employer that allows them to give back to their community.

Bottom Line

Employee morale makes all the difference in the office environment. Times are hard enough these days without having to show up five days a week to a workplace filled with disgruntled coworkers and bosses who don't seem to care. Show employees that you appreciate everything they do, and you'll reap the benefits.

For more insight, tune in to the audio conference "Going Beyond the Paycheck: Low-Cost Recognition Programs to Boost Productivity." Nationally recognized trainer Carol

Hacker will show you how to launch and manage an effective recognition program to recharge productivity and commitment – without straining your corporate budget. For more information call (800) 274-6774 or [click here](#).

Have any questions, comments, or suggestions for a future white paper? [Click here](#) and let us know what you think.

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Compensation among the Generations

BY: | July 30, 2018

Compensation means many things to many people. What motivates people to want to work for the public sector, or any job really, is in the eye of the beholder. It's a quandary HR Managers everywhere are facing. Some have taken a look at this by generation which seems to give a pretty accurate picture of the wants and needs of employees in different age brackets. Although we know money is a motivator for most, there is more to compensation than just a pay check. What drives employees to say yes to one job and no to another? The four prominent generations in the workforce all say something a little different when it comes to compensation.

Millennials are the most talked about generation these days mainly due to the fact they are now the [largest generation in the U.S. workforce](#). Since the average [Millennial graduate is \\$24K in debt](#), money is a driver and health benefits are a must. However, they also put a high value on learning new skills because it makes them more valuable. They may be skeptical about ever seeing a pension, or Social Security for that matter, so benefits that give them options to invest in their future are appealing.

The Gen Xers consider themselves "stuck in the middle" between two behemoth generations according to a [study done by the Pew Research Center](#); like being the middle child. They generally have a lot going on in their lives between children and/or aging parents and desire that work-life balance to help them keep their sanity. This could be in the form of flexible work schedules, adequate time-off policies, and easy access to amenities to support their well-being.

Baby Boomers have begun exiting the workforce, but not as fast as it was originally anticipated mostly due to the 2008 Recession. This generation is loyal and could potentially be convinced to stay on even if it's a part-time or contractor role. Like the Gen Xers, pay and flexible hours will be an incentive. It's a way for them to continue to keep some cash flow going and still spend time doing things they would if they were retired. Many will qualify for Medicare so health benefits aren't always necessary.

While Traditionalists are technically past retirement age, some are still employed. They typically feel a pride in what they do and want to continue making a difference. Respect is a value this generation takes seriously. Though it isn't necessarily something you can compensate on, there are ways to show respect with [a reward like a plaque](#) or gift.

Public Service is an honorable career. Employees, regardless of their generation, take pride in adding value in their workplace and community. A salary and benefits provides employees with a means to function in their day-to-day life, but there's nothing like that feeling you get when someone pats you on the back and says "You Made a Difference".

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How Public Employee Benefits (Beyond Pensions and Health Care) Compare to the Private Sector's

At a time of low unemployment, both kinds of employers are beefing up their perks.

BY: [Katherine Barrett & Richard Greene](#) | October 8, 2018

Public-sector workers know that they can generally count on more generous pensions and health coverage than if they worked for the private sector. But at a time of low unemployment, both kinds of employers are beefing up other benefits to recruit and retain workers. How do the two sectors compare on those?

Using reports from the [Society for Human Resource Management](#), *Governing* compared 300 benefits offered by companies and governments (including state, local and federal employers).

In terms of professional development, general wellness and financial help, governments are the place to be. For instance, public employers are twice as likely to offer on-site gyms, credit counseling and on-site medical care. They're also a third more likely to offer professional development or tuition assistance.

Here's a sampling of benefits more often offered by governments:

BENEFIT	PUBLIC (%)	PRIVATE (%)
On-site professional development	83	64
Graduate educational assistance	62	45
Employee assistance program	92	74
On-site stress management program	25	9
Smoking cessation program	61	37
On-site medical clinic	21	5
On-site fitness center	41	21
Credit counseling	17	8
Financial advice	41	25

But if you're looking for perks like bonuses, free food or the ability to telecommute, you're more likely to find it in the private sector. There, employers are three to four times more likely to offer bonuses, twice as likely to allow full-time telework, and four times more likely to offer free snacks in the office.

Here's a sampling of benefits more often offered by private-sector companies:

BENEFIT	PUBLIC (%)	PRIVATE (%)
Employee referral bonus	13	62
Incentive bonus plan for nonexecutives	13	47
Donations for charity participation	10	30
Paid minibar snacks	3	15
Casual dress code	32	56
Telecommuting, full-time	10	26
Telecommuting, part-time	24	38
Free snacks	8	39
Free coffee	46	87

Some good news for governments is that 87 percent of millennials labeled "professional or career growth and development opportunities" as important in a job, according to a 2016 Gallup poll.

Still, governments struggle in getting the word out on what they offer.

"Governments don't do a great job of talking about all of the attractive features that we have particularly vis-à-vis the private sector," says Robert Lavigna, director of the Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement at CPS HR Consulting. "These are benefits that are more common in the public sector that could be a huge benefit to attracting talented young people to government."

Nancy Buonanno Grennan, the human resources director for Kitsap County in Washington, agrees. The county, which has to compete with nearby Seattle for employees, is currently marketing its tuition assistance and tuition advancement programs that can help people advance their education and careers while working. But until recently, "we were terrible at letting people know the benefits the county had to offer," she says. "We just figured that people would want to work for us. Now we've recognized we have to go find people who aren't looking for us and convince them to make a leap into the public sector."

Governments are increasingly using benefits to attract workers, says Neville Kenning, a consultant focused on the public sector. Perhaps no other city has expanded its offerings -- and publicized them -- as much as Memphis, Tenn.

Starting in 2016, the city began assembling a package of new benefits based on a series of employee town hall meetings, which sent clear signals of what employees, and particularly young ones, wanted.

After the Great Recession, the city reduced traditional retiree benefits, eliminating most retiree health subsidies and moving to a retirement plan that was less financially risky for the city. Employees weren't happy, and turnover escalated, particularly in the police department, which lost 180 police officers in 2015, the year after the reductions.

"We needed to enhance our benefits to recruit public safety employees and other new talent to the city of Memphis," says Alex Smith, the city's chief human resource officer.

Since the town hall meetings, the city now offers two on-site medical clinics, \$50 a month in student loan debt assistance, a \$2,000 referral bonus for police who move to Memphis from other cities, health reimbursement accounts for retirees younger than 65, tuition reimbursement and the opportunity to do paid volunteer work, to name a few.

Some of the Memphis benefits are rare in government and more common in companies, including the referral and relocation bonuses and paid volunteer time. Smith is making sure that employees and potential employees know all about the "total rewards" of working for the city by promoting them in brochures, radio spots and a new video.

This appears in the Management newsletter. [Subscribe for free.](#)

This article was printed from: <http://www.governing.com/topics/workforce/gov-private-versus-public-sector-employee-benefits.html>



Achieving Happy Workers

As a Tennessee agency has shown, employee engagement isn't unattainable.

The office of the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury audits state and local government entities and is involved in the general financial and administrative oversight of state government. It has some 550 employees. I worked there about 30 years ago and have good memories, but I was still surprised to learn that it had repeatedly won recognition as one of the state's best places to work—not just among public agencies but compared to businesses as well. In a survey conducted under the auspices of the Nashville newspaper *The Tennessean*, the comptroller's office has ranked in the top 10 in the "large company" category for the last three years.

Workplace rankings are essentially ratings of employee engagement, based on worker surveys. I was surprised by the comptroller's ranking not just because it seemed hard to imagine that a bunch of auditors, accountants and finance types would be so happy about their jobs, but also because government agencies generally score considerably worse than businesses on these surveys. Last year, for example, the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit that produces an annual ranking of best places to work in the federal government, reported that only 13 federal agencies scored above the average for the private sector.

The growing interest in public-sector employee engagement in recent years is encouraging, given the increasing difficulty governments are having attracting and retaining dedicated workers. Engaged employees are better employees. As management consultant and author Tony Schwartz wrote in the *Harvard Business Review*, more than a hundred studies have found that "the most engaged employees—those who report they're fully invested in their jobs and committed to their employers—are significantly more productive,

drive higher customer satisfaction and outperform those who are less engaged."

