



Session 7

Group Exercises

Cases 1, 2, and 3 Customer Service

Individual Exercises

Describe your jurisdictions Safety Program, Wellness Program and/or Security Policy

Workplace Safety and Loss Control Audit Questionnaire

Self-Evaluation – Customer Service

Self-Assessment – Customer Service

Feeling and Reactions

Sample Worksheet – Maintaining a Positive Attitude

Articles and Materials

Lower Your Stress, Think with Clarity, and Lead with Ease

Career Compass No. 77: Ten Practices to Build a Mini-Culture of Learning

US Department of Labor Statistics

Information on OSHA, National Institute for Safety and Health, and the National Safety Council

Article on State Safety Programs

Ten Commandments for City Hall

6 Secrets to Offering Exceptional Customer Service

Customer Service Scenarios

Customer Service Action Plan

Sample Customer Surveys

Articles on Civic Engagement

Group Exercises

Case One

Roles

- Harriet
- Records clerk
- Harriet's friends
- The police officer who wrote the ticket

Harriet, an 83 year old longtime resident, has become "confused" of late. Harriet has a handicapped parking permit that she proudly displays on her windshield. The other day, she parked on the square and exceeded the two-hour limit. The parking enforcement attendant wrote her a \$3.00 ticket.

Harriet comes huffing into police headquarters and faces off with the records clerk, claiming that she has a permit and should not get a ticket. She has several of her friends from the Senior Citizen Center with her. The records clerk listens and then explains that her permit allows only two hours on the square. Harriet doesn't seem to want to acknowledge this policy and keeps repeating that she has a handicap sticker and doesn't have to pay the ticket.

How would you respond to Harriet?

Case Two

Roles

- Three employees with the Public Works Street Division
- Jim
- Another resident, who may or may not have the same opinion as Jim
- The crew's supervisor

Three employees with the Public Works Street Division have been filling potholes on a sultry, blazing July day. They've been at it for over two hours and decide it's time for a break. One guy drives up to the local convenience store and returns with three cold cans of soda. They sit under a shade tree, and one of them lights up a cigarette as they begin to drink their cans of soda.

Jim, a resident, happens to drive by and see them on break. He pulls over and starts dressing them down, saying that he doesn't want his tax money going to support deadbeats and, what is more, it's illegal to smoke on the job. He demands that they immediately go back to work and that the smoker douse his cigarette. He further says that he's going to take their names and give a "report" at the next council meeting. Finally, he tells them that he took a photo of them loafing and is sending to the newspaper along with a letter to the editor.

How should these guys respond to Jim?

Case Three

Roles

- Sam
- The Public Works Department employee
- The neighbor
- The building official
- An inspector from community code enforcement

Sam, a local handyman, starts to build an eight-foot high cedar privacy fence around his backyard. Unknown to Sam, the city has an ordinance limiting the height of backyard privacy fences to seven feet unless the resident receives a zoning variance. A neighbor complains to the city and then tells Sam he's in violation of the ordinance. Sam stops down at the Public Works Department to check out the ordinance. The city employee behind the desk asks Sam if the fence has been completed. Sam becomes agitated and asks to speak to the supervisor. The supervisor steps into the fray and Sam tells her he doesn't like being accused of breaking the law. He will continue building the fence, no matter what they say.

How would you respond to Sam?

Individual Exercises

**HANDOUT 41:
Workplace Safety and Loss Control
Audit Questionnaire**

Instructions: Use these questions to stimulate your thinking on problem areas in safety and loss control management. "Audit" your own work situation and supervisory actions to determine problem areas and where you can make improvements.

1. Is there a pattern of accidents in your work unit? If so, describe that accident pattern. What seems to be causing them?

2. What is your own attitude toward safety? Do you *really* care about your employees' health, safety, and welfare? Do you care enough to want to prevent accidents before they happen?

3. Are your employees motivated to be safety conscious? Do they know the consequences if they are not?

4. Is your equipment hazardous or dated? Does it need to be replaced? Have you calculated replacement costs vs. losses resulting from accidents and injuries because of faulty equipment?

5. Do your workers have the necessary materials to perform their jobs adequately? Are the materials your employees use heavy, sharp, toxic? Do you know the proper equipment and methods to handle potentially hazardous materials?

6. Have you surveyed your employees' work environment to *look* for potential safety or health problems?

7. Do you thoroughly train new employees to use equipment and materials effectively and safely?

Self Evaluation

0 = Rarely

1 = Sometimes

2 = Often

3 = Almost Always

_____ When having a conversation with a customer, do I give him or her my complete attention and avoid doing other activities (working on the computer, writing unnecessarily, doing a cross word puzzle, and so on)?

_____ Do I make eye contact when speaking with a customer to show that I am paying attention?

_____ When speaking to a customer over the phone, do I make an effort to use inflection in my voice to convey interest and concern?

_____ Do I pick up the telephone by the third ring?

_____ When I need to put a customer on hold, do I ask his or her permission and wait for a response before doing so?

_____ Do I avoid technical jargon and use language that the customer can understand?

_____ When I cannot provide my customer with exactly what he or she wants, do I suggest options and alternatives?

_____ Do I sincerely apologize to the customer when a mistake has been made by me or my jurisdiction?

_____ When a customer is voicing a complaint, do I remain calm and understanding even if I think he or she is wrong?

_____ Do I view customer complaints as an opportunity to improve service rather than as a problem that is taking up valuable time?

0 - 12 points: you are at the Bronze Level - Scoring at this level doesn't mean that you don't care about customers; it is due to one of the following three reasons:

You are a newcomer to the service field and are still learning how to deal with customers.

You are a seasoned service provider but may have become a little rusty on some of the basics that you once practiced.

Job suitability. Over the years, we have met certain people who just don't enjoy dealing with customers or helping others solve problems. Nothing is wrong with them; they just work better by themselves. If this situation applies to you, you might consider either changing jobs or changing the focus of the joy you currently hold.

13 - 22 points: - you are at the Silver Level – You have a solid understanding of the basics, but you are not using them consistently.

The probable reason for this inconsistency is that you are overwhelmed by the functions of your job. On good days, you give good service, and on bad days you give bad service.

The key is to become more consistent with your attitude.

Remember that regardless of the time you spend with a customer (be it a 30 second phone call or a one-hour meeting) and regardless of how busy you are, you always have a personal choice about your attitude. It takes about 30 days to form a new habit, so make a point of practicing the items covered in the questionnaire every time you deal with a customer – especially when you don't feel like it!

23 – 30 points you are at the Gold Level – Congratulations – you are a professional. You seem to have the basics down and are ready for larger challenges. To continue to grow, consider the following:

Once you have finished evaluating yourself, get another perspective by having a co-worker you know and trust evaluate you. He or she may see areas for improvement that are blind spots to you.

Go beyond the basics of service. Educate yourself in the more sophisticated service skills by learning to take initiative.

Suggestion – go through the above questionnaire a second time and replace the work customer with the words staff member. Doing so will help you to evaluate how good a job you are doing of treating your staff as internal customers.

Self Assessment

Circle the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement, using a scale of 5 (highly agree) to 1 (highly disagree).

	Agree					Disagree				
1. There is nothing demeaning about assisting or serving others.	5	4	3	2	1					
2. I can be positive to everyone regardless of age or appearance.	5	4	3	2	1					
3. On bad days, when nothing goes right, I can still find ways to be positive.	5	4	3	2	1					
4. The higher the quality of service I provide during work the better I feel.	5	4	3	2	1					
5. I am enthusiastic about my job.	5	4	3	2	1					
6. Encountering difficult "people" situations from time to time will not cause me to be negative.	5	4	3	2	1					
7. The idea of being a professional at customer service contact is motivating.	5	4	3	2	1					
8. Performing a "people-oriented" job is both challenging and fun.	5	4	3	2	1					
9. I receive great pleasure when others compliment me or my organization on superior service.	5	4	3	2	1					
10. Doing well in all aspects of my job is very important to me.	5	4	3	2	1					

Feeling and Reactions

During the work day when:

I feel ...	physically...	I react by ...
angry	I get teary	withdrawing
I'm right	I perspire	snapping
put down	I get headaches	using my authority
gone around	I get a nervous stomach	making mistakes
challenged	my muscles tighten	taking the offensive
I don't have the facts	my voice shakes	making excuses
left out	I feel tightness in my chest	asking questions
talked down to	my heart rate increases	becoming parental
unable to help	I go to the bathroom	blaming
stupid	I feel tired	showing anger, yelling
frustrated	I blush	using sarcasm
I'm wrong	I am unable to think	proving I'm right
backed into a corner	I mumble	making a joke about it
I have to say no	I straighten up	going on "automatic"
unprepared	I get depressed	not saying anything
resentful	I grind my teeth	losing self-control
nervous	I get anxious	talking too much
out of time, overwhelmed	I feel hungry	becoming evasive
threatened	I fume	criticizing myself
upset	I get nervous	apologizing
confused	I feel aggressive	turning out
irritated	I need space	repeating my point
placated	my back or neck aches	smoking a cigarette
embarrassed	I feel anxious	having a drink

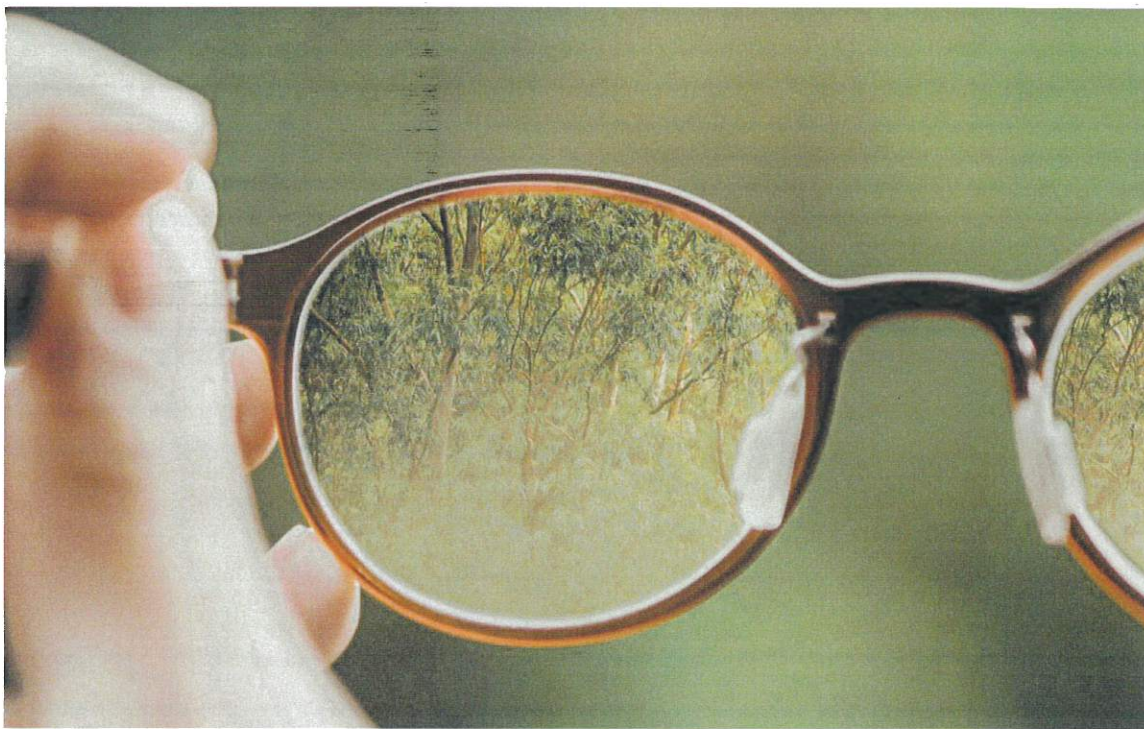
Sample Worksheet: Maintaining a Positive Attitude

My positive attitude can change if:	To prevent my attitude from changing, I can:
I become emotionally upset from a conversation with an arrogant citizen.	Take a quick walk after dealing with a difficult customer.

Articles and Materials

Lower Your Stress, Think With Clarity, and Lead with Ease

June 29, 2022 | *Books & Authors, Interview, Leadership*



Change Your Lens

Many capable leaders have resigned themselves to pervasive stress and being overwhelmed. They push through with brute force – day after day – in a state of perpetual exhaustion. But there's a radical alternative, according to Executive Coach Jody Michael – and it's available no matter what the challenges may be.

In her new book *Leading Lightly: Lower Your Stress, Think With Clarity, and Lead With Ease*, Jody boldly asserts that each person CREATES the majority of their problematic feelings and energy depletion. The culprit – and the solution – is in the "lenses" or perspectives that we hold about ourselves, others, work, life, and the world at large. By developing our mental fitness, we first learn to identify and let go of our default "impeding" lenses that keep us in low to high levels of fight or flight. Second, we adopt powerful, new "helpful" lenses that create authentically positive,

generative moods, behaviors, and energy — creating and sustaining overall optimized performance.

I recently spoke with Jody about her book

“Leading lightly is a state of being that naturally arises when you learn to let go of your internal noise and emotional clutter.” -Jody Michael

TWEET THIS

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What is mental fitness and how do we assess it?

Mental fitness is your measurable ability to engage constructively and positively in life and work every day — no matter what comes your way. You consistently respond to challenges with optimal performance in the moment and with minimal recovery time afterward.

Developing mental fitness is actually a process of changing your brain's physiology. You intentionally disrupt neuropathways that run well-worn patterns of thought and mood. You intentionally create new neuropathways by “trying on” or adopting different “lenses” or perspectives. And then you solidify these new neuropathways to become your brain's new norm, through repetition over time.

So, you can measure your mental fitness with two simple metrics. Both are based on time. First is your speed: How quickly can you minimize your reactivity — and shift out of your triggered state? Many people spend hours or days being upset. With mental fitness, you get yourself out of that state in just a few minutes. Or even less!

Once you can rapidly make this shift, your second metric is sustainability. With true mental fitness, you repeatedly make these shifts, and in many different contexts. It's the very opposite of a “one hit wonder.” Mental fitness serves you well no matter what you encounter at work or home.

“Mental fitness starts with the recognition that the real drivers of your leadership results are the hidden habits of your mind—the powerful, unseen, and entrenched perspectives you hold about yourself, others, and your world.” –Jody Michael

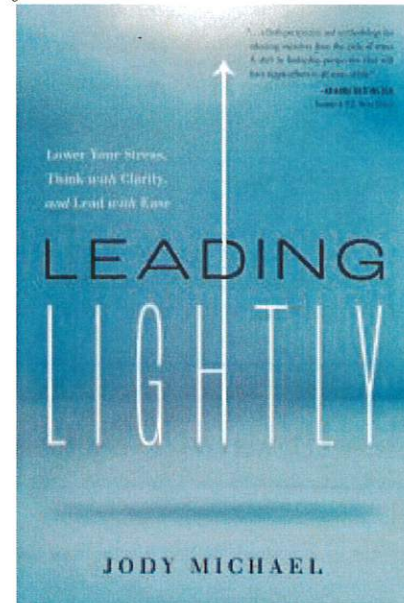
How do we become conscious of some of the hidden habits in our mind that we are not aware of?

The ability to catch your own thoughts in the exact moment they are occurring is one of the most critical mental fitness skills. To do this, you take the stance of a detective. You become an objective observer, constantly on the lookout for useful clues.

You find these clues when you can name your emotions (in all their complexity). When you can notice your body's physiological sensations that indicate stress. When you can read the room, seeing precisely how your state of fight or flight is negatively impacting people and outcomes.

As with any skill or habit, learning to self-observe (or self-assess) takes attention and repetition over time. One way to do this is with my brain-changing MindMastery™ app, available for free (iOS and Android). The app prompts you to do a quick self-observation at eight random times each day, every day. As it catches you by surprise in many different emotional states throughout the day, you'll be able to detect clues you'd otherwise miss.

You practice this way for several weeks (or more) until you can reliably tune into your own thoughts — those hidden habits of mind.



“With mental fitness, you can keep yourself out of these unproductive emotional states so that you are leading, as much as possible, from a position of optimal performance.” -Jody Michael

You say that we have five muscles of mental fitness. Is there one generally stronger or weaker in most leaders?

I've spent over 40,000 hours coaching leaders. I can say with full confidence that leaders need development in all five muscles of mental fitness. That said, very few leaders have the capacity to accurately self-assess in the way I've just described.