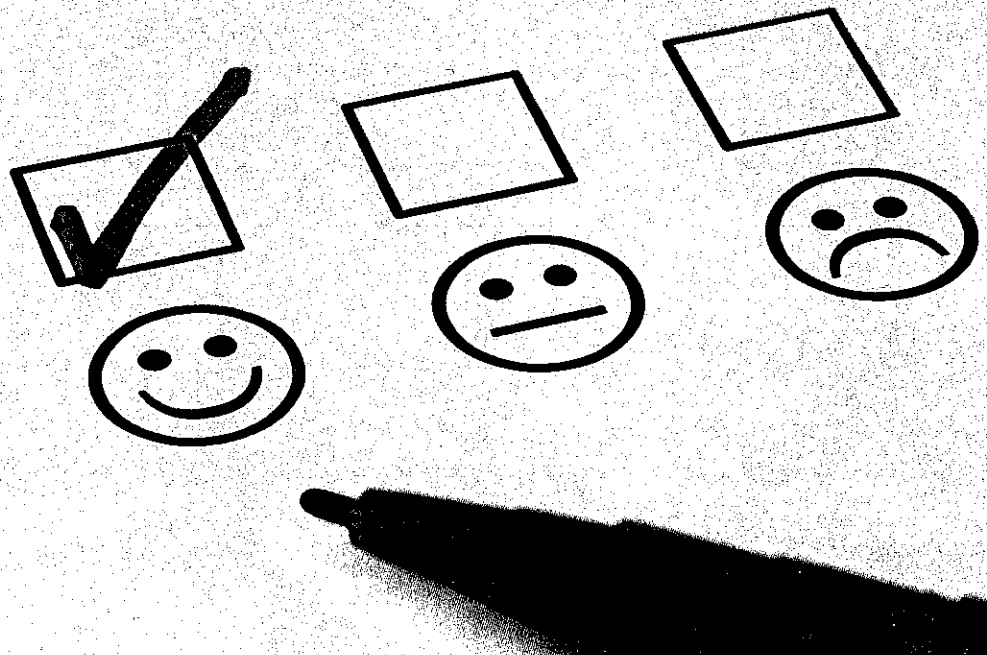
The Tennessean's rankings are based on employee surveys by Energage, a company that runs about 50 such programs across the country, usually through media partners. One common finding, according to Bob Helbig, Energage's media partnerships director, is that pay and benefits aren't the main factors driving employee engagement. "Instead, belief in the leadership of the organization and in its direction are huge," he says, "and appreciation of employees and meaningfulness matter."

This has real implications for government managers, who generally have less flexibility than businesses to reward employees with raises and bonuses. That's a message that Tennessee Comptroller Justin Wilson understands. When I asked him how his office scored so high on the workplace rankings, he said it was primarily a matter of communication—praising employees when they do a good job and constantly emphasizing the mission of

the office, which is a simple one: "to make government work better." And he recognizes that communication needs to be a two-way street. "Our employees have a lot to say," Wilson says, "and if we listen to them we might learn something."

While engaging employees can be harder for public organizations than for private companies, I would argue that it is more important. When organizational improvement occurs in the public sector, writes Robert J. Lavigna, a former Wisconsin state personnel executive who now directs the Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement, "customers and stakeholders will be more satisfied with the services they receive. This improved satisfaction leads to more trust in government." And public servants will feel more engaged when they see that their work is trusted. "In other words," Lavigna writes, "a virtuous cycle." Government can't have too many of those. **G**

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What Government Can Learn From 'Best Places' Employers

The companies that top the rankings have something in common: workplace practices that confirm employees are valued.

BY: [Howard Risher](#) | September 20, 2017

Articles on the best places to work have become omnipresent. Every sector of the economy and every major city has its lists of the best employers. Even demographic groups -- working parents, new graduates, women, seniors, LGBT workers -- now have their own lists. The idea has been a focus of escalating attention for over two decades.

Too often, however, the articles simply rank employers while providing little information on how those rankings are derived. The criteria, when presented at all, vary widely. The rankings rely heavily on employee surveys, whose methodology is always subject to question. Survey respondents' comments typically refer to workplace culture, but the articles provide little in the way of specific guidance as to what managers should do to provide the culture that propels an organization to the top of the ratings.

That information would be helpful to government. The private-sector employers on those lists can select from larger pools of well qualified applicants, experience lower voluntary turnover, and perform better -- in large part because of workplace practices that cost them virtually nothing. The solution to the workforce problems so common among public employers could be addressed by the practices of the "best places" employers.

So what can the public sector learn from what we do know about the top-ranked employers in those national rankings? Google typically leads the lists, and technology and financial companies predominate in the higher rankings. However, second on the 2017 *Fortune* list is Wegmans Food Markets, a regional supermarket chain with more than 45,000 employees. Wegmans has been on the *Fortune* list for 20 years, and it also makes the *Forbes* list of best employers.

The *Fortune* article reports that Wegmans employees say "there's a lot of love and caring" and cite "small things that make a difference." Wegmans' rank on the list, along with other supermarket chains, hotel chains and health-care providers, makes it clear that selection is not based on how generously employees are compensated.

Several organizations now develop national "Best Places" lists, but the one that should be credited with the explosion of interest is Great Place to Work, a San Francisco survey and consulting group. It relies on a lengthy survey instrument combined with information related to human-resources policies and practices. What defines a great workplace "goes far deeper than perks and benefits," the company writes. "In fact, at its core, a great workplace is about the level of trust that employees experience in their leaders, the level of pride they have in their jobs, and the extent to which they enjoy their colleagues."

Great Place to Work's survey questions all relate to how employees feel about their work experience and focus on practices linked to five themes: management's credibility, respect, fairness, pride and camaraderie. All of these are themes that can and should be addressed by public employers. Any employer, public or private, can commit to -- and expect to benefit from -- improving the work experience.

So far, though, there's been little progress on that front in government at any level. There is a ["Best Places to Work in the Federal Government" ranking](#), a project of the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service. It gets a lot of attention when it's updated every year, but it's not clear how much real impact it has had on work management in federal agencies.

What, realistically, can governments do? What barriers do they face that the private sector, for the most part, doesn't have to deal with? In February I posted a column in this space [asking whether civil-service rules are the enemy of employee engagement](#). It was triggered by a Gallup report and a U.S. map with the states colored to depict differences in engagement scores. Those with more traditional civil-service systems were among the lowest-scoring.

More recently, a *Harvard Business Review* article, "[Research Shows Unionized Workers Are Less Happy, but Why?](#)", caught my attention. It is based on an analysis of union membership and job satisfaction from 59 studies published over almost 40 years. (Although not stated in the article, presumably the studies focused on private employers.)

While author Patrice Laroche's analyses show that unions depend on drawing attention to "what's wrong with the way work and workers are managed," he argues that employee dissatisfaction "cannot be blamed on the union."

Unions have far less support in well managed organizations. But while they can play a positive role as partners with management to improve the work experience, too often they oppose needed changes.

Laroche clearly agrees that employers need to focus on improving the work experience. It's not that straightforward in government, of course, given the barriers of civil-service laws and regulations. But it's always possible to learn from employees, through focus groups and other means, what changes would improve their experience.

Unfortunately, the recession, together with the budget crises that followed and the civil-service mindset, have delayed needed changes in the way government work is organized and managed. Change is best accomplished when its promoted by a champion, but few government leaders have come to understand the potential for improved performance.

This may appear to be an HR problem, but any effort to improve the work experience in government is far more likely to be successful if top management makes it an organizational priority. Once the impact of initial changes is felt, an initiative is likely to gain support.

Emulating Google's work environment is not a realistic goal, but there are no true barriers to government becoming as attractive an employer as Wegmans. Everyone would benefit from a more positive work environment. It's a practical way to improve performance at minimal cost.

This article was printed from: <http://www.governing.com/columns/smart-mgmt/col-what-government-can-learn-best-places-employers.html>

Career Compass No. 79: Leading by Connecting

What can I do to become a better leader who people follow?

By Frank Benest | Jan 10, 2020 | ARTICLE



I'm a new supervisor of an economic development team in a large city. Because I have technical expertise and push to achieve results, my team members seem to follow me on technical matters. However, even though I'm the formal supervisor, my influence with the team is uneven.

I tend to be an introvert, so I'm not terribly social. I focus on getting the job done. What can I do to become a better leader who people follow?

You are correct to assume that people want to see that their supervisor has technical expertise and knowledge about the work. Technical knowledge and experience lead to some, but not a lot, of influence.

You cannot force people to follow you because of your positional authority as a manager or supervisor. People on a team *choose* to follow or not. Leadership is all about exerting positive influence with others, regardless of your position. People tend to follow leaders that they connect with on an interpersonal level.

Therefore, the critical task in enhancing your leadership capability is to promote relationship and connection with others.

What does "connection" mean?

"Connecting" with someone may seem like a squishy concept, so what does it mean?

As a supervisor, you give something (information, resources, time, permission) and the employee gives you something (results, performance, commitment, energy, focus). In our professional roles, we certainly undertake many transactions with people.

Connecting is not “transactional.” In authentically connecting with someone, we attempt to understand them (their history, hopes, values, and concerns) and appreciate their uniqueness.

Establishing a human connection with someone is not cerebral, it is emotional. It is more than finding commonality or similar interests; rather, it is a way of relating and forming an emotional bond. I understand who you are and you understand who I am. Even if there are many differences, we care about each other.

Connecting with others requires sharing yourself with others. Connection is all about accepting other people, showing genuine interest in them, and wanting what is best for them. You can connect with someone even if you don’t agree with their perspectives and ideas.

We are a relational species—we connect for the sake of connecting.

The Value of Connection

We spend most of our waking hours at work or working. Therefore, establishing connections with people helps enhance and enrich our lives.

In addition, when we connect with others on our team or elsewhere, all the positives tend to increase, including:

- Employee or stakeholder engagement.
- Discretionary effort.
- Collaboration.
- Adaptability.
- Trust.

Results vs. Relationships

Throughout most of my career as a local government manager, I was focused on achieving results as opposed to promoting relationships. Most leaders fall somewhere along the continuum of results vs. relationships.

Late in my career, I finally figured it out. *A leader achieves results through relationships.*

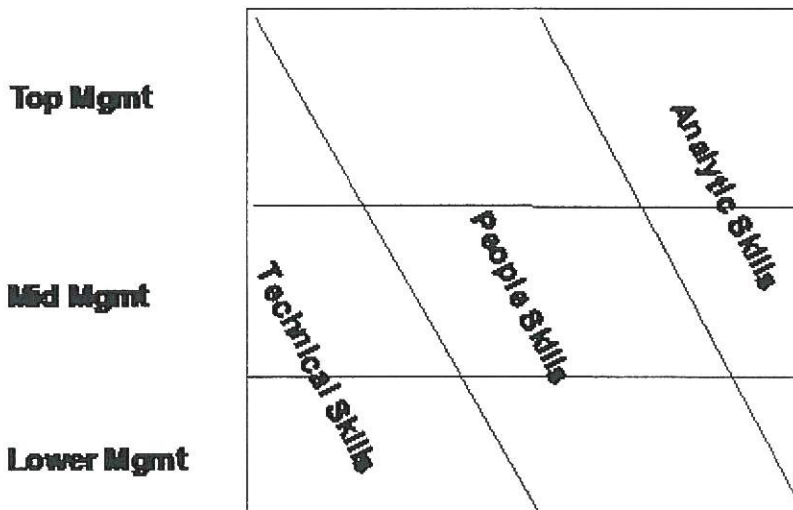
Demanding or Supportive?

A results-oriented leader tends to be demanding of others. A relationship-oriented leader tends to be supportive of others. If one is just demanding, one is perceived as a “jerk.” If one is just supportive, one is perceived as a “pushover.”

The secret is to be demanding *and* supportive at the same time. It is not an “or;” it is an “and.”

The Importance of People Skills

At lower levels of management, one needs a chunk of technical skills, people skills, and a sliver of analytic skills. At mid-level management, one requires all three skill sets. At senior levels of management, leaders need a chunk of analytic skills, people skills, and a sliver of technical skills. See chart below.



80 percent of management failure is related to poor people skills

The common skill set is people skills. One is promoted into management because of technical skills (what a bad idea!). One fails in management because of poor people skills. In a Harvard Business School study, 80% of management failure was related to poor people skills.

As one advances into management, the “soft” skills produce the hard results.

Frank's Personal Experience in Connecting

Because I had suffered a number of personal losses in my life, I started as the city manager of Palo Alto, California, writing personal, handwritten notes to any employee who was experiencing the loss of a family member, friend, pet, or some other trauma. I expressed my experience of grieving the recent loss of my wife Pam and told them that we as an organizational family would support them as they struggled with their grief.

Employees were incredibly grateful that their leader cared about them. As a result of the feedback that I received, we also contracted with an employee assistance program (EAP) to provide grief counseling and other support services.

Not only were employees grateful but I connected with them through the human experience of loss. To this day, 10 years after I retired as city manager, employees stop

me in the downtown, expressing gratitude for my efforts to recognize their struggle with grief.

In reflecting upon this experience, I now realize that our common experience of loss and my efforts to connect with grieving employees created connection. Because of this emotional bond, the employees tended to trust me and follow me.

Whose Responsibility Is It?

It is your responsibility as a leader to take proactive measures to build relationships with team members and others. While it is important for all team members to connect with each other, you have the primary responsibility if you want to exert positive influence.

Practices to Promote Connection

Here are 12 practices to build relationship and connection.

1. Be intentional

To be effective in connecting with others, you must consciously focus on the task of building relationships. It's like any other goal—you must be intentional and focus on it.

2. Get personal

Get to know your team members and other employees and stakeholders with whom you must collaborate. An easy way to get personal is to walk around at the beginning of the day and the end of the day, and ask about the employee. For instance, ask . . .

- How was your weekend?
- How did your daughter do in her soccer game?
- How is your partner progressing in starting a new business?
- What was good about your day?
- What are you learning?

Of course, the best way to promote relationship is to share yourself—your interests, your goals, your family news. You need to model the way so people feel comfortable sharing themselves.

A simple practice is to “take five” at staff meetings. At the beginning of each team meeting, team members can take up to five minutes to share something happening in their lives.

3. Give people space to be themselves

I like sports, traveling, and telling stories. My basic work approach is “ready, fire, aim.” Other people may have completely different interests and ways of working and being. If people are going to accept the “authentic me,” I must accept them in all their uniqueness. For instance, if the other person is more deliberate or analytical than me, I must make the space to let them express their way of working and doing things.

A team shares a common work enterprise and must achieve certain goals and results together. However, there are many ways of achieving those results.

4. **Get away from your office**

As supervisors and managers, we often spend too much time in our offices and require people to come to us. So, it is a good idea to go to the work space of a team member for an impromptu meeting, schedule a walking meeting, or meet at a café. Even though we do serious work together, some informality generates relationship.

5. **Ask questions to generate conversation**

Authentic conversations create relationship and connection. To engage in such conversations, you can ask questions, such as:

- Why is this project important to you (or the organization or community)?
- What does “success” look like to you?
- What are you learning?
- How can I better support you?
- How are you going to proceed?

(See Career Compass #61 titled [Leadership Is the Art of Conversation](#))

Great conversationalists listen twice as much as they talk. They are also curious and ask the other person to “tell me more.”

Being present, asking questions, listening, and seeking to understand all increase your influence (see [Dan Rockwell, Leadership Freak blog, Aug 4, 2017.](#))

6. **Support people when they are struggling**

As indicated by my personal experience, leaders need to find ways to support people when they are struggling. By being forward-looking, we can ask people what they have learned from a mistake instead of dwelling on a failure. If someone is caring for a family member or even would like to attend their child's daytime school performance, we can offer some scheduling flexibility or telework so the employee can attend to his or her family. We can also offer support services to struggling teammates through the agency's EAP.

7. **Promote gratitude**

According to the Gallup research, recognizing a team member at least once every seven days promotes engagement. It also reinforces good performance. More importantly, expressing gratitude for the efforts and contributions of others is a key way to connect with them.

At staff meetings in Palo Alto, we started all-staff meetings with an agenda item called “Team Accomplishments.” This was an opportunity for team members to give a “shout out” recognizing the contributions of others.

In addition, we can celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, and professional or work achievements by sending a card or note or by providing coffee and bagels at the weekly staff meeting. By expressing gratitude for people, we show we are interested in others and we care about them.

8. Conduct "stay interviews"

While we often lavish attention to get a talented professional to join our team, we often forget about them until they leave and then we do an exit interview. By then, of course, it's too late and we have lost the talent.

To build relationship and retain talent, a good practice is to conduct a "stay interview." The purpose of the stay interview is to get to know your direct report better and to retain the person. I know a department director who does a "walking interview" with each of the employees in her department on the staff person's anniversary date.

Some stay interview questions include:

- What do you like most about your work?
- What keeps you here?
- What would entice you away?
- What do you want to learn this year?
- What makes for a great day at work?
- What brings you down on the job?
- Is there anything you'd like to change about your job?
- What would make your job more satisfying and rewarding?
- Do you feel recognized for your accomplishments?
- What strengths or talents do you have that aren't being used?
- What is your greatest challenge or roadblock?
- What part of working here strikes you as ridiculous?
- How can I or the organization help you reach your career goals?
- What support do you need to be more effective?
- What is the most satisfying part about your job right now?
- What is least satisfying about your job?
- If you could wave a magic wand, what changes would you make in the work environment?
- What can we do to ensure we keep you with us?

(See Marnie Green, *Painless Performance Conversations: A Practical Approach to Critical Day-to-Day Workplace Discussions*, 2013.)

Not only do you learn key information through these stay interviews but you also demonstrate that you care. Caring for the other person creates connection.

9. Show vulnerability

Connection and trust all increase with vulnerability. As a leader, you can demonstrate vulnerability at work by saying:

“I made a mistake.”

“I screwed up.”

“I don’t know.”

“I need help.”

By sharing a loss of a loved one, you also show vulnerability.

Remember, only strong leaders can show vulnerability. (See Career Compass # 32 [“The Power of Vulnerability.”](#))

10. Promote learning and growth

One way to show caring is to offer opportunities for team members to learn and grow. As you discover through conversation what team members want to learn, you can provide opportunities for:

- Stretch assignments.
- Team leadership.
- Interim or acting assignments.
- Formal education or certification.

Learning and development is the new “social glue.” As long as talented people are learning and growing, they will tend to stay with you. Such development opportunities also demonstrate that you care.

11. Share stories

From ancient times, human beings have told stories. Tribes, communities, and families have used stories to enchant, entertain, instruct, perpetuate core values, and preserve wisdom.

In contemporary societies and organizations, we still use stories to pass on experience and knowledge. Most importantly, sharing personal experiences or stories help us connect with others.

(See Career Compass #50 [“Story-Telling—A Powerful Way to Communicate and Lead.”](#))

12. Don’t fake it

You can’t fake it. You must understand the value of human connection. You try to connect with others because you see the value in it for yourself and others. You make the effort to form a human bond with others because it enriches you and others.