Most leaders — up to 95% — THINK they are **self-aware**. In reality, only 10-15% ARE self-aware (according to Dr. Tasha Lurich, in her book "Insight"). When I read my clients' logged self-observations from the app, I notice they repeat the same four or five emotions. They just don't have the capacity (or vocabulary) to be more nuanced. And while many can name a chronic pain such as low back, shoulders, headaches and so on, they are not able to quickly detect the more subtle and fleeting physiological sensations of their own unique fight or flight responses.

"Great leaders are like Teflon. Stress ... Anxiety... Exhaustion. None of it sticks. They face challenges every day. And yet ... they consistently perform at their best." -Jody Michael

MEET TRIS

GO LIVE ON FACEBOOK

Tell us about your six-step process to optimize your leadership performance.

Think of a pro basketball player who steps forward to score a crucial free throw in the final moments of a game. The stakes and pressure are high.

The successful players leverage more than the mechanical skills of handling the ball. They've mastered their mental game. In the work context, my six-step process represents that mental game.

When you're triggered (upset, stressed, anxious, overwhelmed, etc.) you will use all five muscles of mental fitness in a rapid, fully integrated way. Previously, you have a ready honed each of the muscles in isolation (like the basketball player who practices skill drills between games). Now you combine those skills and choices in a way that feels almost instantaneous. You remember them with the mnemonic "ABC-SLE."

First, you stabilize yourself with “ABC.”

You must not skip this step! When you're triggered, you will not be able to “think” your way out of your mood. By definition, fight-or-flight physiology diverts your energy away from rational cognition. With ABC, you (A) assess yourself, (B) perform deep “belly breathing,” and (C) — choose to assume full accountability for your own thoughts and mood.

You're then ready to “SEE,” to shift your problematic mood or energy state.

You self-assess to (S) spot your current lens. That's the perspective that's creating your current emotional state. You then (E) explore alternative lenses or perspectives. You've got several to choose from, because you've already intentionally been exploring divergent lenses (whether through my book or conversations with other people).

Finally, you (E) elect to adopt and act from one of these alternative perspectives.

But it won't be just ANY perspective — it must be one that creates within you a neutral-to-positive mood state. You'll feel an actual shift in your body and mind. Now you've restored your capacity to think and act rationally and with control. You're back in your optimal performance state. And you have a new and different way to proceed within your situation or circumstances.

“You choose your responses with a sense of mindfulness; you're not reactive. You emanate a kind of rare receptivity and have a capacity to metabolize the negative, so that you're not pulled or weighed down.” -Jody Michael

MEET THE AUTHOR | SHARE ON FACEBOOK

From blind spots to biases, there are many things holding us back that we are not aware of. You even talk about two different doctors who assessed your health quite differently in one week. We don't know what we don't

know. What are some ways to uncover what would really help catapult us to the next level?

You've really nailed the big challenge: "We don't know what we don't know!" The most direct way to uncover this territory is through direct feedback from someone who's not living in your head. Someone whose lenses or perspectives differ from yours. Often, this person is an executive coach or therapist. But they can also be a trusted friend, colleague or confidante. With your permission, this person provides you with a "mirror" in which you see yourself more objectively. This mirror, combined with your newly-developed skill to accurately self-assess in the moment, will completely change your approach to leadership and life.

"As you look at the world in a new way, you will stop creating pain; you will start creating performance....Mental fitness comprises both choices and skills, and it is measurable." -Jody Michael

TO GET THIS COURSE IN YOUR OWN

You've coached so many leaders. What's the best way to coach someone to lead in the moment and choose engagement and resilience instead of anxiety and stress?

It all starts with awareness. Most leaders are in a most perpetual anxiety and stress, but don't realize how bad or pervasive it really is. I also help them become intimately aware of how much damage they are inadvertently causing around them. The behaviors that stem from their negative mood states invariably ripple out to their teams, colleagues, business partners — and family members at home.

Once they see what they're creating, I coach them to choose to take ownership. They stop blaming everything and everyone else for their stress. At this point, they naturally desire to create resilience and engagement. It's then just a matter of practice to develop skill and change their brain's old pathways.



"Many pain points that you, your team, and your organization repeatedly encounter have actually been caused by leaders acting in a triggered state."

-Jody Michael

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How do leaders engage in an accurate self-assessment and self-awareness process in order to know their starting point?

One of the most accessible ways is the brief Mental Fitness Quiz in *Leading Lightly*. In just a few questions, you will learn if you're at the starting point — including whether you're relying on avoidance strategies that simply "look like" mental fitness. Or you may find that you've gained some skills, but now need to increase your speed, and/or broaden your application to more areas of your work and life.

For an in-depth exploration with my clients, I use more detailed assessments as well as a rigorous 360° stakeholder feedback process. Through the combination of these tools, leaders come face to face with the "good, bad and the ugly" of their habits of thought, mood and behavior. This jump-starts their path to mental fitness and optimal leadership performance.

"When you're triggered, your leadership performance suffers because your brain is running



Home / News

Career Compass No. 88: Leaders Are Dealers in Hope

Turbulent times can sap hope, which can create anxiety and depression, lower team morale, and damage productivity. But there's hope...in hope!

By Dr. Frank Benest | Jan 8, 2021 | ARTICLE

I am a finance services manager in a large suburban city and supervise a division of financial analysts and accountants. Over the past three years in my position, I have developed positive and trusting relationships with team members.

Prior to the pandemic, our team enthusiastically took the lead in order to develop a new financial services software package. The software aims to streamline accounting, budgeting, purchasing, and contracting processes; better monitor finances; and speed up program implementation across the city. In doing so, we started collaborating with a vendor and IT staff, as well as representatives from our client departments.

As we shifted to remote work, team members were fearful about their health and the health of their families and loved ones, their jobs and livelihoods, and the general chaos all around us. We quickly got focused on maintaining our work output and decided to postpone the launch of the new software program. Due to the pandemic-related economic crisis, the city laid off all part-time staff and instituted a hiring freeze but we still have all our full-time staff.

After almost a year, most of us still work from home. Our fear has turned into endless uncertainty not only about our health and jobs but also about all the external change, such as demands to open up the economy and schools, as well as calls for racial justice.

My team is distracted, uneasy, anxious, and exhausted, with little energy to collaborate with others and get innovative about new ways of doing business. In my view, neither the city manager nor the finance director has stepped up to exert strong leadership to counter people's perception of a bleak future.

I feel helpless and so does the team. What can I do as team leader?



Yes, there is a lot of change around us, both internally in the organization and externally in our community, the nation, and the world. Our initial fears about our health, safety, and security have now turned into uncertainty, anxiety, dread, and a sense of hopelessness about the future. We are all in a state of high anxiety. Anxiety levels are three times higher than a year ago (Chantal Bechervaise, "[How to Be Anxious Without Becoming Depressed](#)," *takeitpersonnelly.com*, Oct 28, 2020). In fact, one study indicates that 53% of American adults have a sense of hopelessness (LaRae Quy, "[How to Have Hope in a Bleak World](#)," *SmartBrief* blog, Oct 10, 2020).

3-D Change

Without doubt, there is a lot of change internally and externally. To survive and even thrive amid the change, we need to understand the nature of the change.

The change we are experiencing has three dimensions. It is

1. **Perpetual:** Happening on a continual basis.
2. **Pervasive:** Affecting multiple areas of our lives all at once.
3. **Exponential:** Accelerating at rapid rates.

It is not just the amount of change. Change is occurring all around us in many aspects of our lives. It is nonlinear, so we cannot anticipate it. And it is accelerating faster and faster.

As indicated by Aneel Chima and Ron Gutman, "Change, by its nature, leaves people and organizations feeling confused, vulnerable, and fractured at a time when resilience, cohesion, and collaboration are necessary to perform at the highest level." (See "[What It Takes to Lead Through an Era of Exponential Change](#)," *hbr.org*, Oct 29, 2020.)

Learned Helplessness

Martin Seligman, the famed American psychologist, coined the phrase "learned helplessness." When people feel powerless in distressful times or situations, they easily get frustrated, become more passive, and give up. In the process, team members suffer physically and emotionally. (See Katia Savchuk, "[How to Be a Good Boss in Trying Times](#)," *Stanford Business*, July 23, 2020.)

To counter learned helplessness, we leaders must help our teams confront the new realities, take action to move forward, and in the process make a positive difference for our teams, our organizations, and the communities we serve. In order to do so, we all need the right kind of emotion. The word "emotion" derives from the Latin *motere* which means "to move." This suggests that the right kind of emotion creates the stimulus to take action for the better. (See Chantal Bechervaise, "[How to Be Anxious Without Becoming Depressed](#)," *takeitpersonnelly.com*, Oct 28, 2020.)

What is the adaptive emotion we all need now? Hope!

Hope Defined

Creating a sense of hopefulness is a key opportunity to exert positive influence, regardless of your position. As a manager, creating a shared sense of hope for your team amid 3-D change is a critical leadership responsibility.

What is hope? Hope is defined as the confident expectation that something positive will happen. It is not wishful thinking. Hope is aspirational yet practical and realistic. Hope can help us overcome a sense of anxiety, uncertainty, dread, and powerlessness.

Why Hope?

Simply put, hope points us in the right direction amid all the uncertainty and fuels our next steps forward.

The Post-Heroic Leader

To help create a sense of hope and optimism about the future, we typically wait for the “leader as hero” to save the day. The “leader as hero” is typically seen as a solo, bigger-than-life, charismatic leader who, through the power of his/her personality and ideas, takes charge, inspires certainty, and pulls everyone along the path to success.

There are several reasons that we cannot rely on the heroic leader. First, we cannot wait for the heroic leader (such as your city manager or finance director) to show up and wave a magic wand. Either the hero does not show up or any change is not embraced or not long-lasting. Second, the heroic leader is the wrong model. More than ever, we now need “servant leaders.”

In his classic essay "[The Servant as Leader](#)," Robert Greenleaf emphasized that servant leaders are humble yet committed to the organization, their coworkers, and the people they serve. Servant-leaders are "other-centered," as opposed to "me-centered." They seek to influence (rather than increase their own power and status) so that they can better make a difference and serve others. It is not about their great ideas but the best ideas that will come from everybody in an effort to address the problem or challenge.

While great leaders are humble, they are still passionate. They just demonstrate their passion in a quiet manner and fulfill their commitments every day in small ways. They exhibit their passion by demonstrating their commitment to certain values, their own sense of purpose, and organizational goals. They don't ask of others what they are unwilling to do. They model the way. (See [Career Compass No. 41: The Post-Heroic Leader](#).)

The Importance of Trust

To help create a shared sense of hope, team members must trust you as a leader. Trust is the key currency of 21st century leaders. I congratulate you. You seem to have built some level of trusting relationships with your team members.

To generate trust, leaders must behave in a variety of ways:

- Focus on relationship and connection with team members.
- Share yourself so others will share some of themselves.
- Show empathy in acknowledging the feelings and concerns of team members.
- Demonstrate some level of vulnerability (“I don’t know the solution.” “I need your help.” “I made a mistake.”).
- Model hope and optimism about the future.
- Take agreed-upon action.
- Give trust to build trust.

(See *Career Compass No. 42: Trust Me!*)

If you slowly build trust within the team, you are in a position to create a sense of hope going forward.

Eight Ways to Build Hope

To create aspirational yet realistic hope, the leader must take some of these steps:

1. Show up with hope

We leaders are often uncertain, distracted, and confused, just like our team members. We may be immobilized by our own fear and often focus on the worst case. We typically over-estimate the risks and possible negative consequences of taking any action.

Yet, we must show up with hope and optimism. To do so, we need to manage our own negative emotions. Before engaging your team, you should pause, take a deep breath, and focus on your hope for the future. (See Richard Tedeschi, “[Growth After Trauma](#),” *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2020.)

To lead your team amid fear and uncertainty, consider:

- Past instances when you and/or your team have prevailed.
- Best-case scenarios.
- Available human and organizational resources.
- The cost of doing nothing.
- The opportunity to make a big difference.

As the leader, you must be hopeful in order to build hope in your team.

2. Start conversations

To help team members perceive hope and steps forward, leaders must start authentic conversations. The best way to engage in conversation is to ask questions, listen deeply, and acknowledge what you hear. (See *Career Compass No. 61: Leadership Is the Art of Conversation.*)

In these conversations, you want to demonstrate empathy and explore people's feelings, concerns, and challenges . . . and how you and your team members can respond. Then you must actually respond in some fashion. Listening and responding create trust. (See *Career Compass No. 86: Empathy Is a Superpower.*)

You do want to go beyond surfacing and addressing fears and concerns, where possible. In these conversations, you want to identify people's **purpose**. In other words, what are we here for? You don't want to impose your purpose; rather, you want shared purpose to emerge through conversation. (See Margaret Heffernan, "[How the Best Leaders Answer 'What Are We Here For?'](#)," *hbr.org*, Oct 27, 2020.) For example, your shared team purpose may be creating and managing a sound financial system for the city so all your client departments can help make a positive difference in the lives of residents, business people and their employees, and visitors.

You also want your team to identify a set of **values** to shape your work together and guide decisions. For instance, team values could include:

- The health and safety of employees and community members come first.
- We are all in this together.
- To serve amid adversity and uncertainty, we must do whatever it takes to find creative solutions even if it means changing rules and long-established ways of doing things.

In the midst of confusion, you can follow Google's "Step Zero" example. Google starts with purpose and values, which then allows for fresh ideas, experimentation, pivoting, and learning. (See Marvin Chow, "[Lessons from Google's Virtual Summer Interns](#)," *www.fastcompany.com*, Oct 2, 2020.)

Finally, by exploring your shared purpose and values, your team conversations can help formulate your shared **hope**. Your hope must be in service of your purpose. For example, your hope may be to develop a new financial services software program that will eliminate bottlenecks, streamline processes, improve financial tracking, and cut time to implement.

3. Focus on opportunity

In your team conversations, you want to identify possible opportunities to innovate or at least find the “silver linings” amid the chaos. (See Christina Carter, “[7 Strategies to Help You Live with Uncertainties](#),” *ideas.ted.com* blog, Oct 21, 2020.) Uncertainty creates opportunities to collaborate and to do things differently.

Questions can help illuminate opportunity. Ask:

- Amid all this confusion, what is the great opportunity to do things differently?
- What good can we make of this?
- What would success look like?
- How might we...?

(See [Wally Bock](#), “[What Good Can We Make of This?](#)” *Three Start Leadership* blog, Oct 22, 2020)

The pandemic and the resulting confusion give you the great opportunity to collaborate with others in developing the financial services software package for the city.

4. **Craft a “hope story” or narrative**

Based on your team conversations, you can help the team weave together ideas about their hopes and dreams and the opportunities they perceive. Your “hope story” typically includes the heroes, the challenges to overcome, what success looks like, and the good that will be achieved.

To express this hope narrative, many groups sketch story cards or boards, draft a newspaper or social media headline, or develop a tweet. This hope story then is posted and shared with other groups, thus creating enthusiasm and fostering collaboration.

5. **Do something**

After identifying your hope story, you must do some “future-back” thinking. You ask your team this key question: “What needs to be true or come to pass so we can achieve our hope?” In other words, what do we need in terms of technology, protocols, training, and collaborative efforts from others to achieve the hope? The team then needs to do something. (See [Career Compass No. 87: Do Something!](#))

The team must decide on one or two steps forward. For example, could we next

- Identify the “low-hanging fruit” to move forward?
- Draft a set of proposed protocols for a streamlined purchasing process?
- Develop a training outline for the draft purchasing protocols?
- Start a beta test of the software in one department or division?

As the group takes action, you debrief with the group:

- What is working?
- What is not working?
- What are we learning to inform our path forward?

Action clarifies the journey forward. Your team takes a few steps forward, pivots and adjusts, fixes things up, and learns as they go.

6. Manage the temperature

As your group takes a step or two forward, you must manage the mood of the team. Sometimes you need to increase the temperature in order to create more urgency and movement forward. Other times, a leader may have to lower the temperature since people are feeling overwhelmed and distressed. As Bob O'Neill, former ICMA Executive Director, stated in a session titled "Leading in Crisis" during the 2020 UNITE conference, leaders must know "when to push and when to pause."

7. Deal with the "messiness in the middle"

Achieving your hope story takes time. Positive change gets very "messy" in the middle of the journey. There are obstacles and resistance to overcome, new learning and competencies to be developed, energy and enthusiasm to be sustained.

Therefore, you must help your team members see progress in achieving the milestones along the way so that you maintain momentum and enthusiasm.