What If You Are an Introvert?

It is a myth that great organizational leaders are all extroverts and “charismatic.” Jim Collins in his books *Built To Last* and *Good To Great* demonstrated that great leaders are often introverts. The key to their success was that they were humble men and women who were committed to the vision, values, and success of the enterprise. (See Career Compass #76 “[Humble Leaders Get Results.](#)”

Extroverts get energy through interacting with others. It is easier for them to socialize and form relationships with larger numbers of employees and other stakeholders.

Introverts get energy through quiet time with themselves, reflection, and looking inward. Therefore, introverts must be even more intentional about building relationships and human bonds. Introverts must block off time and regularly schedule time for walking around. They must also be conscious of getting out of their office to personally connect with staff in their offices or in the field. They should also occasionally switch from email to conversing in-person with people. They could arrive at a staff meeting early to welcome people and ask how they are doing before the formal meeting begins.

Relationship-Building Takes Time and Effort

Relationship-building requires focus and leveraging small, daily interactions. Connecting with others happens over time, one intentional behavior after another. As a leader, you go slow to go fast.

Leadership is all about sharing yourself. As Frances Hesselbein stated, “Leadership is a matter of how to be, not how to do.”

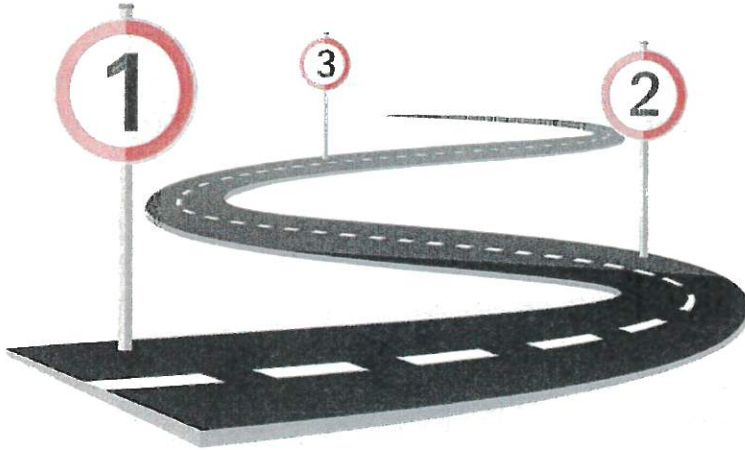


Sponsored by the ICMA Coaching Program, *Career Compass* is a monthly column from ICMA focused on career issues for local government professional staff. Dr. Frank Benest is ICMA's liaison for Next Generation Initiatives and resides in Palo Alto, California. If you have a career question you would like addressed in a future Career Compass, e-mail careers@icma.org or contact Frank directly at frank@frankbenest.com. Read past columns at icma.org/careercompass.

The Roadmap to Engaging Government's Employees

Surveying them is the first step. It's important to do it right -- and then act on the results.

July 26, 2018 AT 6:15 AM



(Shutterstock)



By [Robert J. Lavigna](#) | Contributor

Director of CPS HR Consulting's Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement

It's become an article of faith in government that improving employee engagement will drive improved performance and service. That's not surprising, given the documented successes of private-sector firms in engaging their workers and reaping the financial benefits.

However, what works in the private sector does not necessarily translate seamlessly to government. Raising the level of employee engagement in the public-sector environment -- where policymakers answer to voters rather than the market, outcomes can be hard to measure, most of what government does is highly visible, and civil-service systems are perceived as constraining administrators' flexibility -- presents particular challenges. Despite these challenges, however, research in government has also revealed that improving engagement can improve performance.

In the 18 months since we launched the Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement, we've conducted employee-engagement surveys of thousands of public-

sector workers across the nation. We've then worked with these employees' organizations to help them act on the survey results.

Through this work, we've learned a thing or two, to misquote that ubiquitous insurance-company TV commercial, about how the public sector can better engage its employees in the important work they do and thereby attract, develop and retain the talent government needs to deliver for its stakeholders. Here are some of the lessons we've learned:

Make improving employee engagement a strategic priority. With due respect to my human-resources colleagues and the profession I've devoted 30-plus years to, employee engagement can't be perceived as just another HR program. Instead, it must be an organizational priority. Here, for example, is one of the strategic goals of the Napa Sanitation District in California: "Maintain a dynamic and skilled workforce through employee engagement, professional development and opportunities for advancement." Note that this is not an HR department goal. It's an enterprise-wide goal.

Emphasize the business case. The entire organization -- senior leaders, managers, supervisors and front-line employees -- must understand that engagement is not just another touchy-feely fad or about making workers happy all the time. Research has shown that high-engagement government organizations do better at achieving strategic goals, delivering responsive customer service, devising innovative solutions, recruiting and retaining talent while improving attendance, and keeping workplaces safer.

Commit from the top. Likewise, leaders should commit not just to surveying employees but also to taking action -- and clearly articulating this commitment. When we conduct a kickoff meeting before we launch a survey, we always ask the CEO (such as the city manager, county administrator or agency director) to open the meeting. We also suggest that the leader send a message to all employees announcing and explaining the survey.

Communicate, communicate, communicate. No surprise here. Communication is the key to achieving a high survey response rate and sustaining engagement. This means communicating before, during and after the survey to make sure employees know why the organization is focusing on engagement, how the survey will be administered, and how the results will be acted on. As the leader of one high-engagement agency told us, "We talk about this -- engagement -- all the time."

Reach all employees. The most efficient way to conduct surveys is online. However, there may be many employees who do not have access to email and computers in their workplaces. One solution is to encourage employees to complete the survey on their smartphones or tablets or to provide employees with hard-copy invitations that have links to the survey and then provide opportunities for them to complete it through special sessions, laptops or kiosks.

Involve unions. Labor should be a partner in building engagement. Ideally, union leaders should be advocates for the process, encouraging their members to complete the survey and helping the organization take action. When we do a survey kickoff

meeting, we want union leaders to be in the room to hear why the organization is doing the survey and the CEO's commitment to act on the results.

Keep it confidential ... Employees must believe that no one in their organization will see their individual responses. Employee confidentiality is why many organizations use third parties to conduct surveys. When our Institute does a survey, we guarantee that individual survey responses will be confidential and report only summary data.

... But share survey results. When employees are asked to complete a survey, they expect to hear what the results are. If there is silence about the results, employees are more likely to resist actions taken in response to survey results and will also be less likely to respond to future surveys. We recommend sharing organization-wide results within 30 days of when the results are received.

Drill down. Report survey results at the lowest organizational level possible, such as by department, division, bureau or location. This makes the results actionable and promotes accountability for that action.

When we conduct a survey, we provide reports and recommendations for individual work units and demographic groups with at least 10 responses.

And take action. Unfortunately, some organizations survey their employees, achieve a high response rate and then declare victory. This is a fatal mistake. Organizations that do this may find that engagement declines, not improves.

But it's also important to set priorities. No organization can address every issue that comes out of an employee survey. Like many survey providers, we analyze survey results to identify the key drivers of engagement. This helps the organization understand, and then take action on, the most important issues first.



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Forget Technology; Denver Turns to Its Employees to Fix Problems

BY: [J.B. Wogan](#) | February 2014

In Denver city government, this is what an innovator looks like: White-haired, dressed in light blue scrubs and wearing a pair of sneakers, Tara Morse works as an animal care supervisor. Each day, she conducts about a dozen examinations of new dogs and cats that arrive at the Denver Animal Shelter. Not long ago, Morse came up with a simple idea to save her agency about \$75,000 a year.

When pets get reclaimed by their owners, they're usually collected in fewer than 15 days. After that, the owners rarely turn up. Yet city and county policy dictated that the agency hold animals for 30 days before trying to place them in another home. The longer they stayed, the more their health deteriorated. And as their health worsened, their chances of being adopted dropped as well. Morse recommended a new policy of 15 days. The result was just what Morse had predicted: cheaper, more effective care.

Morse was putting to use skills she learned at the Denver Peak Academy, a city-run training program, housed within the mayor's budget office, that teaches municipal employees analytical methods to improve their daily work. Graduates apply those lessons toward improvements within their home agencies. The academy functions as a school for government innovation, though head instructor Brian Elms quibbles with the term, especially when applied to solutions as low tech and commonsense as the one Morse proposed. "It's just a good idea," Elms says. "Is it an innovation? I don't know what else you call it."

Cities throughout the country are creating offices tasked with spurring innovation. But the Peak Academy represents a different strain. Instead of looking for better results through data analytics, new technology or paid consultants, Denver is turning to its ground-level employees for simple, straightforward reforms. More than a suggestion box, the academy provides a structured ongoing process for soliciting new ideas and making sure they happen.

So far about 2,000 employees from 25 city agencies have undergone at least the basic two-day training from the academy. Nearly 300 have taken the weeklong course, which requires graduates to generate at least three ideas that would make their departments run more smoothly.

While the program costs about \$750,000 a year, including the salaries of the eight-person staff running the academy, the budget office claims the city has already saved about \$3 million by implementing the ideas of academy alumni. If every alumni proposal were in place today, the academy says that the annual cost savings would be closer to \$12 million.

The Denver Peak Academy teaches city employees to visualize problems and simple solutions. *Benjamin Rasmussen*

Among the 50 or so finished projects, most are small-bore in nature. Take, for example, a suggestion by Amber Vancil, a Peak Academy graduate and accountant in the Department of Public Works. Vancil noticed that the wastewater division used certified mail to warn residents that the city intended to place a lien on their property for unpaid utility bills. By shifting to first-class mail, she saved the city an estimated \$46,000 per year. "It's baby steps," says Jerraud Coleman, another academy graduate and a permit technician in the public works department. Coleman's latest project involves a shift to paperless residential parking permits. "If we do a million of these small innovations," he says, "we can make a great impact."

The idea for the Peak Academy originated with a campaign promise by Mayor Michael Hancock in 2011. What he had in mind was a performance division modeled after Baltimore's CitiStat, a management improvement program that uses data to hold agencies accountable for their work. But CitiStat is centralized and top-down, and Dave Edinger, the man Hancock tapped to be his chief performance officer, argued that a top-down program was unlikely to yield results in Denver.

City workers, Edinger believed, weren't ready for further scrutiny and demands from management. In the past few years, the city had cut 680 positions from its workforce, added furlough days and asked employees to contribute more to their pensions and health insurance. "Morale was very low," says Hancock, thinking back to the beginning of his term. "They needed something to feel like they could take control."

Edinger teamed up with Scotty Martin, the city's process improvement manager, to create the Peak Academy. To encourage participation among city employees, the team promised that no one would lose their jobs as a result of efficiencies they proposed through the academy. Employees' jobs might change, but not their employment status. That decision has been critical for getting government workers to embrace the program. "You go down the road of employee-led innovation," Edinger says, "you better make that guarantee."

For the curriculum, they borrowed heavily from the Lean business management model pioneered by Toyota. In car manufacturing, the Lean method involves a meticulous review of production lines in order to eliminate steps that a customer wouldn't consider important and wouldn't be willing to pay for. The goal is to save money and time without sacrificing quality.

The main local hospital, Denver Health, already used Lean management, so the city had a nearby example to follow. Because the city had a \$94 million budget shortfall in Hancock's first year as mayor, whatever training materials the academy used had to be free. Although Edinger and Martin modified the Lean approach to suit the city's needs, the basic lesson plans and exercises were derived from free websites.

Any municipal employee can volunteer for training, either the shorter "green-belt" course or the more intensive "black-belt" course. The city pays employees their regular salary during the training and issues a certificate once they're finished. Afterward, graduates often host one-off improvement events within their home agencies, helping coworkers and supervisors find ways to fix backlogs and improve workflow.

In the academy, trainees learn several ways to identify problems and propose solutions. One is a "value stream analysis," in which an employee strings together sticky notes for every step of a process, such as reviewing and approving parking permit applications. The final version of the analysis not only shows how much time it takes to complete the process, but which steps could be eliminated. Like many of the tools taught in the academy, a value stream analysis relies on graphics to help agency staff see and understand the problem.

When Animal Care Supervisor Morse proposed reducing the number of days the shelter holds animals, she used another Lean tool called an A3, which explains how things currently work, why something needs to change and what the ideal target state would be. The A3 is an example of how workers are learning to make logical, evidence-based arguments for reform. "There's no secret to the sauce," Elms says. "We wanted to teach a foundation where everyone could use the same language to attack a problem."

Municipal governments have long had performance improvement systems in place, but rarely with front-line workers conducting evaluations of their own agencies and then suggesting changes. With citystat programs, an analyst from the mayor's office applies pressure from outside the agency. Likewise, with a city audit, a team of independent analysts studies an agency and publishes a report with recommendations for improvement. "Even if they came up with the same solutions," says Barry Hendges, a Peak Academy graduate from the human services department, "you wouldn't have the same buy-in."

As the Peak Academy scales up, it's likely to face a few serious challenges, some of which have begun to emerge in its first two years. One is selection bias. The government workers who undergo the academy training are volunteers. While the academy has recorded impressive results, it's not yet clear whether the early recruits were influenced by the program, or were people already brimming with reform ideas who merely needed a channel for communicating them.

If it's the latter, then there may be limitations to the academy's reach. What happens when somebody reluctantly enters training at a supervisor's direction, but has no real interest in taking on extra work once they've graduated? One recent graduate said she felt coerced by her manager to take the training and did not want to proceed with the innovations she presented at the end of the week. In such cases, the academy may have to formulate a plan to win over workers uninterested in change, or accept that it can only empower those who already want help.

Perhaps the biggest question for the future viability of the program involves its leadership. The academy owes its origins to a trio of dedicated managers who enjoy the mayor's full backing. With Edinger and Martin—who founded the academy but now monitor its progress from a distance—Elms trades book recommendations on leadership and management, looking for new sources of inspiration to guide their work, a habit that's rubbed off on the rest of the Peak Academy staff. "We're nerds," Elms says with pride. Graduates paste giant process maps on their office walls, admitting they now scrutinize their ordinary routines with efficiency-tinted goggles. "Almost everything you do is a process—getting dressed, making coffee," Elms says. "It really changes your entire life, not just your work life." Would the enthusiasm still be there without Elms' presence? That's an open question.

Mayor Hancock asserts that the academy isn't really an initiative that can die with his administration because it has already created a cultural shift in the workplace. "I don't see it as a program," Hancock says. "I see it as a value." Yet those who champion the training say the academy's success is linked with the mayor's support. Mid-level managers are willing to accept their employees' reform ideas in part because they're products of the mayor's initiative. When another mayor takes office, it's not clear that the program will survive.

Regardless of whether the Peak Academy achieves the scale and longevity that its founders seek, it has already extended beyond Denver city government. Within its first two years, the academy received about 30 requests for training slots from city and state agencies in Kansas, New York, Texas and 11 municipalities within Colorado. Ashley Hand, the chief innovation officer for Kansas City, Mo., underwent Denver's training and now wants to establish her own version of the Peak Academy. What appeals to Hand about the Denver model of innovation is its focus on people rather than tools. Cities such as Boston, New York and San Francisco have become national leaders in innovation, but their brand is more technologically focused. Denver is spending its money on giving its front-line workers new ways to solve problems. "Putting these skills in the hands of staff at all levels," Hand says, "that's extremely powerful."

This article was printed from: <http://www.governing.com/topics/mgmt/gov-denver-seeks-employee-help.html>

Are You Turning to Your Employees for Advice?

BY: | August 31, 2018

Employees are the most valuable assets of an organization. Government entities rely on them to deliver services to the community and often times they go above and beyond what is within their job description when resources are tight. Yet when looking for areas of efficiency and ways to save money, they aren't always the first to be asked.

Historically, employees on the front lines have been overlooked as idea generators. In 1911, Frederick Taylor published "The Principles of Scientific Management" to address the relationship between managers and those employees who are on the front lines. His theory that managers were the planners and the employees were there to perform the tasks was well received during his time. But over time, employers have evolved to recognize someone performing "tasks" may have more insight on how to create efficiency or come up with a new process than someone who sits at a distance.

Many states are looking within for innovative ways to improve services and save money. Pennsylvania, launched a website so employees can submit cost saving ideas to help balance the budget. California has something similar called the Employee Suggestion Program. In a 2014 interview with Kari Ehrman, Merit Award Program Manager, she was asked what makes this program so successful; she responded, "The main reason was because it received top management support".

Programs like this help drive employee engagement. Many take pride in what they do. If they find a way to make something more efficient, cost effective, or safer, their ideas should be heard. More collaboration between employees and leaders can result in a more productive workforce.

Jennifer Dowd is a Sr. Manager, Industry Marketing – Public Sector at Kronos.

This article was printed from: <http://www.governing.com/topics/workforce/Are-You-Turning-to-Your-Employees-for-Advice.html>

Overcoming Public-Employee Silence

Too many government workers don't think their organizations value their input. It's a challenge their leaders need to take seriously.

BY: [Leisha DeHart-Davis](#) | July 2, 2018

"My department manager does not like differing opinions shared and tries to shut down any conversations of such."

"Over the years, we have been asked many times about ways to save money for the department and the city, but nothing ever changes."

"Nine times out of ten, my ideas are dismissed."

"We do have an opportunity to provide opinions but what's the repercussions? Most don't speak about their opinion because they know that it won't result in change."

These excerpts from interviews with employees of local governments -- a building inspector, a firefighter, a parking services representative and a housing maintenance technician -- illustrate what employee silence looks like, when workers intentionally withhold ideas for workplace improvements or keep their concerns to themselves. These employees have chosen not to speak up because nothing comes of their suggestions, they fear retribution or their thoughts are dismissed.

Employee silence means that potentially valuable information is not making it up the hierarchy for consideration. As a result, silence stifles innovation, dampens employee morale and hinders organizational effectiveness. The effects are particularly damaging for the delivery of high-quality public services with scarce taxpayer dollars.