8. Express gratitude

As team members express their hopes for the future and your group takes steps forward, leaders must express appreciation for their efforts and gratitude for who they are and the commitments they make. "Leadership is about noticing." (See Dan Rockwell, "[Gratitude for Leaders](#)," *Leadership Freak* blog, Nov 2, 2020.)

Gratitude fuels hope and keeps it alive.

Leaders Are Dealers in Hope

How do leaders respond to 3-D change? With hope!

Shaped by shared values and purpose, aspirational and realistic hope helps us discern a positive future and fuels action to achieve it.

As Napoleon once famously stated, "leaders are dealers in hope." In times of great change and uncertainty, hope helps us accelerate our efforts to adapt.



Sponsored by the ICMA Coaching Program, *ICMA 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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Career Compass No. 77: Ten Practices to Build a Mini-Culture of Learning

If there is no behavior change or better way of doing things, learning is not real or authentic.



ICMA | coaching program

I am a public works operations superintendent in a large special district. I oversee several field divisions (parks, streets, water, public facilities) and supervise these division managers. The district's board of directors and the general manager want us to focus on environmental sustainability. While our different groups are quite useful in doing their work, I see the need to promote learning and experimentation in all things "green."

The problem is that there does not seem to be much enthusiasm to learn new things and try out new approaches in our work. People seem to be stuck in doing things the way we've always done them. While we encourage staff to attend training workshops, the district as a whole does not actively promote ongoing learning. In fact, we tend to be afraid of making any mistakes.

How do I help create a learning culture, at least in my realm of the organization?

Yes, the world is changing, and we need to adapt. One of my favorite quotes from Gary Hamel is: “Are we changing as fast as the world is changing?” In most case, the answer is “No, we’re not.”

Of course, adapting requires ongoing learning, experimenting, and risk-taking.

What is a learning culture?

Learning is defined in the dictionary as an activity or a process for gaining knowledge or skill by studying, practicing, being taught, or experiencing something. I prefer to focus on **authentic learning** which is defined as real-life learning. It is a style of learning that encourages learners to create a tangible, useful product to be shared with their world or some behavior is changed for the better. (See Steve Revington at www.authenticlearning.weebly.com .)

If there is no behavior change or a better way of doing things, learning is not real or authentic.

Culture is defined as “the way we do things around here.” It is the operating system for the team or unit or organization as a whole. Culture seems like it is a “squishy” notion, but it consists of two elements:

1. Values and beliefs.
2. Behaviors.

Therefore, a learning culture consists of values and behaviors that promote learning and new ways of interacting and changing things for the better.

A new or enhanced culture is not created overnight. Instead, it’s built slowly over time, step by step, behavior by behavior. (See [Career Compass #51 “Building a World-Class Culture.”](#))

Where do you begin?

To get started, you need to do a few things:

First, understand that you don’t need to change the whole organization. You can create a mini-culture of learning. Even though the entire district may not encourage robust learning, experimentation, and risk-taking, you can develop a learning mini-culture in your part of the organization. Start in your realm of influence.

Second, you need to start talking about the “big why” and need to promote learning and adaptation. Always start with the “why,” not the “what” or the “how.” (See Simon Sinek’s TED Talk [“How Great Leaders Inspire Action.”](#)) Discuss learning and adapting as critical ingredients to the future viability of the organization and PW operations. Share some examples of new environmental efforts that could pay-off.

Third, to create a state of readiness, you can serve as a role model. Modeling is the most potent way that others learn. Are you learning new things? Are you sharing what you’ve learned with your direct reports and their teams? Are you demonstrating that you’ve been uncomfortable as you’ve learned? (I have more to say later on the importance of discomfort.) Are you sharing what you have learned by stumbling around and making a few mistakes?

Finally, you should focus on “learning by doing” coupled with candid and helpful feedback. There are two elements to promoting authentic learning: 1) taking on stretching job assignments, and 2) receiving honest feedback or coaching.

How do we overcome our blind spots?

We all have cognitive blind spots, especially those of us with technical and professional expertise. The Buddhists say that our “expert’s mind” is a full and closed mind. To promote learning and new ways of doing things, you must encourage your team to confront challenges (such as environmental sustainability) with a “beginner’s mind,” which is an empty and open mind.

To promote cognitive humility, Dan Pink, in his [Pinkcast 3.09](#) (August 13, 2019) suggests several questions from Warren Berger’s [The Book of Beautiful Questions](#). You can ask yourself and your team:

1. Do I think more like a soldier (defending territory) or a scout (exploring new territory)?
2. Would I rather be right, or would I rather understand?
3. Do I routinely solicit and seek out opposing views?
4. Do I enjoy the pleasant surprise of discovering that I’m mistaken?

Another way to promote openness to new ideas is to include non-experts from other fields or disciplines when you are brainstorming new solutions. Thus, it would be helpful to include recreation leaders, librarians, police officers, or neighborhood group members who don’t have any expertise in public works operations but will bring diverse experiences and ideas to the discussion. (See [Career Compass #72 “How Do We Generate Creative Ideas?”](#))

What are the key ingredients of powerful learning experiences?

In my leadership development workshops, I often ask participants to share a powerful learning experience and identify key ingredients or conditions that made the experience so powerful.

The typical characteristics of powerful learning include:

- The challenge was important or meaningful to me and/or my organization or community.
- I had to “stretch” and get uncomfortable.
- I was given some measure of autonomy to “figure it out.”
- I learned as I went along.
- Honest and responsible mistakes were accepted if I was committed to excellence and learned from the missteps.
- I had informal coaching or support from my boss.
- My team supported the effort.
- I was given the time and resources to take on the challenge.
- I could see progress as I tackled the problem.
- I was able to share what I learned so that others could benefit.
- My boss or coach believed in me.
- Someone showed they cared about my growth and development.

These are the classic “enabling” ingredients or conditions for powerful learning. Any one experience does not have to include all these ingredients; however, for the experience to have a strong learning impact, it must incorporate a lot of these ingredients.

Consequently, if you can provide opportunities to promote learning for individuals and the team based on these enabling conditions, you will encourage robust learning and over time and create a mini-culture of learning and development.

What are 10 practices to promote learning?

Based on my local government management and consulting experience, I have identified 10 practices to promote learning. While it is helpful if the overall organizational culture supports these practices, you can use these suggested approaches with your team without much support or approval from top management.

The 10 practices are:

1. Start each meeting with a learning report. When I was the city manager of Palo Alto, California, we encouraged each unit in our organization to start its staff meeting with a learning report. It could be a summary of an article or report, or what was learned at a recent work-

shop, or themes from a stakeholder or community meeting, or “what my teen daughter told me at the breakfast table.”

2. Debrief everything. After every experience (for example, key project event, governing board or neighborhood meeting), you can engage the team in a debriefing. Debriefs include three questions: What went well? What did not go so well? What can we learn for our future practice?

Of course, as a leader, you must make it safe for people to provide different views and opinions. (See [Career Compass #69 “Psychological Safety—The Key Determinant of Team Effectiveness.”](#))

When appropriate, it is a good idea to share the key learnings from the project or initiative debrief with other groups so they can learn from your team’s experience.

3. Ensure everyone has an individual learning plan. While it is common for professional and technical staff to develop an annual work plan, you can also require that each staff person incorporate (or draft a separate) learning and development plan. Questions on the individual learning plan template could include:

- What do you want to learn in the coming year?
- What are different ways to get the learning?
- What learning activities do you propose?
- Why would that learning be valuable to you, the organization, or the community?
- How could the new learning be applied?
- What kind of resources (time, money, or other support) would you need?
- How would you share the learning with other staff or key stakeholders?

4. Provide choices. Everyone wants options and choices. People like to learn in different ways. While learning by doing plus feedback and coaching is the most powerful way to learn, people could secure learning in many ways:

- Taking on a stretch assignment.
- Leading a new team.
- Becoming an interim or acting manager.
- Taking a course or seminar.
- Doing research, such as interviewing key informants.
- Reading some of the literature and identifying best practices.

5. Help people secure the ideal mix of learning. While everyone tends to focus on classroom training, the ideal blend of learning is 70/20/10: 70% of learning for an individual should

ideally be learning by doing; 20% should be informal or informal coaching; and 10% should be classroom training or education.

6. Favor “ready, fire, aim.” As managers, we tend to question the ideas of our direct reports and try to make them better. Unless “the barn is on fire” (Dan Rockwell, “[Reject Fast Solutions](#),” *Leadership Freak* blog, Aug. 26, 2019), we should instead just encourage people to try out their idea. As Dan Pink emphasizes in his book *Drive*, autonomy is a key self-motivator along with purpose.

7. Help people find their “sweet spot” of learning. In giving stretch assignments, you want to help people find their sweet spot of learning. (See [Career Compass #73 “How Do I Secure and Benefit from a Stretch Assignment?”](#)) The sweet spot is a stretch assignment where there is a 50-70% chance of success. If there is a 90% chance of success, it’s too easy, and there’s no discomfort, and therefore they won’t learn anything new. If there’s only a 40% chance of success, the effort will cause too much distress, and the person will tend to withdraw or shut down.

8. Take “little bets” and smart risks. To learn by doing and achieve positive outcomes for themselves and others, people must take some risks. Since our local governments tend to be risk-averse, you can help staff minimize the risks of new endeavors by:

- Making a “little bet” (see Peter Sims’ book *Little Bets*) by doing a small beta-test and then scaling the solution after you’ve learned what works and what doesn’t work.
- Engaging the internal and external stakeholders as partners in the new endeavor, thereby creating allies and “spreading the risk.”
- Calling everything an experiment because, of course, there will be mistakes (some things will work and others won’t) with any experiment.
- Tying your learning effort to a broader agenda (for example, the board’s priority of environmental sustainability) or some other ongoing investment (for example, an IT or capital project).

9. Encourage teaching and mentoring. Some people (like me) learn best by teaching. If someone has acquired new knowledge or learned a new skill, encourage them to give a presentation at a unit meeting or to the larger department at an all-hands meeting. They can also do a demonstration, or you can have others “shadow” or partner with them as they try out a new skill.

10. Celebrate new learning. One of the best ways to build a learning culture is to celebrate new learning. Once someone gets a certificate or learns a new skill, recognize the person with

bagels and coffee for all at a staff meeting or department all-hands meeting, as well as highlight their learning achievement in the employee e-newsletter.

Learning is the key to adaptation

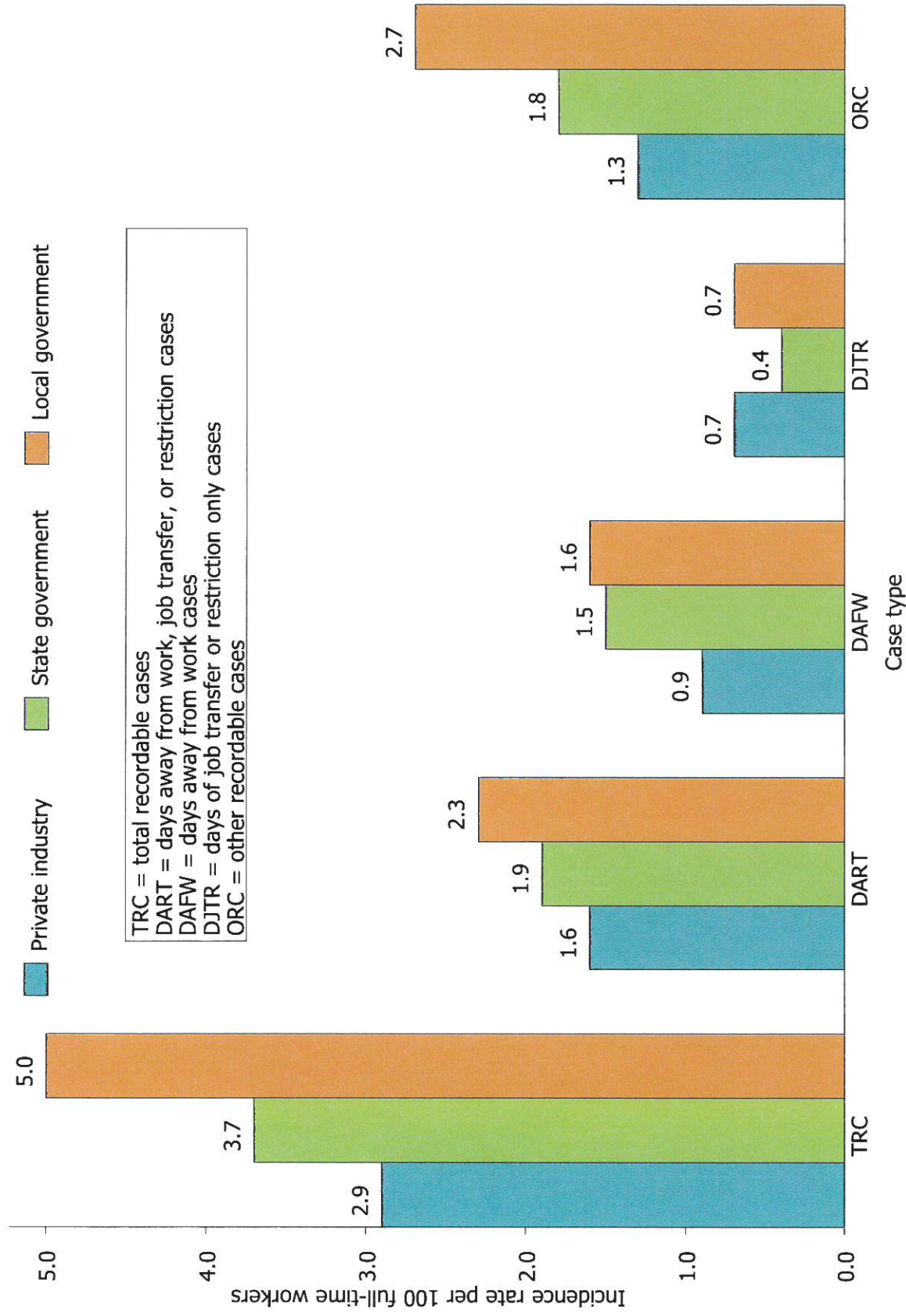
All local government organizations are facing tough adaptive challenges (demographic and technological shifts, climate change, homelessness, the opioid epidemic, growing income inequality). There are no right or wrong answers to these problems. Learning and experimentation at all levels of our organizations will be required to adapt to new realities.

Your role as a leader is to promote learning for everyone. To paraphrase David Gable ("[How Humble Leadership Really Works](#)," *hbr.org*, April 23, 2018), as a leader, you are mere overhead if you're not helping staff learn and become better at what they do.



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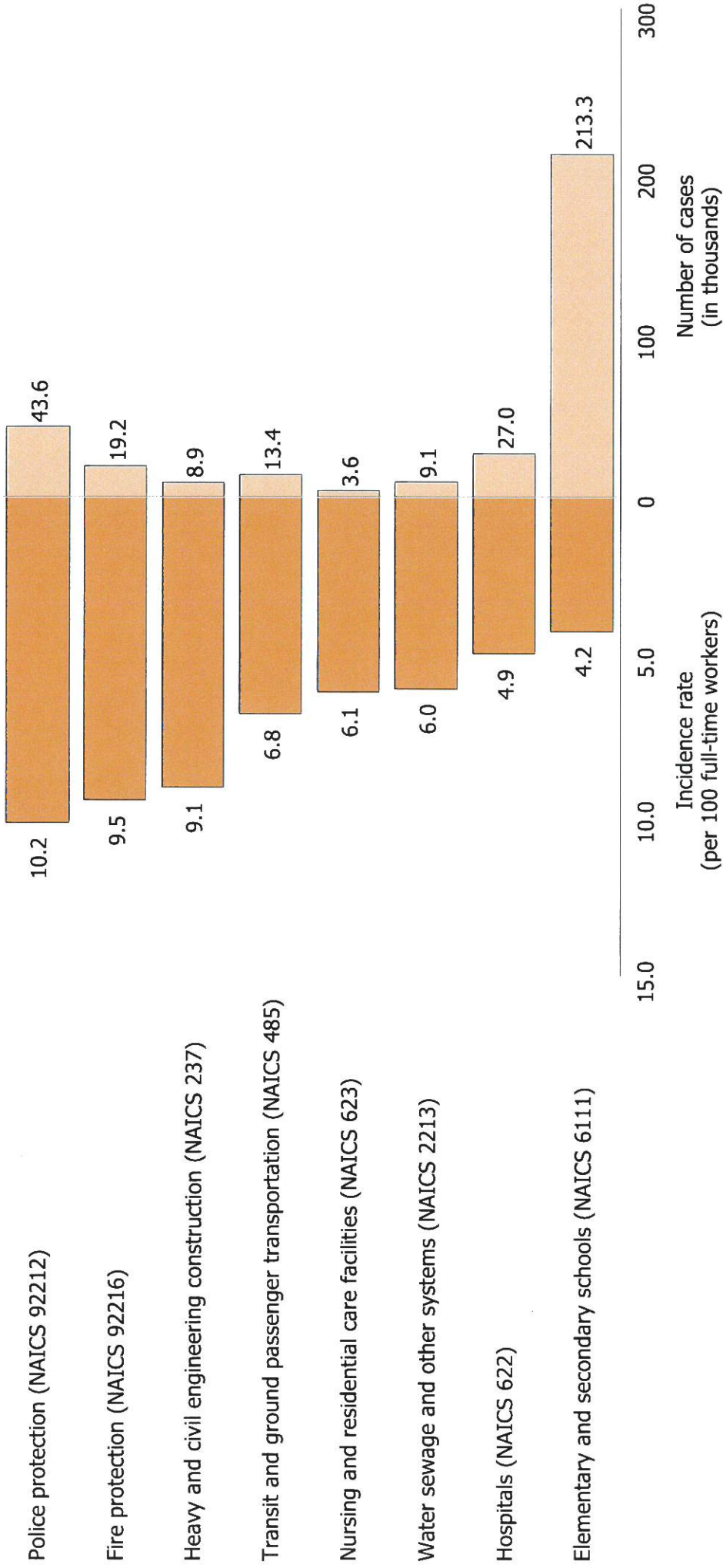
Nonfatal occupational injury and illness incidence rates by case type and ownership, 2016



Continuing a trend since 2008, the total recordable cases (TRC) incidence rate of injuries and illnesses remained highest among local government workplaces (5.0 cases per 100 full-time equivalent workers), compared to state government (3.7 cases) and private industry (2.9 cases) workplaces. The local government TRC rate declined from 5.6 cases in 2015 to 5.0 cases in 2016.