How big a problem is employee silence for government? At the Local Government Workplaces Initiative at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, we've been [researching its extent and impact](#), and our findings are troubling. We surveyed 3,234 local-government employees over the past 18 months, and fully 50 percent of them told us that they sometimes do not speak up when they have ideas for improvement. The odds that these same employees were thinking about quitting were nearly four times that of vocal employees. So silence is a morale issue that affects workforce turnover.

How can governments at every level mitigate employee silence? Here is a framework for public administrators:

Want employee input. Really. The crucial first step is to examine your own attitudes. Not all managers want employee input. Some say they want it but really do not. The best public managers understand the value of employee input, work systematically to encourage input and have a plan for acting on that input. If you don't fall into this category, you will only demoralize your employees.

Create formal processes for employee input. Management by walking around is OK, but it's no substitute for formal processes that elicit and respond to employee input. Some examples include an employee forum, like the one created by the town of Chapel Hill, N.C., to provide regular feedback on workplaces issues, and an employee task force to address pay structures, like the one used by the city of Concord, N.C. Having formal processes in place can also reduce fears of retribution by creating a critical mass of employee voice.

Follow Up. When employees come to you with ideas or concerns, do the following:

1. Thankfully acknowledge the idea, suggestion or concern.
2. Outline the next steps (for example, "I will check this out with accounting").
3. Put a timeframe on it ("You will hear back from me within the next two weeks").
4. When you decide, let the employee know what the answer is. "Yes, great idea, thank you." Or "No, but here's why." Or "Not yet, let's revisit this in (specify the timeframe)."

Train supervisors in employee input. It is more common for supervisors to be trained in giving employees feedback rather than in receiving it. Such training could include an overview of basic employee input processes such as those described above, role playing on encouraging and responding to input, and an emphasis on the importance of careful language -- being encouraging rather than dismissive.

Overcoming employee silence is a crucial challenge for public organizations. Doing so is a matter of understanding the harms of silence, recognizing the benefits of employee input and having the will to improve your public-sector workplace.

This article was printed from: <http://www.governing.com/gov-institute/voices/col-overcoming-public-employee-silence.html>

What Poor Workforce Strategies Are Costing Government

Engaging their employees could improve productivity and save governments a lot of money. But the public sector is largely ignoring the opportunity.

March 21, 2018 AT 6:15 AM



According to Gallup, 71 percent of state and local employees are not engaged with their work. (Shutterstock)



By [Howard Risher](#) | Contributor

A consultant focusing on public-sector pay and performance

The linkage is indisputable: When employees are engaged and committed to their organizations and their work, they are more productive, and that contributes to lower operating costs. Employee engagement is also linked to the costs associated with absenteeism, turnover, accidents, mistakes and waste. It all adds up. And yet at all levels of government these potential savings are being left on the table.

Gallup's research on this subject is best known. In 2014, it [reported](#) that as a result of lagging employee engagement levels federal workers' productivity was 11 percent lower than in the typical client organization. Based on the average federal salary (ignoring benefit costs) and the number of federal employees, that productivity gap translates into \$18.5 billion annually in added costs.

Similar studies apparently have not been completed in state and local government. But the issues are essentially the same, given that Gallup also reports that [71 percent of](#)

[state and local employees are not engaged with their work](#). Productivity gains of just 5 or 10 percent can save millions. Conversely, when productivity declines, costs increase.

Employee engagement became a hot button in the private sector long ago because Gallup and others have confirmed the linkage with performance and productivity. Businesses have learned that switching to policies and practices that contribute to higher levels of engagement pays off. Those practices have also been shown to facilitate the recruiting of better-qualified applicants. The same kinds of changes would improve the brand of government as an employer by make agencies better places to work.

Productivity in government is difficult and for many operations impossible to measure, but that does not negate the importance of good performance and the practices that contribute to raising performance levels. Over the years, public employers have focused on strategic planning, goal setting, metrics and of course technology, but those initiatives largely ignored the workforce and clearly have not solved the performance problem.

It's also been true that public employers have focused more on improved efficiency than on improved results. The gains from efficiency studies are rarely significant. In contrast, studies show rethinking the organization and management of work and adopting practices to strengthen employee engagement can generate savings of 10 percent or more. Simply [eliminating a layer of management](#) is an obvious saving. There is also evidence that engaged employees will improve their service to the public.

A core aspect of the problem is that nothing in traditional civil-service systems supports efforts to raise performance levels. A century ago, civil-service reform protected employees from political abuse. Similarly, the early personnel offices protected workers from supervisor abuse. But work environments were inflexible and unresponsive: The principles of scientific management -- the origin of "time-and-motion studies" in the manufacturing environment -- dictated how workers did their jobs through the century.

In the private sector, that approach began to change after the 1990-91 recession. Since then, there has been an explosion of books, articles, online resources and conferences promoting the potential gains from new work management thinking. Every sector except for state and local government now has rankings of the best places to work. The thread that runs through all of these discussions, studies and surveys is the advantage of maintaining a positive, supportive work environment.

The books and articles consistently focus on improving engagement. Writers rarely discuss the management actions that can trigger a decline in engagement levels or cause a worker to become disengaged. When that happens, their performance and productivity decline and costs increase.

Public leaders, in particular, need to recognize that decisions that adversely affect workers -- freezing pay, reducing benefits, cutting the workforce -- may be politically advantageous but that those actions will undermine employee engagement and performance. Moreover, once the adverse action ends, it will take time to regain the employees' commitment.

In business, companies with poor management fail, but ineffective management in the public sector can continue for years, especially where leaders are not dependent on elections. In one federal organization, engagement scores are at rock bottom and members of Congress are receiving complaints from constituents expressing dissatisfaction. A root cause is the way the agency's workers are managed. It's been more than a year since the problem first surfaced but little has changed.

A final point is that writers commonly discuss engagement in terms that suggest it's a human-resources issue. But all of the factors that influence engagement are controlled by leaders or managers. HR has virtually no involvement in day-to-day workforce management. In too many jurisdictions HR has been seen as merely an administrative function. But leadership on workforce issues is needed. That can be [a new role for HR](#).

Employee engagement has important ramifications for operating results, budget management and the public's satisfaction with government. The practices associated with high-performance workplace cultures are all available to government. When employees believe their efforts are valued and there is mutual respect and trust, they will commit to achieving credible goals. Workers want to make their organizations a success. A starting point might be to solicit their ideas to improve performance. They will have many.



[Howard Risher](#) | Contributor | h.risher@verizon.net

Factors That Make People Stay

According to research into employee retention conducted by Kaye and Jordan-Evans, the following are the most common reasons people stay in jobs, listed in order of popularity and frequency. The authors note that 90 percent of respondents listed at least one of the first three items among the top three or four reasons they stayed.

1. Career growth, learning and development
2. Exciting work and challenge
3. Meaningful work, making a difference and a contribution
4. Great people
5. Being part of a team
6. Good boss
7. Recognition for work well done
8. Fun on the job
9. Autonomy, sense of control over my work
10. Flexibility—for example, in work hours and dress code
11. Fair pay and benefits
12. Inspiring leadership
13. Pride in organization, its mission and quality of product
14. Great work environment
15. Location
16. Job security
17. Family-friendly
18. Cutting-edge technology

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Note the similarities between the two lists—the one you generated at the beginning of the course and the one based on research. Again, note that most of the factors are within the supervisor's control.

The Supervisor's Role in Retaining Good Employees

From the research into employee retention and from the participants' own experiences, it is clear that there is much a supervisor can do to retain the organization's best employees. Of course, compensation is an important retention factor, but as noted in module 2, civil service schedules constrain local governments from matching salaries, bonuses, and incentives offered by

the private sector. Local government supervisors, then, must view creating an environment where employees want to stay as one of their most critical job responsibilities. Employees who love their jobs will often stay even in the face of more lucrative offers because their present job is a known commodity—and a good one.

Retention Strategies for Supervisors

Good supervisory practices go a long way toward creating a retention culture in your organization. Examples are as follows:

Communicate respectfully with all employees. Be a model for respectful interactions in your work unit: listen actively and remember what people tell you. Make eye contact, pay attention, and don't interrupt when talking with employees. Make notes from important conversations in your day planner or palm pilot, or on your calendar. Give all employees a chance to participate in meetings.

Get to know and understand your employees. Ask appropriate questions and listen to the answers, know your employees' goals, and help your employees do work they are passionate about.

Create a work environment in which your employees can thrive. Do what you can within organization policies to be family friendly, make room for fun at work—and have fun yourself, and help maintain employee wellness by recognizing signs of stress and mitigating stressful situations. If an employee seems to be having problems, ask respectfully—without prying—how you can help. Sincerely solicit employee input about the status and direction of your work unit.

Share organizational information. Share as much information as you can, tell your staff what happened at meetings you attended, try to quiet the rumor mill, and truly keep an open door. Hold staff meetings regularly and make sure they are productive rather than routine. Be proactive about sharing what information you can so that rumors don't begin. Should rumors start to circulate, gather employees together so that everyone hears the truth from you at the same time.

Provide challenging work. Some required tasks are routine and just plain boring. Work with your employees to add challenge to those tasks, and make sure to spread the most challenging assignments around the staff.