[View data](#)

Incidence rates and numbers of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses by industry, local government, 2016



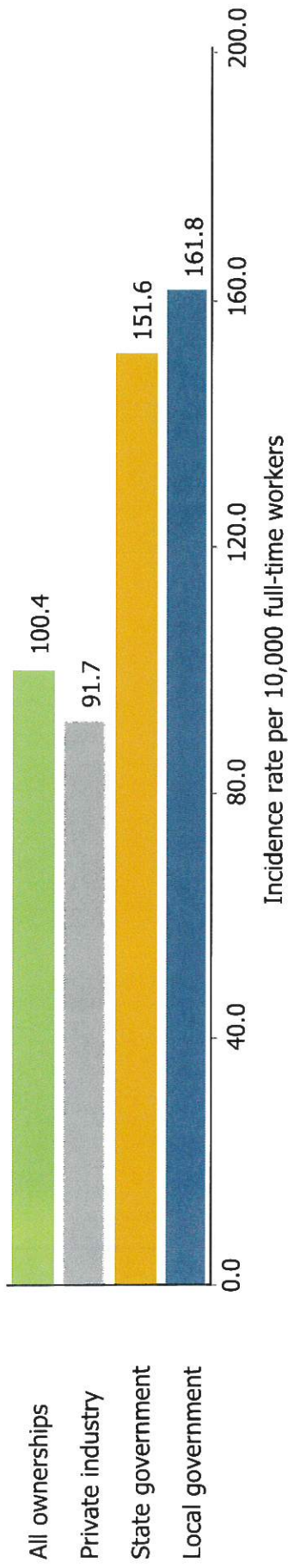
While the incidence rate for elementary and secondary schools (NAICS 6111)—4.2 cases per 100 full-time equivalent workers—was lower than the average rate for all local government workers (5.0 cases), this industry accounted for 40.3 percent (213,300 cases) of all injuries and illnesses among local government workers in 2016. More than half of the 14.0 million local government employees* were employed in this industry.

[View data](#)

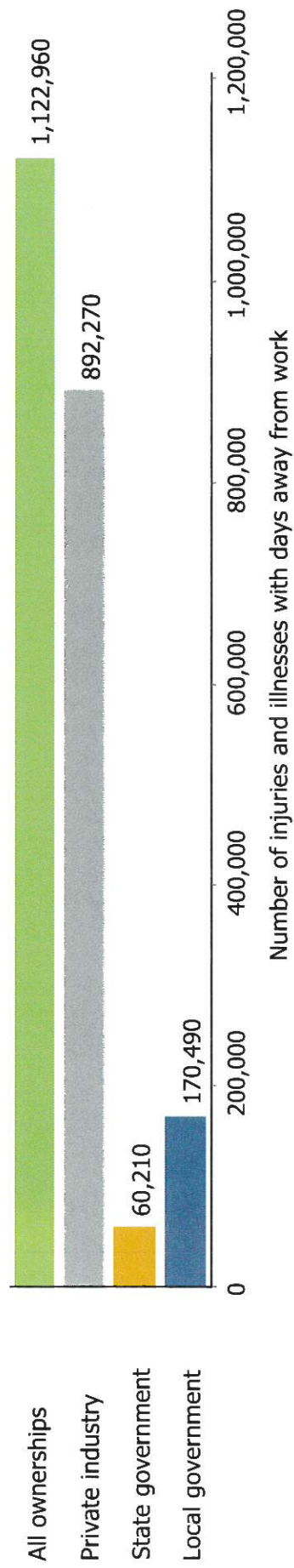
* 2016 employment from the BLS Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, November 2017

Nonfatal occupational injury and illness incidence rates for cases with days away from work, by ownership, 2016



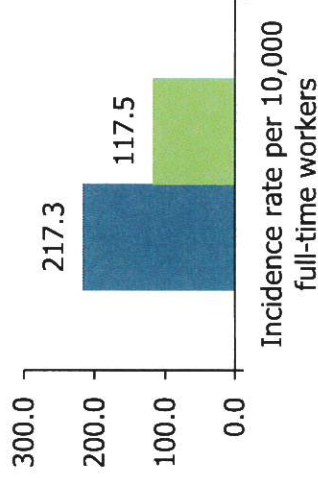
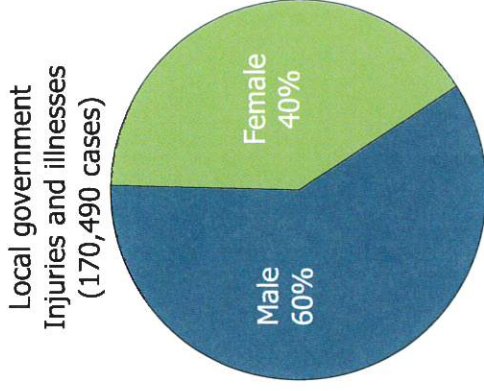
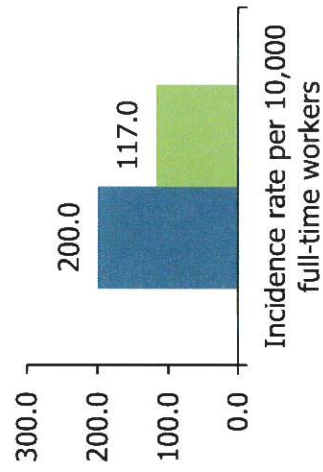
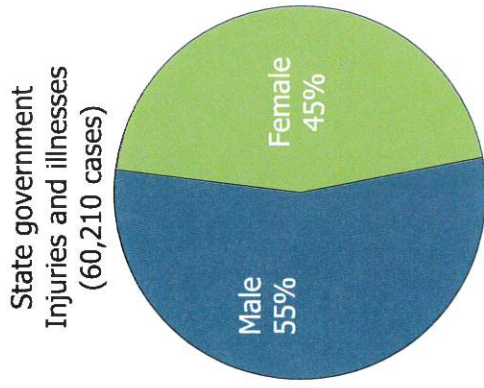
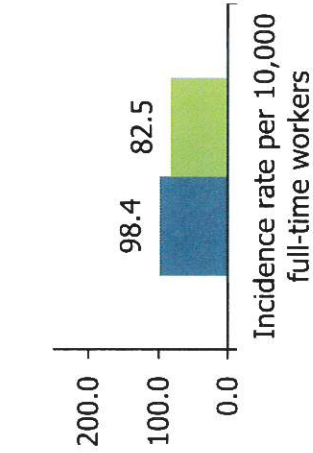
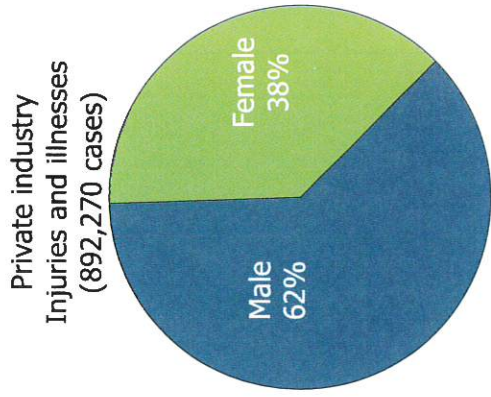
Number of nonfatal occupational injury and illness cases with days away from work, by ownership, 2016



The all ownerships incidence rate of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses resulting in days away from work has decreased each year consecutively since 2011.

[View data](#)

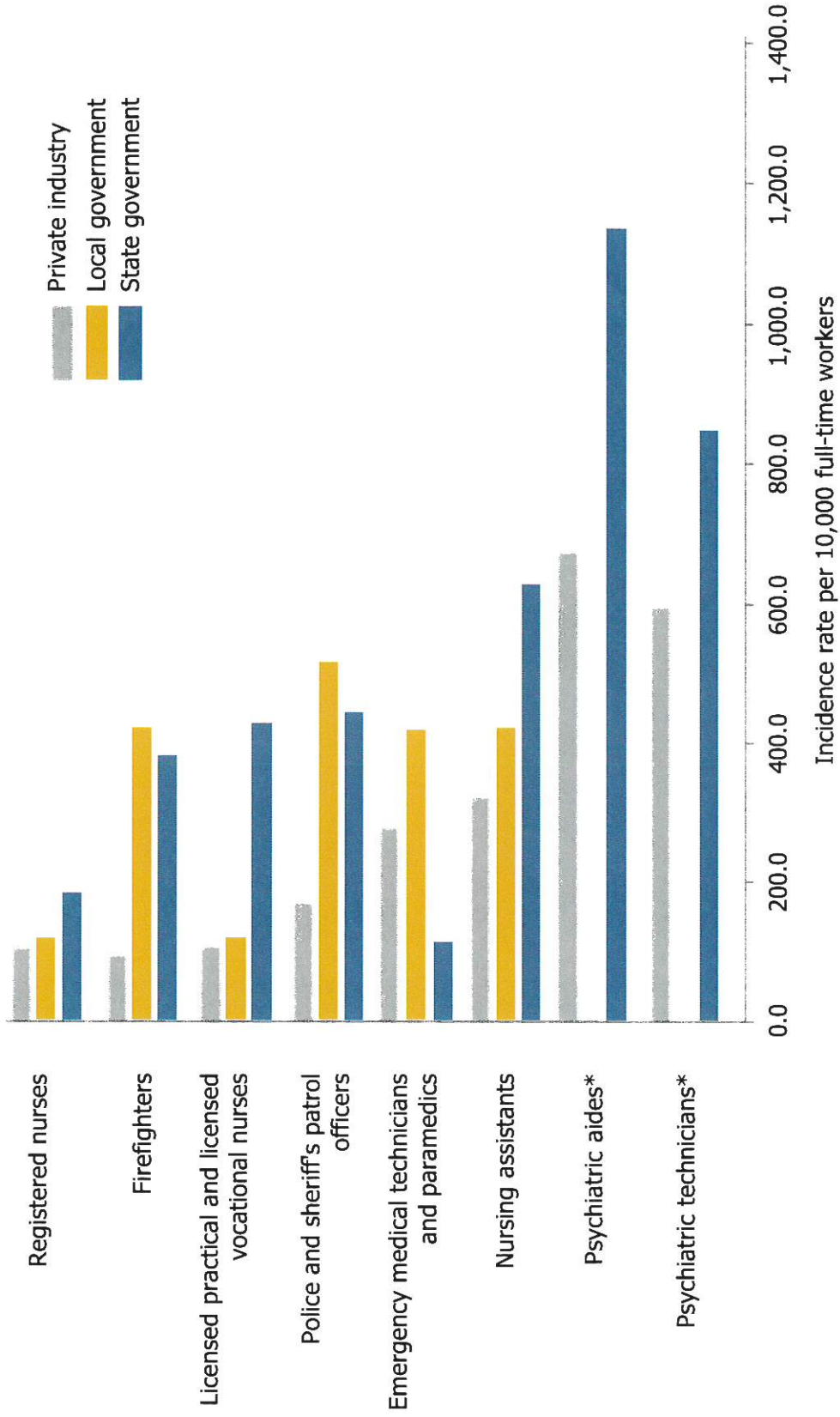
Distribution of nonfatal occupational injury and illness cases and incidence rates for cases with days away from work, by gender and ownership, 2016



The incidence rate of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses resulting in days away from work for male state government workers increased to 200.0 cases per 10,000 full-time equivalent workers in 2016, up from 188.0 cases in 2015.

[View data](#)

Nonfatal occupational injury and illness incidence rates for cases involving days away from work for selected healthcare and protective service occupations, by ownership, 2016

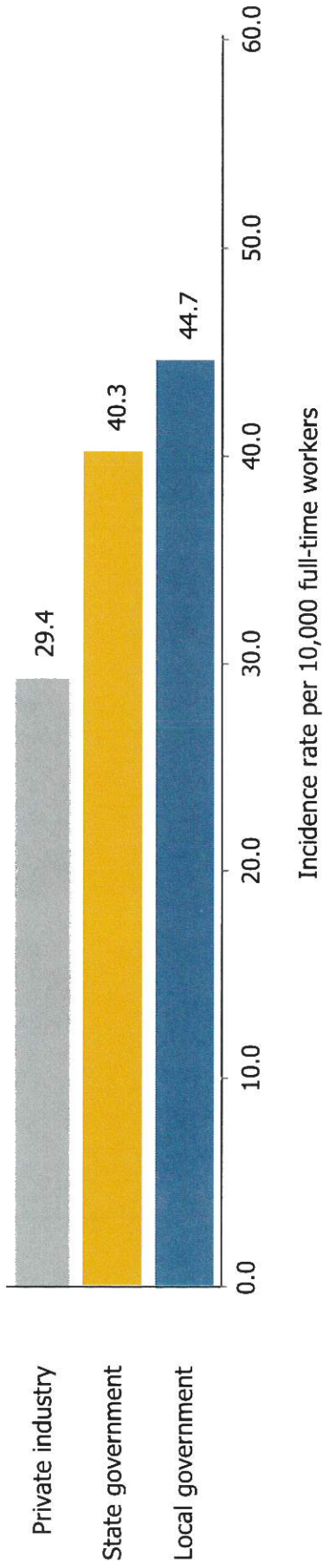


These occupations are frequently employed in both the private and public sectors. In state government, the incidence rate of cases involving days away from work (DAFW) among psychiatric aides (1,136.3 cases per 10,000 full-time equivalent workers) in 2016 was over six-times greater than the DAFW incidence rate for all state government workers (151.6 cases).

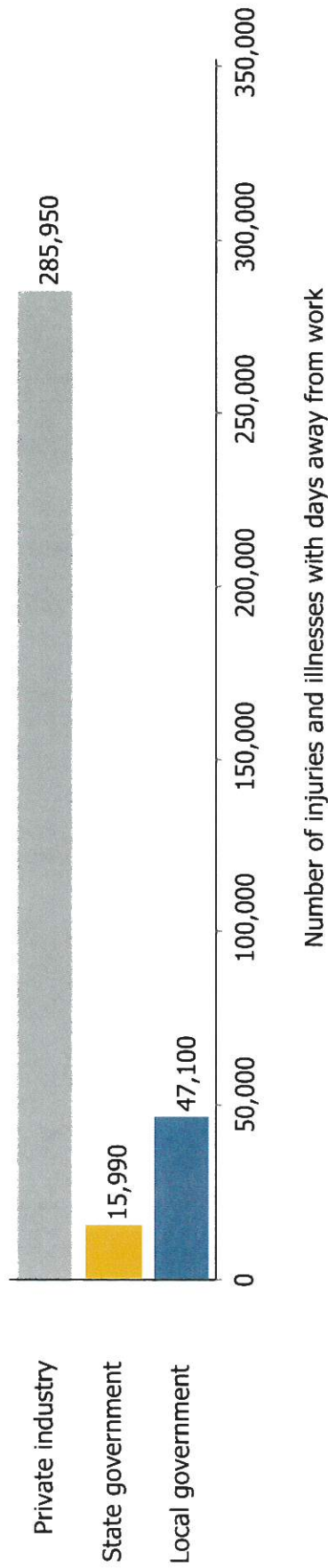
[View data](#)

*Incidence rates are not available for local government psychiatric aides or psychiatric technicians.

Nonfatal occupational injury and illness incidence rates of musculoskeletal disorders with days away from work, by ownership, 2016



Number nonfatal occupational injury and illness cases of musculoskeletal disorders with days away from work, by ownership, 2016



Musculoskeletal disorders accounted for 32 percent of days-away-from-work cases in 2016 in private industry and occurred at a rate of 29.4 cases per 10,000 full-time equivalent workers. This rate was essentially the same as reported for 2015.

[View data](#)

[Back to OSHA Data & Statistics](#) / [Commonly Used Statistics](#)

Commonly Used Statistics

Federal OSHA coverage

Federal OSHA is a small agency; with our state partners we have approximately 2,100 inspectors responsible for the health and safety of 130 million workers, employed at more than 8 million worksites around the nation — which translates to about one compliance officer for every 59,000 workers.

Federal OSHA has 10 regional offices and 85 local area offices.

OSHA budget

FY 2016: \$552,787,000

FY 2017: \$551,736,000

FY 2018: \$543,257,000 (requested)

OSHA inspections

FY 2017 total federal inspections: 32,396

FY 2017 total State Plan inspections: 43,551

Worker injuries, illnesses and fatalities

5,190 workers were killed on the job in 2016 [<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/foi.nr0.htm>] (3.6 per 100,000 full-time equivalent workers) — on average, more than 99 a week or more than 14 deaths every day.

Construction's "Fatal Four"

Out of 4,693 worker fatalities in private industry in calendar year 2016, 991 or 21.1% were in construction — that is, one in five worker deaths last year were in construction. The leading causes of private sector worker deaths (excluding highway collisions) in the construction industry were falls, followed by struck by object, electrocution, and caught-in/between. These "Fatal Four" were responsible for more than half (63.7%) the construction worker deaths in 2016, BLS reports.

Eliminating the Fatal Four would save 631 workers' lives in America every year.

- Falls — 384 out of 991 total deaths in construction in CY 2016 (38.7%)
- Struck by Object - 93 (9.4%)
- Electrocutions - 82 (8.3%)
- Caught-in/between* - 72 (7.3%)

(*This category includes construction workers killed when caught-in or compressed by equipment or objects, and struck, caught, or crushed in collapsing structure, equipment, or material)

Top 10 most frequently cited OSHA standards violated in FY 2017

The following were the top 10 most frequently cited standards by Federal OSHA in fiscal year 2017 (October 1, 2016, through September 30, 2017):

1. Fall protection, construction (29 CFR 1926.501) [[related OSHA Safety and Health Topics page](#)]
2. Hazard communication standard, general industry (29 CFR 1910.1200) [[related OSHA Safety and Health Topics page](#)]
3. Scaffolding, general requirements, construction (29 CFR 1926.451) [[related OSHA Safety and Health Topics page](#)]
4. Respiratory protection, general industry (29 CFR 1910.134) [[related OSHA Safety and Health Topics page](#)]
5. Control of hazardous energy (lockout/tagout), general industry (29 CFR 1910.147) [[related OSHA Safety and Health Topics page](#)]
6. Ladders, construction (29 CFR 1926.1053) [[related OSHA Safety and Health Topics page](#)]
7. Powered industrial trucks, general industry (29 CFR 1910.178) [[related OSHA Safety and Health Topics page](#)]
8. Machinery and Machine Guarding, general requirements (29 CFR 1910.212) [[related OSHA Safety and Health Topics page](#)]
9. Fall Protection—Training Requirements (29 CFR 1926.503) [[related OSHA Safety and Health Topics page](#)]
10. Electrical, wiring methods, components and equipment, general industry (29 CFR 1910.305) [[related OSHA Safety and Health Topics page](#)]

OSHA is Making a Difference

- In more than four decades, OSHA and our state partners, coupled with the efforts of employers, safety and health professionals, unions and advocates, have had a dramatic effect on workplace safety.
- Worker deaths in America are down-on average, from about 38 worker deaths a day in 1970 to 14 a day in 2016.
- Worker injuries and illnesses are down-from 10.9 incidents per 100 workers in 1972 to 2.9 per 100 2016.

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Important Website Notices
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Accessibility Statement

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

Promoting productive workplaces through safety and health research

NIOSH at a Glance

NIOSH's mission is to generate new knowledge in occupational safety and health and to transfer that knowledge to employers and workers. We are solutions people. By working collaboratively with public and private sector partners, NIOSH transfers its research findings into cost-effective solutions to make work safer, healthier and more productive for workers, employers, and the Nation. NIOSH is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Way We Work

Relevance — Employer and worker needs for solutions drive research programs at NIOSH. We focus our efforts on [ten industry sectors](#) to address the specific problems for which research solutions are needed.

Quality — Sound science, the highest level of data quality, and independent peer review are hallmarks of NIOSH science.

Collaboration — Different than the regulatory approach to safety and health, NIOSH works cooperatively with employers and workers to adapt research findings into workable solutions.

Accountability — NIOSH aims to use its funding to maximize the taxpayer investment in research.

We use a [Burden, Need, and Impact](#) method to ensure accountability for our appropriated dollars.

Partnership — For over 20 years, the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) has been the way NIOSH connects to the Nation's industry sectors. NORA is a public-private partnership to identify critical needs and to optimize the transfer of science findings where they can do the most good.

Impact — NIOSH is results driven. We are committed to evaluating our performance and measuring the impact of our research solutions in the real world.

Partnerships Lead to Safer and More Productive Workplaces

Construction: Highway construction workers are at the frontline of building and repairing the nation's roads, but may face exposure to dust that can cause lung cancer. Working with the asphalt industry and labor partners, NIOSH designed, tested, and implemented simple retrofits for existing asphalt milling machines to reduce worker exposure. Industry partners voluntarily installed NIOSH recommended dust controls to new half-lane and larger cold-milling machines. Manufacturers with 80% market share began putting the controls on new machines nearly three years ahead of schedule.

Oil and Gas Extraction: The hydraulic fracturing industry employs hundreds of thousands of workers in both rural and metropolitan areas. NIOSH field research found high crystalline silica exposures among workers in hydraulic fracturing operations, placing them at risk of irreversible lung disease. In response, NIOSH worked with partners to develop the NIOSH mini-baghouse retrofit assembly, an effective and inexpensive engineering solution that can reduce silica emissions on sand moving equipment by 99%. Major companies responded positively and quickly to the NIOSH work, voluntarily redesigning their equipment to protect workers from silica dust.

Mining: Providing adequate lighting for miners to work safely is a challenge in underground mines. Inadequate light contributes to miner slips, trips, falls and machine related injuries. NIOSH research-partnered with two underground coal mines

and a technology company to develop a new LED cap lamp for miners. The new cap lamp cut glare in half and provided better peripheral motion vision. Miners can also adjust the distribution and intensity of the light to suit their work tasks. This innovation contributed to changes in five industry voluntary consensus standards for cap lamps used in mines, leading to voluntary changes in the manufacturing of all cap lamps for use in underground mines and improved safety for miners.

Firefighting: NIOSH works with both structural and wildland firefighters to understand and prevent a range of health issues, from cancer to smoke inhalation to injuries. NIOSH collaborated with the firefighter community, firefighter equipment manufacturers, and the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) to collect and analyze data on firefighter body size and shape that aids in the design of better fitting firefighter personal protective equipment.

Maritime: In commercial fishing, 86% of fatalities are caused by drowning. Wearing a personal flotation device (PFD) is a simple way for workers to protect themselves, but many work without one. NIOSH collaborated with fishing workers to understand their concerns about wearing PFDs and what would make them more willing to wear this critical piece of safety equipment. The results of this work were used by a PFD manufacturer to make an innovative 'tactical deck vest' that can be worn comfortably and continuously, keeping workers afloat if they should go overboard.



Creative Tools with Small Businesses in Mind

The Ladder Safety App, NIOSH's award winning first mobile application, has over 112,000 downloads. Falls from ladders are common in the construction industry but preventable. The free NIOSH Ladder Safety app provides visual and audio signals to help users set the proper angle. It can be readily accessed at the worksite, making it especially helpful for small construction businesses. State officials, industry leaders, and safety professionals have promoted the app, and many companies have incorporated the use of the app as part of their safety practices.

Frontline Service

NIOSH field scientists provide individualized assessments of potential workplace hazards through [Health Hazard Evaluations](#). They are available by request from employers, workers and worker representatives.

Preparing Tomorrow's Workforce for Safe and Healthy Work

The Safe•Skilled•Ready Workforce program aims to equip young people and new hires with eight, transferable, work-readiness competencies to help protect them on the job now and throughout their lives. NIOSH worked with educators and job training experts to create Youth@Work: Talking Safety, a free, foundation curriculum in occupational safety and health. It is customized for each of the 50 states.

YOUTH @ WORK
Talking Safety

Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh> to learn more

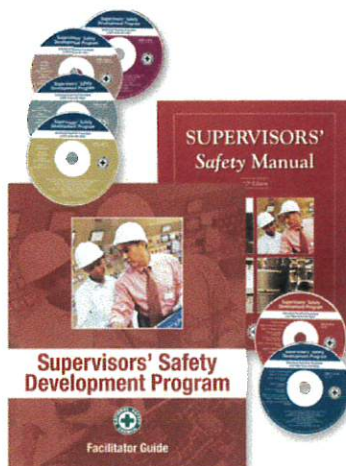


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Supervisor Safety Development Program Training

The Supervisors' Safety Development Program (SSDP) trains supervisors and managers to incorporate best safety practices into their daily management activities. A key feature of the program requires participants to demonstrate they have acquired the knowledge and skills from training and are prepared to implement them in the workplace. **Supervisors' Safety Development Programs** are offered in the following ways:



PACKAGED TRAINING ([HTTP://SHOP.NSC.ORG/SSDP-FACILITATOR-KIT-P86.ASPX](http://shop.nsc.org/ssdp-facilitator-kit-p86.aspx))

CLASSROOM TRAINING ([HTTPS://NSC.CSOD.COM/LMS/LODETAILS/DETAIL.SLO.ASPX?LOID=DC0DC0A-E9BF-4640-A1D9-BBE2F043B451#T=1](https://nsc.csod.com/lms/lo/details/detail.slo.aspx?loid=DC0DC0A-E9BF-4640-A1D9-BBE2F043B451#T=1))

ONSITE TRAINING ([HTTP://SAFETY.NSC.ORG/SSDP](http://safety.nsc.org/ssdp))

ONLINE WITH ADAPTIVE LEARNING ([/SAFETY-TRAINING/WORKPLACE/SUPERVISOR-SAFETY/SSDP-ONLINE-ADAPTIVE](https://www.nsc.org/safety-training/workplace/supervisor-safety/ssdp-online-adaptive))

Training goals

To equip supervisors and managers with the knowledge, leadership skills and methods to apply safety as part of their responsibilities and become effective safety leaders and advocates.

Who should attend?

New supervisors and managers
Experienced supervisors and managers seeking refresher training or additional education

What you'll learn

Supervisors and managers learn how to incorporate safety and health into their daily management process.

Key learning includes:

- How to confidently address critical safety and health issues

Browse Workplace Safety Training (<https://www.nsc.org/safety-training/workplace>) / Supervisor Safety Development (<https://www.nsc.org/safety-training/workplace/supervisor-safety>)

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SSDP Combo (<https://www.nsc.org/safety-training/workplace/supervisor-safety/ssdp-combo>)

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Slip Trip and Fall Training (<https://www.nsc.org/safety-training/workplace/slips-trips-and-falls>)

- How to enhance safety responsibilities and safety management systems, including safety inspections, incident investigations, safety meetings and employee engagement
- Identification and control of hazards, incident prevention, OSHA compliance, and continuous improvement in all areas of safety and health
- How to promote a positive safety culture
- Learning to support workers with on-going safety training, on-the-job training and promoting safe behavior

Program Topics

Safety Management	Safety & Health Inspections	Ergonomics	Hand/Portable Power Tools
Communication	Incident Investigation	Hazard Communications	Materials Handling/Storage
Safety & Health Training	Industrial Hygiene	Regulatory Issues	Electrical Safety
Employee Involvement	PPE	Machine Safeguarding	Fire Safety

Cost and length of course may vary by location. Please contact your local Chapter for details.

"We have received good feedback on the program and will continue to offer the modules on a perpetual rotating basis. Our goal is for all supervisors, team leaders and managers to enroll, as the topics covered are invaluable not only for their jobs at the Authority, but for all aspects of their daily lives."

Scott Sauer, Assistant General Manager of System Safety, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority

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NSC University
(<https://nsc.csod.com/default.aspx?p=nsc&c=AnnonBrowse&dlink=%2fDee>)

NSC Compliance Training +
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Workplace Online Training
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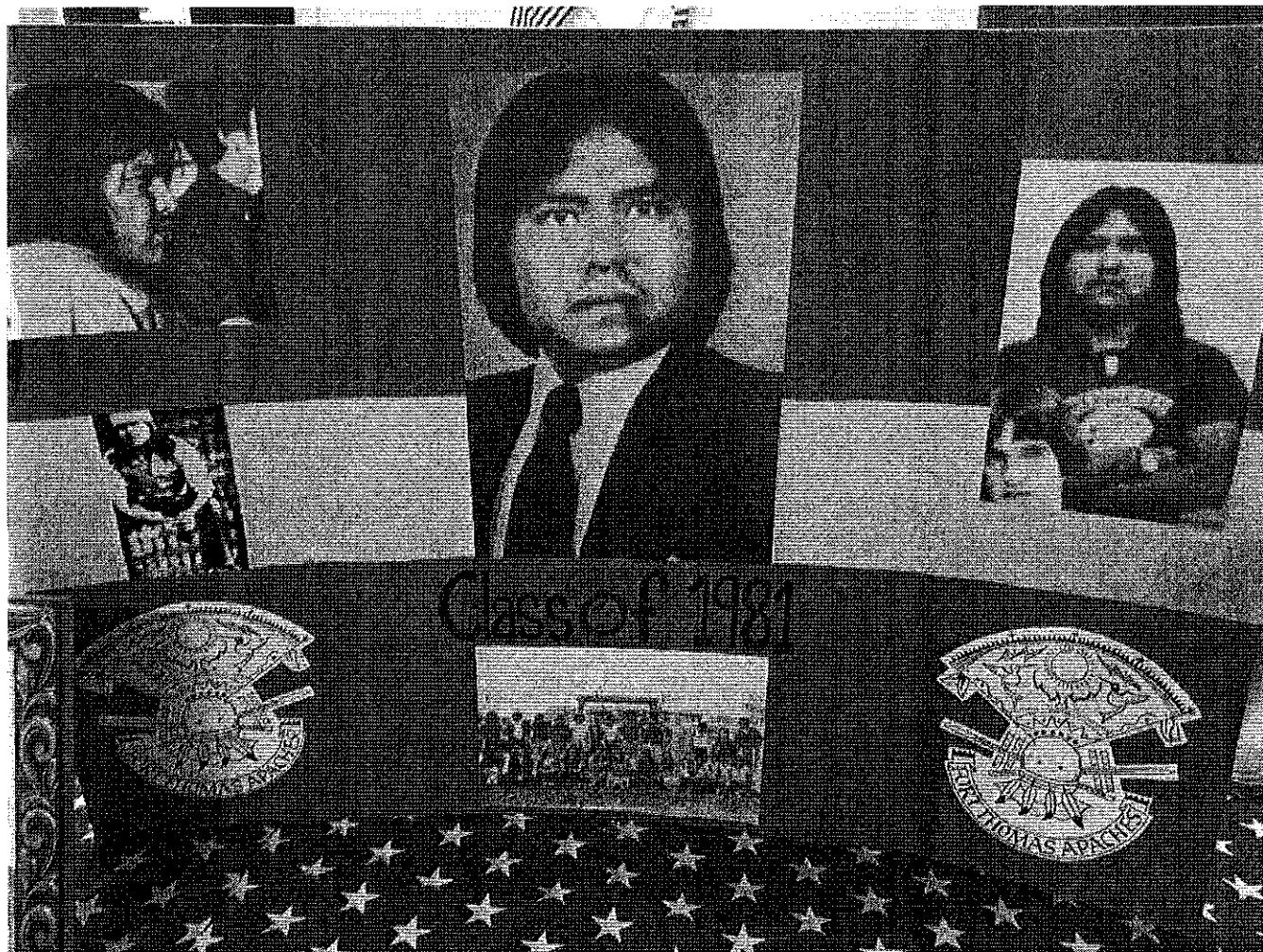
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Fatal Flaws

'The good, the bad and the ugly' of state worker safety programs

Twenty-eight states and territories regulate their own workplaces rather than defer to the feds. While some of these programs are effective, others are in trouble for not adequately protecting workers.