Support opportunities for professional development. Ask employees what training opportunities they would like to pursue, and suggest some ideas of

your own. If budgets constrain the use of outside training, institute a policy that whoever attends outside training is responsible for conducting a lunchtime seminar to share new skills and information with other employees.

Recognize excellent performance. Design creative, non-monetary ways to recognize excellence. Always give employees personal feedback.

Orient and mentor new employees. Once you have hired someone, make sure to spend time orienting him or her to the organizational culture, policy and procedures, and physical work space. Design a mentoring program in which seasoned employees are paired with new ones to “show them the ropes.”

How do you know what will make your employees stay? Ask them! Just like we did at the beginning of the training. Ask, “What makes you stay?” And listen to the answers. Employees at different points in their lives and careers will have different answers. Older employees who have been with your local government for many years may need job security and skill retooling, while younger employees who have recently been hired may need assurances that they will be able to pursue outside training to keep their skills up for both current and future jobs. Parents may want a family-friendly outlook, while people without children may want assurances that they won’t have to shoulder the burden when a colleague needs to care for a sick child.

Exercise: Retaining Good Employees

The purpose of this part of the exercise is to design a retention strategy for a specific employee. Each group will be given a short description of the person they hired for the job in module 2. Suggest at least three specific actions that you can take to ensure that the employee that your group hired stays.

Debriefing the Exercise

- What does the employee seem to want from a job?
- What factors did you discuss that would make the employee consider leaving?
- How did you determine the strategies that would make him or her stay?

Now, brainstorm at least one more strategy to add to each group’s list and add it to your handout.



[50% Of Americans Think Gun Violence Is A 'Very Big Problem'](#)



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Replacing a Government Employee Can Cost 150% of Worker's Salary



ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/SEANFBGGGS

By Bob Lavigna | JULY 22, 2021

COMMENTARY | Public-sector organizations devote considerable resources to hiring, but they often overlook retention and its "evil twin" turnover. Analyzing data and acting on it can help.

[Public-Sector Organizations Devote Considerable Resources to Hiring, but They Often Overlook Retention and Its "Evil Twin" Turnover](#)



Jim Goodnight, CEO of SAS, a business software company perennially on *Fortune's* list of 100 Best Companies to Work For, once said, "My chief assets drive out the gate every night. My job is to make sure they come back."

Goodnight's comment should also resonate with government. Public sector employers need to make sure their "assets" keep coming back too, if not physically then virtually.

The coronavirus has dramatically affected the workplace, including in government. Organizations now face a double whammy—hiring new and retaining employees.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, job vacancies in the U.S. economy are at an all-time high, and Americans quit their jobs in record numbers in May. In government, the

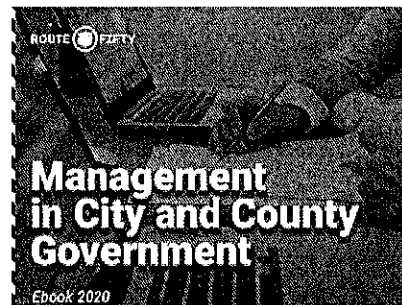
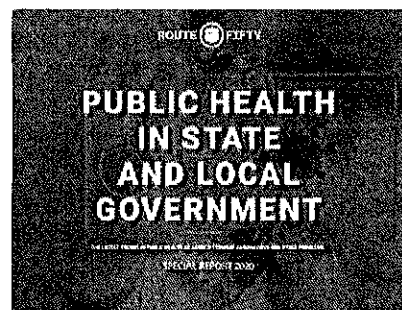
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responding employees are planning to look for a new job. Many said the pandemic has given them a new perspective on work, and 71% said they would leave an employer whose values don't align with theirs. Prospective and current employees expect organizations to continue to offer maximum flexibility in where and how people work.



While public-sector organizations devote considerable time, effort and resources to hiring, they often overlook the other side of the talent coin—retention (and its evil twin turnover). This is a mistake because replacing a departed employee can cost up to 150% of the employee's annual salary.

Government therefore needs to focus not only on attracting talent, but also keeping it. One answer to this challenge is to continue to give employees flexibility in where and how they work.

According to a Bloomberg headline, “Americans are Done With 5-Days a Week in the Office.” Our Institute’s national survey of public-sector employees revealed that 85% of respondents working remotely for the first time want to continue at least part time.

But only a relatively small proportion of public-sector employees are “office workers” who can operate remotely. Most employees in fields like public safety, firefighting, emergency services, public works, health care, transit and public education can’t phone or video in. In local government, these occupations typically account for the majority of the workforce, and competition for this talent is intensifying. For example, Waste Management Inc. is now offering college scholarships to the family members of its 36,000 full-time employees. Tough for government to compete with a perk like that.

minimize unwanted turnover. This includes:

- Analyzing turnover data to understand who is leaving and staying—and why.
- Measuring and improving employee engagement.

Who's leaving and who's staying?

Most organizations know what their overall turnover rate is. But this may only be the tip of the iceberg. The rest of the story is understanding who is leaving. A seemingly low overall turnover rate can mask workforce problems while a high turnover rate may not necessarily be a cause for concern.

Specifically, the organization needs to know if it is losing:

- The best performers.

- Senior leaders, managers or supervisors.
- Employees in specific work units, occupations or pay levels.

Beyond the who is the why. High turnover among certain groups or work units can signal a problem and require a deeper dive. However, if turnover is higher because of long-delayed retirements (and the number of retirements nationally has increased), this may not be a big problem.

Understanding why employees are leaving can require collecting quantitative or qualitative data by drilling down on turnover data, and conducting exit interviews, stay interviews (asking employees why they remain with the organization), focus groups and employee surveys.

The bottom line is that monitoring and managing retention requires understanding who is staying and leaving – and why – and then applying the results to drive retention.

Measuring and Maximizing Employee Engagement

Decades of research have shown that employee engagement matters. High-engagement organizations achieve their strategic goals, are more productive, deliver more responsive customer service—and have lower turnover. According to Gallup, high-engagement organizations have 43% lower turnover than low-engagement organizations.

Research by our Institute has shown that engaged employees in government are three times more likely than disengaged employees to believe their organization is achieving its mission. This connection is critical for retaining talent because many public servants were attracted to their organizations because of mission.

Unfortunately, there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to improving engagement. By one count there are about 90,000 public-sector organizations in the U.S. Each is different. The key to improving engagement is understanding the level of employee engagement in the organization—the baseline—and what influences engagement. The best way to collect this data is to survey employees to understand how they feel about their work and the organization.

And then taking action to improve engagement by focusing on what employees say matters to them.

Our national research has revealed that the following factors can influence engagement in government:

- Strong and empathetic leadership.
- The work itself.
- Training and development.
- Employee appreciation and recognition.
- Effective supervision.

In other words, just like minimizing unwanted turnover, improving engagement requires data—and the commitment to act on the data. 📊

Bob Lavigna is director of the Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement.

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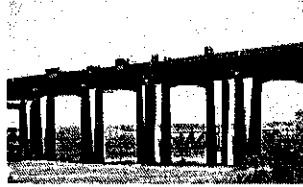
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Feds Reveal Programs For \$3B in Local Economic Development Funds




ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/VM


By [Jean Dimeo](#) | JULY 22, 2021

State and local governments will have access to the money, which is flowing from the Economic Development Administration.

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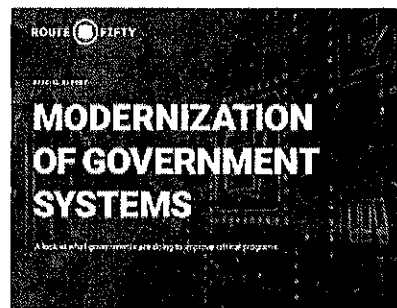
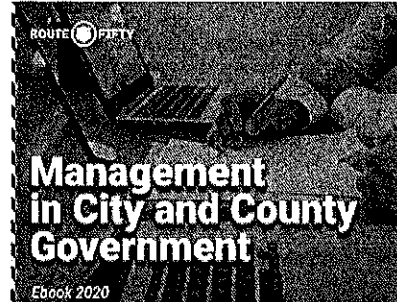
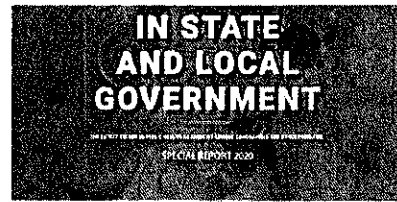
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A federal economic development agency provided more details on Thursday about how it plans to invest \$3 billion in American Rescue Plan Act funds, money that state and local governments will be able to tap into. Department of Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo during a press

"Millions of Americans continue to struggle. ... Ensuring that these \$3 billion are distributed equitably is core to our investment strategy," she said. "We know that equity is good for workers, good for business, and good for the economy."

The Economic Development Administration, housed within Commerce, said the new Investing in America's Communities initiative will provide:

- \$1 billion for the Build Back Better Regional Challenge.
- \$500 million for the Good Jobs Challenge.
- \$500 million for the Economic Adjustment Assistance Challenge.
- \$100 million for the Indigenous Communities Challenge.
- \$750 million in travel, tourism and outdoor recreation grants.
- \$90 million in planning, research and networks grants.