By Jim Morris | 6:01 am, November 12, 2018 | Updated on US Gov. Law Center | 11/12/2018



Photos of Lariat Rope in 1981, the year he graduated from high school. Photo courtesy of Evelyn Hinton

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This story is part of a collaboration between the Center for Public Integrity, Ohio Valley ReSource and the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting.

Fifteen minutes before his shift was to end on November 8, 2017, Lariat Rope, a thickset man of 55, tumbled into a pit of scalding water at Sapa Extrusions North America in Phoenix, an aluminum-products plant where he'd worked for more than 25 years. It took rescuers three hours to retrieve his body from

ONALISA

the pit, which is used to cool aluminum logs 10 inches in diameter and up to 18 feet long. The cause of death: "multiple trauma due to blunt force injuries, drowning and thermal injury," according to a report approved by the Industrial Commission of Arizona in April.

The commission's Division of Occupational Safety and Health, known as ADOSH, cited Sapa for violating a standard requiring employers to install "covers and/or guardrails ... to protect personnel from the hazards of open pits, tanks, vats [and] ditches." It proposed a fine of \$7,000 — the amount it had established for violations that "caused or contributed to a fatality" and which, according to the ADOSH field operations manual, cannot be reduced by that agency.

Nonetheless, the industrial commission — ADOSH's overseer — pared the fine to \$5,250 "based on [the] employer's quick abatement" of the hazard, according to a handwritten notation on the April report. "My brother's life has more value than that," Rope's sister, Evelyn Hinton, said in a recent interview, recalling his devotion to their elderly parents. "Five thousand is just not cutting it." Rope was married and had two sons.

Arizona is among 26 states and two territories (Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands) that manage their own worker-safety programs, as they are allowed by law to do — providing the programs are "at least as effective" as the one run for the rest of the country by the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Some meet or exceed this threshold; others fall considerably short of it.

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Arizona's industrial commission has been under fire from the news media and the federal government. In December 2016, the Arizona Daily Star reported that the commission, which reviews proposed ADOSH penalties exceeding \$2,500, routinely reduced them even though, a federal OSHA official told the newspaper, it often failed to provide clear justification for its cuts. In a May 2017 letter to the commission's director, the head of federal OSHA's Phoenix Area Office found that the commission was "reducing penalties in a seemingly arbitrary manner without regard for the factors in the [ADOSH field operations manual]. This practice reduces the deterrent effect of higher penalties and fails to ensure that employers within the state are treated equally."

The commission responded in August 2017 that it was "legally authorized to adjust penalties [proposed by ADOSH] upward or downward" and that it



Ariat Rope in his Army uniform. Photo courtesy of Evelyn Hinton.

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“strongly disagree[d]” with federal OSHA’s claim that it had been “operating outside of its legal authority.” In an emailed statement to the Center for Public Integrity, which inquired about the Rope case, commission spokesman Trevor Laky wrote, “Every workplace fatality is a tragedy and the Industrial Commission of Arizona works every day to prevent workplace injuries and educate employers and employees on workplace safety.” The commission, he wrote, has the latitude “to revise penalties based on specific circumstances.” A U.S. Labor Department spokesman did not respond to requests for comment.

State troubles, federal intervention

The ability of states and territories to create and maintain their own safety programs is rooted in Section 18 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. But the track records of those programs vary widely. Some are cash-starved and suffer from high staff turnover and investigative lapses as a result. Others are relatively well-funded and stable. Recently released federal audits of the 28 programs (six of which cover only public-sector employees) found significant problems in Arizona, Illinois, Kentucky and Maryland, for example, while praising Iowa, New Jersey, Oregon, Tennessee and Washington.

Sometimes the federal government must intervene. A September 1991 fire at a chicken-processing plant in Hamlet, North Carolina, killed 25 workers and injured 55. The Imperial Foods plant, then 11 years old, had never been inspected by state workplace-safety officials; investigators found that the dead and injured were trapped behind locked fire doors.

The North Carolina Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Division fined Imperial Foods \$808,150 for 83 violations; owner Emmett Roe was sentenced to nearly 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to 25 counts of involuntary manslaughter and served just under four years. The month after the fire, federal OSHA showed its lack of confidence in North Carolina regulators by asserting “concurrent enforcement jurisdiction” with the state. That lasted until 1995, by which time the Occupational Safety and Health Division had beefed up its enforcement staff and made other improvements.

A decade ago, construction workers on the Las Vegas Strip were dying at such an alarming clip that federal OSHA conducted a special review of the Nevada program. The review found, among other things, that state investigators weren’t properly trained to spot construction hazards. The feds forced the state to develop a corrective action plan and kept close tabs on it. The most recent federal audit of Nevada was largely positive, though deficiencies were noted.

In 2012, federal OSHA began policing certain industries in Hawaii — and considered taking over the entire state program, which was “failing,”

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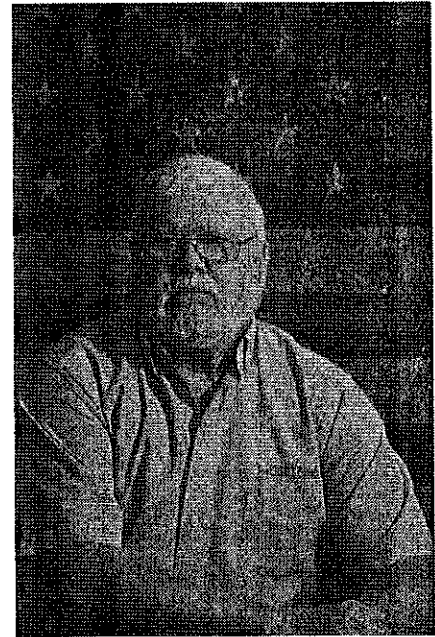
according to Jordan Barab, then a deputy assistant secretary with the U.S. Labor Department. Federal intercession ended in 2017.

Ron Hayes has seen the gamut in state workplace-safety enforcement. Hayes became an advocate for families of accident victims after his 19-year-old son, Pat, suffocated in a Florida grain bin in 1993. He cajoles and coerces public officials in his South Alabama drawl. He writes a lot of letters. He's given presentations to managers and inspectors with a dozen state programs, coaching them on how to communicate with victims' relatives. He heavily influenced a 2012 U.S. Labor Department directive instructing federal OSHA employees to consult families during fatality investigations.

Hayes, 69, quit his job as an X-ray technician in Fairhope, Alabama, in 1996 to form a nonprofit called the FIGHT (Families in Grief Hold Together) Project. He calls himself a "big fan" of state programs — provided they're well run. "I believe in them," he said. "They're more responsive [than federal OSHA]." He has no patience, however, for faltering programs like Kentucky's. The state was flagged by federal OSHA this summer for routinely mishandling worker-death investigations. In a written statement, a U.S. Labor Department spokesman said federal officials are "working with the Kentucky Labor Cabinet to craft a corrective action plan." In a separate statement the spokesman wrote, "OSHA monitors all 28 State Plans closely throughout the year."

Hayes, who is advising the families of several fallen Kentucky workers, is skeptical. "Kentucky businesses are really blessed," he said. "Companies walk away with no citations, no training [requirements], no nothing. They walk away scot-free, and a dead man can't speak." Kentucky officials declined interview requests but said in their response to the most recent federal audit that the state "makes every reasonable effort to determine the cause" of fatal accidents.

Kevin Beauregard heads North Carolina's safety agency and chairs the Occupational Safety and Health State Plan Association, which includes all 28 state and territorial programs and meets three times a year. While the group tries to "make sure we have some consistency" across programs, Beauregard said, consistency is hard to attain when federal funding is so paltry and state funding so erratic. North Carolina gives its program enough money to function smoothly, he said.



Ron Hayes, who lost his own son in a grain-bin accident, is a forceful advocate for families of workers killed on the job. Photo courtesy of Ron Hayes.

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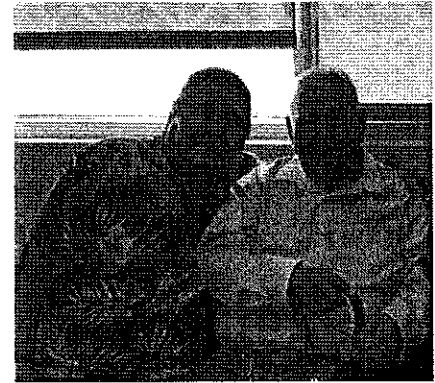
essentially the death penalty — taking away the state plan. That's a burdensome hurdle. Nobody really wants to do that."

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'It's best you don't see'

Lariat Irving Rope, who was born June 10, 1962, on the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation in southeastern Arizona, had three sisters and three brothers. He joined the U.S. Army in 1981, was discharged in 1989, and went to work at Sapa Extrusions three years later. He was known by his family and friends as "Low Rider," "Pops," "Cherry Bomb" and "Fatts," according to his obituary, and, while gregarious, "wasn't the type to sugar coat things." He had a fondness for travel, photography, family gatherings, the reggae band Stick Figure and the University of Arizona Wildcats. His unusual first name came from his father, a lifelong cowboy.



Lariat Rope was especially close to his father, Evan Rope Sr., a caster and cowboy. Photo courtesy of Deborah Hinton.

On the day of his death last year, Rope was finishing a 12-hour, overnight shift as a caster, helping guide molten aluminum logs into a pit of water 10 feet wide, 11 feet long and 22 feet deep. A fall-protection table, with slots for the logs, was designed to be maneuvered over the pit to keep workers from falling in, but the pit typically would be uncovered for five to 10 minutes during the casting process, the Industrial Commission of Arizona said in its April report. "It was during this time when employees would be exposed to an open pit fall hazard," the commission found.

At about 5:45 a.m. on November 8, Rope "was observed trying to move an aluminum log into position with his hand and as he stepped forward, he stepped along the edge of the pit, losing his balance" and falling in, the report says. His 32-year-old son, Andre, was working in another part of the plant when it happened and bolted for the scene but was deterred by a co-worker, said his aunt, Evelyn Hinton. "Someone stopped him and said, 'It's best you don't see.'"

Lariat's wife, Debra, learned of the accident around 6 a.m. and began calling her husband's extended family. Hinton got the word around 6:30 as she was preparing for work. "We turned on the TV," she said. "They were still describing it as a rescue."

Hinton called her brother Dave, the only sibling other than Lariat who lived in Phoenix, and he took off for the Sapa plant, in an industrial district west of downtown. Around 7:30, some 30 members of the Rope family — including Lariat's parents, Rosie and Evan Rope Sr.; Hinton; another sister, Rose; and a

PHOTO COURTESY

brother, Evan Jr. — left the reservation for the 116-mile drive to Phoenix. Lariat's brother Johnny and sister Carrie set out from Morenci, Arizona, and Dallas, respectively, by car and air.

The group from San Carlos got to Sapa around 9:30. Evan Sr., a pastor, "thought Lariat would be OK, but he'd already passed," Hinton said. "He was just traumatized to find out." Family members were ushered by security into the nearly-empty factory — the workers had been sent home — and waited to view Lariat's body. What they saw looked like something from a horror film. "He was wrapped up in some kind of red-colored plastic," Hinton said. "I don't know if that was his blood."

"My brother's life has more value than that. Five thousand is just not cutting it."

Lariat Rope's sister, Evelyn Hinton

The precise cause of Lariat's fall remains in doubt. Hinton said Andre told her a crane near the pit reportedly had been acting up "all night." Dave Rope said several of his brother's co-workers told him they'd heard a loud noise before Lariat fell. (Industrial commission spokesman Laky wrote that "ADOSH did a thorough investigation regarding the crane incident and any 'loud noises' reported would have been investigated.")

In response to an inquiry from the Center, Hydro Extrusions North America, which acquired Sapa last year, issued a written statement. "At Hydro, safety is our first priority," the company said. "We immediately reported this incident to the relevant authorities and worked closely with them, along with our internal experts, to complete a thorough investigation. We shared the information we learned with other locations within Hydro, as well as our industry, in order to help prevent future incidents and minimize risk. Our thoughts continue to go out to the family and colleagues of the employee involved in this tragic event."

Hinton is unmoved. She said she can't understand why the company didn't fix the fall-protection table before Lariat's death. She called the state-imposed penalty of \$5,250 "way low." Peter Dooley, a senior project coordinator with the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health who helped Hinton's sister-in-law, Ingrid Rope, obtain investigative documents from the state, said the industrial commission's reduction of the fine from \$7,000 "sends the wrong message to employers that put their workers at risk."

The accident shook the entire Rope family, none more than Andre, the older of Lariat's sons and a recovering alcoholic. "My brother had been nursing him back to health," Hinton said. After his father's death, Andre returned to work at Sapa for a brief time but started drinking again and was let go. "He just

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stopped caring about everything," Hinton said. He died on Easter Sunday of this year.

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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR CITY HALL

1. TAXPAYERS are the most important people in any city, whether in person, by mail, by phone, by fax or any other manner.
2. TAXPAYERS are not dependant us; we are dependant on them.
3. TAXPAYERS are not an interruption of our work; they are the purpose for it.
4. TAXPAYERS do us a favor when they call; we are not doing them a favor by serving them.
5. TAXPAYERS are the vital part of our business; not outsiders.
6. TAXPAYERS are not cold statistics; they're flesh-and-blood human beings with feelings and emotions like our own.
7. TAXPAYERS are not people with which to match wits. Nobody should ever win an argument with our taxpayers.
8. TAXPAYERS are people who bring us their wants; it is our job to fill those wants – for their benefit and ours.
9. TAXPAYERS are the lifeblood of this city; let us not forget it.
10. TAXPAYERS deserve the most courteous and attentive treatment we can give them. DO IT!

(Author unknown)

6 SECRETS TO OFFERING EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

salesforce



Introduction

THE SERVICE GAP

The vast majority of people are not experiencing great service. Nearly a third of consumers believe that businesses are now paying less attention to providing good customer service.

On top of that, just 7% of those polled say that customer service experiences they have with companies typically exceed their expectations. Now think about how you could succeed and profit as a business if you not only continually offered good service to your customers, but also frequently offered more than what they expected.

So what do customers want? It's simple.

- They want easy access to service on their terms.
- They want evidence that a business cares.
- They want first-time resolution when they ask for assistance.
- They do not want unpleasant surprises.

What do YOU need to do to give customers what they want?

The answers are on the following pages.

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03 Secret 1

05 Secret 2

06 Secret 3

08 Secret 4

09 Secret 5

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Chapter 1

ALIGN YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE WITH YOUR BRAND

A business's brand goes far beyond its name or logo. The strength of a brand can sell potential customers on working with you, and inspire loyalty once they do. One of the best ways to develop a strong brand message is to offer quality customer service. In fact, good service has been found time and time again to trump advertising when it comes to impact on brand image. But first you must put the key building blocks in place.

Have a clear brand promise

A November 2012 study by the American Society of Quality found that among the 600 companies examined, the single largest challenge was the setting of proper expectations. Take the time to clearly state what your brand is about. This includes what you are and aren't willing to do when it comes to customer service, so there is no confusion. Educate your customers so they can properly set their expectations for the kind of help and attention they are going to get if they have an issue.

Require everyone to follow the brand promise.

Employees from top to bottom must walk the talk of the brand promise. Managers are responsible for enforcing this, but more importantly, for leading by example. You can't expect a cashier to



follow certain customer service protocols if their boss isn't willing to jump in and do the same.

Figure out what your values are.

Small businesses need not create a grand mission statement like a larger organization might. But they can still put into a few words what their vision is. Ask what the value add of your service or product might be. Then write it down and use it as the foundation for the brand promise you and your employees want to deliver. You may choose words like "efficiency," "knowledgeable," "genuine," "innovative," or even, "real."

Formalize your customer service process, but allow for flexibility.

Once your vision is in place, take the time to map out your customer service plan. Train your employees that there is one way of doing things, but also let them know that there will be situations where they can let go of the "process." Teach them to be consistent, but not to have to a robotic response. Certain customer service issues will require flexible solutions if they are going to be resolved properly.

Measure your customer service and ask for feedback.

Find a way to track your customer service to ensure it backs your brand image. One of the best ways to do this is to ask for feedback. Most people won't tell you what you did wrong if there is not a safe way to complain. This especially applies to small businesses, because customers are more likely to know you personally. Once complaints are received and addressed, don't be afraid to pick up the phone and follow up.

Make service part of your brand.

If you are looking to take on the big task of aligning your customer service with your brand, here is a quick checklist that can help.

- Have a clear brand promise.
- Require everyone to follow the brand promise.
- Figure out what your values are.
- Formalize your customer service process.
- Measure your customer service.

Chapter 2

TRAIN YOUR FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES

Your employees are the channels from you to your customers. When it comes to offering great service, they can only use the hand they are dealt. This means if you don't equip them with the tools and guidance they need, they will fail, and your business will lose customers.

Set your employees up for success with these four steps:



Give them easy access to information.

This includes key aspects of the business, such as the status of an order, or the price and availability of a product.



Arm them with answers to common questions.

Employees should know how to describe the features of the products or services they are selling. They should also be trained to explain the rational for business policies.



Back them up with products that deliver what was promised.

An easy example of this is coffee that is served hot, or soda that is served cold.



Make sure they are empowered to fix issues right away.

Studies have found that in more than 90% of incidents where employees are rude, it's because they are embarrassed that they don't know how to respond to a reasonable customer request.

Ask your employees what their three biggest frustrations are in giving customer service.

Take action on at least one of the issues. This will have a hugely positive impact when it comes to morale, because they will see that there is hope that those things will change. They are also more likely to share again in the future, before a problem develops.

If you get a customer complaint about an employee, don't immediately scold them.

First, ask why they said and did what they did. Let them know that you believe they are a good person, who wants to do a good job. Chances are they've been lacking certain tools or the empowerment to offer good service, and this gives you the opportunity to change that.

“

Happy employees do better work
and offer better customer service.

”

Chapter 4

MONITOR CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS

Now that your staff has been trained and empowered to give great service, it's time to follow the old adage and "inspect what you expect." This can be done in several ways. As a small business, although you can't be present for every transaction, make sure you get two or three data sources to verify you are getting a valid snapshot of what is taking place.

Here are several techniques to use for monitoring customer interactions:



Personal observation.

Whether you are in a store or office, pause and listen to your employee and customer conversations. Pay particular attention to how employees reply to comments.



Ask for feedback.

When you come face-to-face with customers, look them in the eye and ask, "How are we doing?" This method is proven to increase customer communication by 30%.



Break down barriers with customers.

Solicit feedback by asking for it, on things like invoices and emails. You are likely to get the same amount of compliments as complaints, which allows you to celebrate great service, and correct problems you weren't aware of.



Provide manager's contact information.

Passing on your email address and, if possible, cell phone number, sends a message to customers that you are here to help, and demonstrates to your staff what a priority great service is for you.

Chapter 5

PAY ATTENTION TO THE RIGHT CUSTOMER METRICS

Another important way to set your frontline employees up to offer great service is to take time to check-in with them on key customer metrics. Paying attention to the following nine points will help to dramatically shift your employees' time and focus. Instead of using their energy to put out customer service "fires," they can concentrate on preventative service that offers actual value. Use this exercise as a teaching tool after a real customer service issues takes place.

1. Empathy

Did the employee use a tone of voice and expression (for face-to-face interactions) that demonstrated they genuinely cared about the complaint?

2. Effective Listening

Did they show active listening, by paraphrasing back what the customer said to confirm the complaint was accurately understood?

3. Knowledge

Did they articulate what your business's policies are in regards to the incident?



Which metrics should you track?

Paying attention to the following nine points will help to dramatically shift your employees' time and focus.

- Empathy
- Effective listening
- Knowledge
- Clarity
- Empowerment
- Preventative education
- Emotional connection
- Prevention
- Customer rating

4. Clarity

Did they back up the above point with a clear explanation as to why your business policies are in the customer's best interest?

5. Empowerment

Did the employee use the appropriate empowerment and flexibility to make the customer happy?

6. Preventative Education

Did the employee help the customer avoid a future problem by anticipating what they might need going forward?

7. Emotional Connection

If appropriate, was the employee able to establish an emotional connection with the customer?

8. Prevention

Could this customer issue have been prevented in the first place?

9. Customer Rating

From the customer's point of view, how would the employee rate the overall interaction?

Chapter 6

TREAT CUSTOMERS AS MEDIA REPS

The most effective and least expensive way to win new customers is word of mouth referrals from other happy customers. Yet this element is often overlooked by businesses of all sizes, because they aren't sure how to manage or measure such referrals.

You manage word of mouth by offering a great experience every time a customer comes in contact with your business.

You measure word of mouth with staff training and some common sense.

Ask these four questions of yourself and your manager(s) and then make sure the answers are shared with all frontline employees:

1. What percentage of new customers are a result of personal referrals?
2. What can we do to make all service transactions happily memorable for customers?
3. How much do we typically spend to win a new customer? This could include money spent on marketing, advertising, or other sales efforts.
4. How much would it cost to make all service transactions happily memorable for customers?

You may be surprised by the answers to the questions and how much you've been missing by not emphasizing word-of-mouth referrals as the number one way to earn new customers.



CONCLUSION

The continued success of a small business ultimately comes down to making a profit. While taking into account the small segment of people who spend based only on discounts, the best way to earn the right to charge a premium price at your business is to offer great service. Studies show that sensitivity to price doubles when a consumer has a complaint, and doubles again if they experience another problem.

But in the mind of a customer, exceptional service typically justifies expense, because they view what they're paying for as worth it.

It's also the best way to earn a "customer for life."

Remember:

- A strong brand image increases customer loyalty.
- Employees need to be empowered to offer great service.
- Increasing employee morale goes hand-in-hand with them going the extra mile for customers.
- "Inspect what you expect" and pay attention to customer interactions.
- Find ways to provide preventative service by tracking customer metrics.
- Happy customer referrals are the cheapest and most effective way to get new business.

It's four to five times as costly to attract a new customer as to keep an old one. Invest in what you have by offering great service!

SERVICE SOLUTIONS THAT WILL MAKE YOUR BUSINESS MORE PRODUCTIVE

Delivering amazing customer service is at the heart of what it means to be a Customer Company and connect with your customers in entirely new ways.

[Learn more >](#)

34%

Increase in customer retention

38%

Decrease in case resolution times

39%

Increase in agent productivity



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When Customer Service is Successful

Marcia Gutierrez, customer service representative

Ms. Jacobs, customer

Narrator

MS. JACOBS (friendly): Good morning. My name is Sara Jacobs.

MARCIA (friendly, courteous): Good morning Ms. Jacobs. My name is Marcia. How can I help you today?

MS. JACOBS (concerned): Well, I'm a resident of this community, and I've lived in the Parkview area for the past six years. I take my children to the park in that area two or three times a week. In the past three or four weeks, I've noticed that the beautiful tree that stands closest to the recreation center seems to be dying.

MARCIA (thoughtfully): Thank you for pointing that out. Let's see what we can do about this. I need you to fill out the upper portion of our service form. The Parks and Recreation department will investigate this matter and see what's wrong with the tree. Ms. Jacobs, please try to be as specific as possible and give us the name of the park and the exact location of the tree. This will help us find the tree quickly without having to contact you again for more details.

MS. JACOBS (helpfully): On, that's no problem. The tree is located in Mills Run Park, and it's the only elm tree in the entire park. Besides, it's the largest tree, and it stands adjacent to the recreation center.

NARRATOR: *Ms. Jacobs fills out the form and hands it to Marcia.*

MS. JACOBS (appreciatively): Marcia thanks so much for all your help. My kids will be glad to know that their favorite tree will get a "check-up".

MARCIA (friendly): Thank you, Ms. Jacobs, for bringing this concern to our attention. You will hear from us within five days regarding the action that has been or will be taken to save the elm tree.

NARRATOR: *On the fifth day, Ms. Jacobs receives a letter from the Parks and Recreation department informing her that the elm tree is diseased and the department is treating it to restore its bark. It will take two or three months before the tree is completely healthy.*

Several months later, Ms. Jacobs calls and thanks Marcia for the quality service that she received. Over the next eight months, Ms. Jacobs notices that the elm tree is on its way to recovery.

Exercise: A Difficult Transaction

CHRIS (polite): Good morning. May I help you?

MS. SANCHEZ (angry and anxious): My name is Gabriela Sanchez. I keep receiving ridiculously high water bills. I know that they aren't correct, and I wish you would come out like I've asked you to and reread my meter.

CHRIS (confused and angry): Ms. Sanchez, where do you live? Did you bring copies of the bills with you?

MS. SANCHEZ (belligerent and defensive): What? Why are you here? It's your job to find my payment and research why the bill is wrong. I have been a law-abiding, taxpaying customer in this community for thirty years, and I've never seen such incompetence in all my days. I have called twice and written to you folks. Still, I can't get any help. This isn't fair.

CHRIS (getting upset): Ms. Sanchez, if you'll just calm down and be rational, I may be able to help you. Now, please give me your name.

MS. SANCHEZ (shouting): You know my name. Why can't you go to a computer and find out my address since you're sending me bills. You folks sit around all day doing nothing....

CHRIS (resentful, hostile): Ms. Sanchez, if you would lower your voice and cooperate with me, I might help you, but until you do, I won't tolerate this kind of abuse.

NARRATOR: *The conversation continues for about five minutes and steadily worsens. The customer and the customer service representative actually cease to discuss the overcharges and end up attacking one another personally. Ms. Sanchez eventually leaves.*

Exercise: The Tax Bill That Won't Go Away

Background Information

Mr. Evens, a customer, has received several "past due" notices for his unpaid personal property taxes. Although the taxes were paid two weeks after the due date, he has received three invoices in the past seven weeks. Subsequently, he has made three telephone calls and sent one letter to the tax office. By now, he is exasperated and angry. As the scenario begins, Mr. Evans is speaking on the telephone with the receptionist at the tax office.

RECEPTIONIST (friendly, polite): Good morning. This is the Department of Finance. This is Pat. How may I help you?

MR. EVENS (angry): Good morning. My name is Lee Evans, and I would like to speak to someone in the personal property tax office about the delinquent property tax notices I'm receiving for a bill that I've paid.

RECEPTIONIST (friendly, polite): Let me direct your calls to Chris, our service representative, who can help you.

CHRIS (friendly, polite): This is Chris. How may I help you today?

MR. EVENS (angry, but indicating good will): Good morning. My name is Lee Evans, and I have received three "past due" personal property tax notices in the past seven weeks for a bill that I paid two weeks after the due date. Can you help me?

CHRIS (courteous, friendly): I will certainly do my best to help you. Let me make sure that I understand the problem. You paid your personal property taxes two weeks past the due date, yet for the past seven weeks you have continued to receive invoices. Is that correct?

MR. EVENS (agreeing, indicating satisfaction): That's right.

CHRIS (caring, concerned): I know how frustrating it is to receive a bill for something that you have already paid. Can I put you on hold while I research this matter?

MR. EVENS (agreeing, indicating satisfaction): Chris, wait a moment. I don't have a copy of the tax statement, but I do have a copy of the front and back of the canceled check. Should I send you a copy?

CHRIS (polite): Great! This information is helpful. But first, let me check something out on our computer system.

NARRATOR: *Chris leaves the phone for six to eight minutes and returns confused. He can't find any indication of the bill being paid. But as he picks up the receiver, Chris has an idea about what has happened.*

CHRIS (polite): Mr. Evans, I have an idea about what may have happened to your check. Was your home address on the check?

MR. EVENS (surprised by the question, but still polite): Why no, it was not. We had just changed banks and my new checks were not in yet. Why on earth would this be a problem?

CHRIS (polite, but frustrated): You should have written your address on the original check. Since we receive so many property payments, we don't always have time to research addresses. Therefore, your payment was put into our general escrow account.

MR. EVENS (doubting, angry): Wait a minute! My address was on the return envelope. I realized that it wasn't on the check, and I made several attempts to notify our office. On June 15 at 8:45 a.m., I explained this to Joe Dillard; on July 6 at 2:45 p.m., I again explained this to Pete Dill. I also followed up with a letter to Mr. Dill. It's not my fault that you didn't read my letter or respond to my *three* previous telephone calls. I did my job, you should have done yours!

CHRIS (humble, thoughtful): Mr. Evans, I certainly didn't mean for you to think that I blame you for our mistake. We failed to follow up on your calls and letter. But now we want to make sure that your tax payment is properly credited.

MR. EVENS (thoughtful): Okay, that's really all I want.

CHRIS (courteous, helpful): I will mail you a handwritten receipt today showing that you paid your personal property taxes for this year. Within the next two weeks, I will send you a computerized statement from our office, which will indicate that your bill has been paid in full. I will give you a call in about three weeks to make sure that you have received it. Thank you for your patience and for bringing this problem to our attention.

MR. EVENS (happy, satisfied): You are quite welcome. Have a nice day.

CHRIS (relieved): Thank you. Good bye.

THE CUSTOMER SERVICE ACTION PLAN

Issue or concern to address	Action(s) needed	What I can do	What others need to do

HELP US SERVE YOU BETTER

Because we want to provide the best possible service, we would appreciate your frank comments about your recent visit to the Police Department facilities.

Please take a moment to tell us how we did our job and where you feel we need improvement. Thank you for your time and consideration.

- 1. Were your impressions of the police facility favorable? Yes No
- 2. Was your service request accepted within a reasonable period of time? Yes No
- 3. Were you satisfied with the level of service you received? Yes No
- 4. How could we improve our service? _____

- 5. Name and Address (Optional) _____

Please answer the following questions . . .

	YES	NO	NOT APPLICABLE
1. If you telephoned the Police Department, were you satisfied with the handling of your call?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Did you receive service within an acceptable period of time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Were you satisfied with the overall level of service you received?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. What did we do best? _____ _____ _____			
5. How could we improve our service? _____ _____ _____			

Dear Resident:

Concern # _____

Please let me know how they did! We are proud of our community and our employees. I like to know if we are serving the citizens of St. Peters at an acceptable level. (Circle One)

How pleased are you with the City's initial response?

Pleased

Satisfied

Displeased

How pleased are you with the quality of workmanship or service in resolving your concern?

Pleased

Satisfied

Displeased

What is your perception of the City of St. Peters on an overall basis as far as service to its citizens?

Pleased

Satisfied

Displeased

Comments: _____

Thank you in advance for your response.

Clark County Parks and Recreation Class Evaluation

Clark County Department of Parks and Recreation would like to thank you for your participation. It is our goal to give you the highest quality of leisure service. To help insure that our activities meet the needs of the community, we ask that you take a few moments to complete the following evaluation. Your ideas are very important to us. Please return this evaluation to any Clark County Parks and Recreation Community Center, or mail to: CCPR, 2601 E. Sunset Road, Las Vegas, NV 89120.

Class Name: _____

Location: _____

Instructor: _____

Date: _____

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>			<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	
The flyer/brochure was descriptive and informative.	5	4	3	2	1
The registration procedures were convenient.	5	4	3	2	1
The length of the program was sufficient.	5	4	3	2	1
The cost of the program was reasonable.	5	4	3	2	1
I would recommend this class to a friend.	5	4	3	2	1
The instructor was well prepared for class.	5	4	3	2	1
The instructor met the goals and objectives of the class.	5	4	3	2	1

	<u>Excellent</u>			<u>Poor</u>	
How would you rate the instructor?	5	4	3	2	1
How was the instructor's mastery of the subject matter?	5	4	3	2	1

What suggestions or changes would you make to improve this class? _____

Other comments or testimonial: _____

May we use this in our publicity? Yes No

If yes, please sign here: _____
(Signature)

Thank you once again for your support. We look forward to serving you in the future. Please return survey to any Clark County Community Center or mail to: CCPR, 2601 E. Sunset Road, Las Vegas, NV 89120.