As part of the initiative, Commerce also is allocating \$300 million ARPA funds for coal communities to help them recover from the pandemic and create jobs.

EDA will work with communities on "innovative new approaches" to strengthen the American workforce, businesses and communities, the Commerce secretary said in a statement.

Amid the influx of funding, the EDA in April revised its investment priorities to include "equity" for the first time. Its amended investment priorities matter for grantees because they provide a framework for the types of projects and programs the agency is looking for when it awards competitive grants.

Jean Dimeo is managing editor of Route Fifty

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Turnover Cost Formula: Get Ready for Shock

You've probably seen estimates that employee turnover costs an employer as much as \$30,000 per lost and replaced employee. Other times you might see an estimate of \$10,000 to \$30,000 as the cost of replacing a lost employee.

These figures seem astounding. How can you know what employee turnover is costing your business? And what might you do to lower the costs?

The cost of turnover is an elusive figure that can sabotage your bottom line without you ever seeing it. It doesn't show up as a line item on your financial statement.

It can take over a year for a new employee to reach maximum efficiency. So when you lose an experienced employee it means lost productivity or lost sales while you're rehiring, retraining, and while your new employee is gaining experience.

Experts suggest that as much as 80% of turnover cost is hidden. Though estimates vary, it's clear that reducing turnover expenses is important to your bottom line.

How to reduce your turnover costs:

1. Determine what turnover is costing you in total dollars. (Use the formula shown in the adjoining box.)
2. Invest more time, money and effort up front to recruit, select and train better people, who can reach maximum productivity sooner.
3. Avoid hiring applicants with a job-hopping work history. If you must hire job-hoppers -- because of a tight labor market, for example -- lower their pay and benefits to compensate for the increased turnover cost.
4. Encourage referrals from your present employees.
5. Do exit interviews of departing employees, to learn more about what causes employees to leave. Then, when possible, correct practices that cause employees to leave.
6. Listen to all complaints from your employees. Correct legitimate problems quickly.
7. Cross-train your employees to do several jobs, so that different employees can rotate boring tasks.
8. Rotate undesirable jobs among several employees.
9. Allow employees flexibility in how they perform their work.
10. Have a promote-from-within policy.

Turnover Cost Formula Example

A. Annual pay for the position.....	\$18,000
B. Annual benefits, taxes, insurance cost for the position.....	\$ 5,400
C. Total pay, benefits, taxes, insurance (A+B).....	\$23,400
D. Percent of first year that new employee is unproductive.....	25%
E. Cost of unproductive time (CxD).....	\$5,850
F. Recruiting (such as advertising).....	\$500
G. Management cost to recruit, interview, train, and supervise new employee (Hours in first year [50] x hourly management rate \$50).....	\$ 2,500
Estimated turnover cost (E + F + G).....	\$ 8,850

What Does Losing an Employee Cost Your Company?

Can losing one \$50,000-a-year employee actually cost your company \$150,000 to \$450,000? That's what one publisher asserts in its marketing e-mail for a tool to improve hiring and reduce turnover.

The assertion is based on a commonly repeated belief that the cost of losing and replacing one employee runs up to three times the employee's annual pay, and sometimes higher.

One business consultant writes, "A general approach to calculate employee turnover cost is to use 50 percent to 200 percent of an employee's annual salary."

A LawBiz® Blog article warns "Turnover is very expensive!" and cites the Society for Human Resource Management's estimate that "it costs \$3,500 to replace one \$8 per hour employee..." The article also cites another organization's estimate that turnover cost is "30 percent - 50 percent of the annual salary of entry-level employees; 150 percent of middle level employees and up to 400 percent for specialized, high level employees."

Here's another headline on a marketing e-mail intended to frighten an employer: *"1 in 4 employees will quite their jobs this year – and you'll spend 3 times their salary to replace them!"*

What's an employer to believe? Actually, sometimes your turnover cost could be 10 percent of the departing employee's annual income. Other times, it could be 300 percent of the employee's income. That's because turnover costs are unique to each employer, unique to each job position, unique to each employee, and unique to each industry and each community.

There is only one way to know your company's turnover cost to replace an individual employee. That's to know *all* the costs related to the loss and replacement of that employee. And then use all this cost data to calculate the total estimated turnover cost for the loss and replacement of that individual.

The first challenge is to identify all the costs related to turnover. Following is a list to help you:

Turnover costs

- Separation/severance pay.
- Increase in unemployment insurance taxes.
- Time spent in exit interviews with departing employee.
- Increase in overtime put in by other employees.
- Increase in pay for use of temporary help.
- Management time to recruit, interview, test, train, and supervise a new (replacement) employee.
- Tests and medical exams given to applicants and replacement employee.
- Travel and moving costs for replacement employee.
- Cost of recruiting (such as advertising).
- Replacement employee's unproductive cost.



Use your cost information to calculate the turnover cost. Here's an example.

Turnover Cost Formula Example	
A. Annual pay for the position.....	\$18,000
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C. Total pay, benefits, taxes, insurance (A+B).....	\$23,400
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G. Management cost to recruit, interview, train, and supervise new employee (Hours in first year [50] x hourly management rate \$50.....)	\$ 2,500
Estimated turnover cost (E + F + G).....	\$ 8,850

Turnover Cost Calculator
 For a detailed Turnover Cost Calculator, check out the U.S. Department of Labor's "Cost-of-Turnover Worksheet" at this Web page: <http://www.dol.gov/cfbc/turnover.htm>.

Sometimes, turnover is a plus.

Three business college professors, after doing two studies of voluntary turnover, concluded there are times when turnover is good.

The researchers looked at voluntary turnover among core employees – those who control production processes or the direct delivery of services – in the trucking and the concrete pipe manufacturing industries. (Voluntary turnover only applies to employees who leave an employer by their own choice. It does not include involuntary terminations, layoffs or other workforce reductions.)

"We found that what matters is the match," explained John Delery, a University of Arkansas associate professor of management and one of the turnover researchers. "A company may choose not to invest in its people, but to obtain profits in other ways. That company is not really

harmful by high voluntary turnover rates. But if a company chooses to obtain its profits through investment in its people, high voluntary turnover can be devastating."

In other words, if the employer doesn't invest much in an employee, turnover may not be very costly.

"One of the problems with some studies is that they look at all forms of turnover together," according to Nina Gupta, a University of Arkansas professor of management and one of the turnover researchers. "But all forms of turnover don't have the same effect. Sometimes firing an employee can have a beneficial impact on productivity."

To increase financial performance, investment in human capital must be tied to low voluntary turnover rates, Gupta explained. "We can't really generalize about what is better for profits," she added. "Some approaches say that human resource investments promote financial performance. Our study shows that this is not necessarily the case."

Following are some advantages of terminating employees and of voluntary turnover:

- Turnover gives the employer the opportunity to introduce new talent, new experience, new perspectives, and new ideas into the workplace.
- Turnover can result in some cost savings by resetting pay and salaries. In some instances, when highly paid, experienced employees leave they are replaced with qualified, new employees who start at lower pay or salary levels.
- Turnover can result in savings in some employee benefit costs. Older employees replaced by younger employees, for example, can mean lower health benefit costs. Long-time employees, who have reached the upper limits on annual paid vacation, replaced by new employees will mean lower vacation payout.

THE COST OF EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

Please enter numbers with no spaces or commas, decimals are ok.

Separation Costs

cost of exit interviewer's

time.....\$

+ cost of terminating employee's

time.....\$

+ cost of administrative functions related to

termination.....\$

+ separation

pay.....\$

+ increase in unemployment

tax.....\$

Vacancy Costs

cost of additional

overtime.....\$

+ cost of additional temporary

help.....\$

- wages and benefits saved due to

vacancy.....\$

Replacement Costs

preemployment administrative

expenses.....\$

+ cost of attracting

applicants.....\$

+ cost of entrance

interviews.....\$

+ testing

costs.....\$

+ staff

costs.....\$

+ travel and moving

expenses.....\$

+ cost of additional temporary help (20 hours @ \$11 per hour for 2 weeks)..... 440
 - wages and benefits saved due to vacancy (40 hours @ \$9.50 per hour for 3 weeks) ...(1,140)

Replacement Costs

preemployment administrative expenses (3 hours @ \$12)..... 36
 + cost of attracting applicants (ads, agencies, and staff time)162
 + cost of entrance interviews (5 interviews x 1 hour x \$16)80
 + testing costs (aptitude, skill, drug--1 hour @ \$16 + \$30)46
 + staff costs (staff meetings -- one 30-minute meeting with 3 people @ \$16 per hr)24
 + travel and moving expenses (interviewees and new employee)0
 +postemployment information gathering and dissemination costs (payroll, benefits, policies, and procedures, employee records, 2 hours @ \$14 + 2 hours @ \$9.50)47
 + cost of postemployment medical exams75

Training Costs

cost of informational literature (manuals, brochures, policies)10
 + formal training costs50
 + informal training costs (OJT, mentoring, socializing - 1 day @ \$16 per hour + 1 day @ \$9.50 per hour)204

Performance Differential

differential in performance costs/benefits (salary differential, vacancy lag, learning curve) ..760

TOTAL TURNOVER COSTS PER EMPLOYEE

.....\$2,288