Board of County Commissioners
Vernon Anderson, Chairman, Chair of Park & Recreation, Vice-Chairman
Jay Buchanan - Executive Director of Park & Recreation
David L. "Doc" Shultz, County Manager
Curt E. Adams, Assistant County Manager
Gene Tompkins, Director of Park & Recreation
Richard L. "Dick" H. Anderson, Director of Public Works





DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES PROGRAM EVALUATION

Dear Citizen: The Board of County Commissioners and your Department of Parks and Recreation want to provide you with the highest quality leisure services. In order to accomplish this, we would like to know what your experience has been with County recreation and cultural programs. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. This information will help us to better serve you. Thank you.

Community Center/Location _____

Program/Class/Activity _____

(please circle the appropriate response for each question)

- 1. How did you first find out about this program/activity?
a) Newspaper
b) Television
c) Word of Mouth
d) Radio
e) Flyers/Posters/Brochures

(please specify)

- 2. Why have you or members of your family chosen this County program?

(you may circle more than one response)

- a) Good family program/activity
b) It is reasonably priced
c) Friends attend
d) It is convenient to home
e) The program is of a high quality
f) Other:

(please specify)

- 3. Please rate this event in the following categories:

Table with 4 columns: EXCELLENT, GOOD, FAIR, POOR and 3 rows of categories: Convenience of hours offered, Condition of facilities and equipment, Quality of the event.

- 4. Please use the following space for any suggestions or comments on this or other events that are offered by Clark County Dept. of Parks and Recreation.

Three horizontal lines for writing suggestions or comments.

- 5. Do you have any suggestions for events or programs you would like to see added in current offerings by Clark County Dept. of Parks and Recreation?

Three horizontal lines for writing suggestions for future programs.

- 6. What is your age group?

- 1. Less than 18 years
2. 18-24 years
3. 25-34 years
4. 35-49 years
5. 50-64 years
6. 65 years or over

OPTIONAL INFORMATION

May we contact you at a future date regarding your opinion of our programs and/or be placed on a mailing list for future programs/activities?

Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Phone, Apt./Unit#

Return this form to a Clark County Parks and Recreation employee. THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

How did you hear about this program?

Help us know how best to reach you. Please check all that apply. Thanks!

<input type="checkbox"/> NEWSPAPER		
<input type="checkbox"/> Review-Journal	<input type="checkbox"/> Sun	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement	<input type="checkbox"/> Article	<input type="checkbox"/> Calendar Listing

RADIO **DIRECT MAIL** **WORD OF MOUTH**

TELEVISION **CCP&R EVENTS CALENDAR** **CCP&R BROCHURE**

OTHER (please explain) _____

Additional Comments _____

Age Group (Please circle appropriate range) **Your Zip Code** _____

under 12 12-17 18-24 25-34 35-49 50-64 over 65

Clark County Parks and Recreation • Cultural Affairs Division

**CLARK COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION
SUNSET PARK
PARK RESERVATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

Meeting your needs is extremely important to us. In our continuing effort to meet the needs of our valued patrons, we ask that you take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire pertaining to your reservation at Sunset Park.

Date of event: _____ Permit Number: _____ Number of Participants: _____

Were extra services necessary; i.e., portable toilets, drop boxes (for trash), security, overnight camping, electricity, vehicle access, other:
Yes _____ No _____

If "yes", please specify: _____

Your comments in the following areas will be deeply appreciated.

1.	Reservation Process:	Excellent ()	Good ()	Fair ()	Poor ()	N/A ()
2.	Condition of Area:	Excellent ()	Good ()	Fair ()	Poor ()	N/A ()
3.	Condition of Equipment:	Excellent ()	Good ()	Fair ()	Poor ()	N/A ()
4.	Customer Service (Park Staff):	Excellent ()	Good ()	Fair ()	Poor ()	N/A ()
5.	Customer Service (Office Staff):	Excellent ()	Good ()	Fair ()	Poor ()	N/A ()
6.	Customer Service (Park Rangers):	Excellent ()	Good ()	Fair ()	Poor ()	N/A ()

Comments/Suggestions: _____

Do you plan to use Sunset Park again? Yes _____ No _____

If "No", please briefly explain why: _____

Did your reservation require equipment or services that were not available? Yes _____ No _____

If "Yes", please briefly explain: _____

Additional Comments: _____

Upon completion, please mail to: **Clark County Parks and Recreation
Sunset Park/Dolores Prieto
2601 East Sunset Road
Las Vegas, NV 89120**

Thank you for your time and comments!

Date: _____

1. What person in the Finance Office served you? (Please print name) _____

2. With which City departments did you come into contact today? (Check all that apply)

- _____ Building Department
- _____ Sanitation and Environmental Dept.
- _____ Business License Department
- _____ Tax Office
- _____ Public Parking (Traffic)

3. What was, or were, the purpose(s) of your visit today? (Check all that apply)

- _____ To get a permit for _____
- _____ To discuss a bill _____
- _____ To obtain a Business License _____
- _____ To get information on _____
- _____ To pay for my animal license _____
- _____ To pay insurance _____
- _____ To pay for my parking permit _____
- _____ Other _____

4. How often do you visit City Hall for services?

- _____ Less than once a year
- _____ Less than once a month
- _____ 1-2 times a month
- _____ Weekly
- _____ This was my only visit

5. Based on TODAY'S visit to the Finance Office, how would you rate the office on the following factors?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Speed of service	_____	_____	_____	_____
Courtesy of staff	_____	_____	_____	_____
Availability of appropriate staff	_____	_____	_____	_____

6. How would you rate overall service of other City departments in the following areas?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Building Dept.	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sanitation Dept.	_____	_____	_____	_____
Curb repairs (Public works)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Animal control	_____	_____	_____	_____
Parking Services (Traffic Dept.)	_____	_____	_____	_____

7. Based on your overall experience with City of Greenville services TODAY, how would you rate each of the following factors?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Convenience of City Hall	_____	_____	_____	_____
Concern for your needs	_____	_____	_____	_____
Customer Service	_____	_____	_____	_____

8. Has any member of the City staff been especially helpful? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, please let us know who, so we can show our appreciation to them. _____

9. Have you had any problems with the City about which we should know? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, please describe them: _____

10. Is there anything the City could do better or differently? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, please describe: _____

Thank you for taking time to complete our comment card. With your help, we will continue to work toward the highest quality customer service possible.

If you would like for us to call you, please print your name and address below:

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 You may telephone me at: _____
 () _____

Dear citizen,

Please take a few moments to tell us what you like about our services, what you would like to see changed and what you hope will stay as it is.

Your evaluation and comments are important to the City of Greenville.

Thank you for your help.

Peggy Sterling,
Director,
Administrative and
Support Services

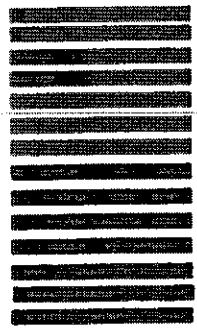
NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES



BUSINESS REPLY CARD

FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 0102 GREENVILLE, SC 29602

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE



The City of Greenville
P.O. Box 1845
Greenville, SC 29602

WANTED

YOUR OPINION

The City of Greenville
Serving...Protecting...Caring

WANT HELP FROM CITY HALL?

Fill Out This Checklist.

Pitch In! to make our City cleaner. Whenever you see a condition that needs to be corrected, use this form and bring in or mail it to:

Office of the City Manager
City Hall
Augusta, Maine 04330

(Type or Print)

DATE: _____

STREETS: _____
(Location)

Holes () Rough () Settled ()
Water () Bump () Loose gravel ()
Manhole cover rattles () Needs cleaning ()
Mud on street () Poor drainage ()

SHRUBBERY: _____
(Location)

Blocks traffic sign () Obstructs sidewalks ()
Blocks view of intersection ()
Overgrown ()

SIDEWALKS: _____
(Location)

Holes () Cracked () Tree roots ()
Muddy () House service trench sunken ()

BALLFIELDS: _____
(Location)

Dangerous conditions () Vandalism ()
Improper behavior by participants or
spectators ()

REFUSE COLLECTION: _____
(Location)

Frequently not picked up () Inadequate
receptacle () Frequently scattered ()

TREES: _____
(Location)

Limbs too low () Dangerous limb ()
Hanging limbs () Blocks traffic sign ()

POOLS: _____
(Location)

Improper behavior after playground hours ()
Hazardous conditions/vandalism ()

FIRE HYDRANTS: _____
(Location)

Leaking () Caps off () Needs painting ()

STREET LIGHTS: _____
(Location)

Lamp out () Reflector damaged () Pole
damaged () Globe damaged () Wires, pins,
insulators or crossarms dangerous () Needed ()

TRAFFIC SIGNS: _____
(Location)

Bent () Missing () Dangerous () Needs
replacing () Needs repainting () Dirty ()
Unnecessary () Needed ()

STREET SIGNS: _____
(Location)

Missing () Dangerous () Needs replacing ()
Needs painting () Dirty () Improper location ()
Needed ()

PLAYGROUNDS: _____
(Location)

Equipment broken or vandalized ()
Hazardous conditions ()

**OTHER PERTINENT FACTS OR ADDI-
TIONAL INFORMATION:**

**TO HELP US SERVE YOU, WE NEED
TO KNOW:**

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

Thank you for your help!
Daniel W. Fitzpatrick
City Manager

CITIZEN EVALUATION

1. How pleased are you with the City's Response? (Circle one)

Very Displeased	Displeased	Satisfied	Pleased	Very Pleased
1	2	3	4	5

2. In general, how pleased have you been with City services over the past year?
(Circle one)

Very Displeased	Displeased	Satisfied	Pleased	Very Pleased
1	2	3	4	5

Other Comments or Suggestions _____

I'd like to talk more about this. Please call me at _____

What Citizens *Really* Think

Civic-engagement platforms have their uses, but they're no substitute for public opinion research.

BY: [Adam Probolsky](#) | December 10, 2018

Every city council, school board and local-government agency has them: gadflies who attend every public meeting. Sometimes they may be the only public speakers. They make full use of the public-comment period to berate staff, rail against the agency and promulgate their latest grand conspiracy theories. Every agenda item is evidence of corruption; every staff recommendation, flawed; every employee, incompetent.

For all the stress that these angry gadflies create for public administration, giving them the opportunity to speak demonstrates the strength of our democratic institutions. But they don't represent the views of the general public, ratepayers or voters. You'd never judge your jurisdiction's or agency's effectiveness based on the words of a few speakers during public comment. But is your agency catering to the digital equivalent?

Local governments are increasingly turning to citizen-participation or "quick poll" platforms to enhance civic engagement. The pitch of these services is compelling, but beware: These off-the-shelf tools can work against effective decision-making and cause agencies to make big engagement mistakes.

Just like a public-comment period, engagement platforms provide a snapshot only of those who choose to show up. The "engaged" are just that: people who choose to talk and participate. But a handful of highly engaged citizens can skew priorities. Local governments must recognize that engagement and opt-in polling platforms are vulnerable to this selection bias.

When used properly and with their limitations understood, these services are useful tools that can help local governments track, respond to and interact with their constituents. But real citizen engagement can only come from hard work by staff and, in many cases, the help of outreach professionals and public opinion researchers who can craft unique plans for each community or agency. Communication preferences, culture and languages spoken are just a few customization examples where fixed platforms fall short.

The biggest mistake local governments can make with engagement is failing to understand the role of research in the engagement process. Open lines of communication are always a great idea. But effective local governments understand the shortcomings of digital engagement tools and social media platforms, and they know why statistically valid research methods are necessary for understanding broader community sentiments and identifying how to best communicate with their constituencies.

Engagement and statistically valid research are two very different things. Polling is not engagement; it's not meant to be. Public opinion research is independent and unbiased, and it uses statistically valid methodology. Polling yields responses from a population that accurately reflects the views of the full range of ratepayers, residents or voters. You need polling to determine likely outcomes and guide messaging strategy. Proper research is also inclusive of disadvantaged communities, non-native English speakers and those who struggle with technology.

On a practical level, well-designed surveys give you a starting point for your larger engagement plan. What's the preferred platform for receiving information about your local government? How often do

constituents want to engage with your agency? For service-based agencies or special districts, does a new technology improve the customer experience, or is it actually an inconvenience?

It doesn't matter what engagement platform you buy. Relying on such a tool alone, a transportation agency or sanitation district will never achieve meaningful ongoing civic engagement. The public expects these government agencies to just work and, for the most part, reserves comment for times of crisis. Statistically valid public opinion research, however, can shed light on the attitudes of this silent majority and guide long-term strategic planning.

Most importantly, local governments and their service agencies should value the institutional knowledge of their veteran staff whose experience, in concert with well-executed research, can help differentiate between meaningful civic participation and a few loud voices.

This article was printed from: <http://www.governing.com/gov-institute/voices/col-civic-engagement-platforms-public-opinion-surveys.html>

When Citizen Engagement Becomes Too Much

BY: [Alan Ehrenhalt](#) | November 2018

In the 1950s, while doing research for a book on political participation, the social scientist James Q. Wilson found himself attending a lot of citizen engagement meetings on urban planning. Eventually he reached a conclusion that seemed obvious to him, but that public officials, and especially political reformers, didn't talk much about. Wilson's insight was that most citizens don't attend meetings to endorse a policy, to give their blessing to a new project, or to sit back and learn. They show up to complain -- to say no to what's being proposed.

It's not hard for a local government to fill an assembly hall for a session on airplane noise or the need for a new four-lane road through town. But nine times out of 10, the people aren't there to tell the government to keep up the good work. They're there because they're upset.

One reason most public officials don't talk much about this is that it runs counter to the deeply held American belief that the broadest possible public participation is good for democracy. It's true that a significant portion of the time, the ambitious plans of local government aren't good policy. In those cases, somebody really does need to speak up against them.

The decade that followed Wilson's research produced perhaps the most dramatic triumph for citizen participation in modern American history: the victory of Jane Jacobs and her band of citizen activists over New York City's super-planner Robert Moses, and the abandonment of Moses' scheme to bulldoze much of Lower Manhattan with gigantic expressways.

Jacobs' crusade marked the beginning of a period in which public participation and civic activism became untouchable articles of faith in American local government. Candidates in every corner of the country began running on a platform of more civic engagement, more transparency, more chances for ordinary citizens to show up at meetings and make their feelings known. They are still doing it.

Virtually no one runs for office these days saying what Wilson implied in the 1950s -- that mass meetings and listening sessions make it more difficult for a local government to enact any complex instrument of public policy, good or bad. Boston's Big Dig, the highway and tunnel project that ended up costing \$24 billion and taking 25 years to complete, was made a good deal slower and more expensive than anyone expected because numerous cadres of citizen activists, environmentalists, preservationists, and others had to be consulted and mollified before work could proceed.

These days, it is almost impossible to find any local official willing to entertain Wilson's insights -- at least in public. One of the few current officeholders who will go on the record challenging the conventional wisdom is Christopher Cabaldon, the iconoclastic, provocative and often eloquent mayor of West Sacramento, Calif. Several years ago, Cabaldon appeared on a *Governing* panel that asked a small group of mayors how they apportioned their time and how they wanted to spend it. Cabaldon was asked about the number of hours he spent at town halls and other mass meetings. Too many, the mayor said. Public meetings take up huge amounts of time and rarely produce anything of genuine value.

More recently, Cabaldon expanded on his views to an audience in Texas. Public meetings, he said, generate a warped sense of what the community is all about. They attract the affluent, the angry and the articulate. They do a poor job of expressing the views of the ordinary citizen. "When we generate instant opinion, we are empowering desires in the community that are not necessarily representative. ... If we were responsive to every one of the citizen complaints, we would change from being one of the most progressive governments to one of the most regressive."

Cabaldon isn't a household name in Austin, but now would be a good time for that city's leaders to consider what he has been saying. Austin just spent five years working on a massive new planning and zoning project and ended up unable to pass anything. There was plenty of public involvement in this process; one might reasonably argue that there was too much.

No one disputes that Austin needed to do something about its zoning code. Written in the 1980s, it was so badly riddled with waivers and exemptions that even real estate developers had trouble figuring it out. In 2012, the city council approved "Imagine Austin," a comprehensive plan for the city that extended all the way out to 2040 and covered everything from transportation and housing to recreation and nutrition. One of the provisions of Imagine Austin declared the need for a new zoning code, with work to start on it immediately.

The work did begin promptly, and the new effort, known as CodeNext, attracted what one proponent called "a tidal wave of input from neighborhood associations." By 2017, the city had received some 4,000 comments and 60 position papers. "I think it was a bit overwhelming," says Greg Guernsey, the city planner who was in charge of CodeNext at the time.

But it soon became clear that the feel-good spirit of Imagine Austin, with its lofty rhetoric declaring the city "a beacon of sustainability, social equity and economic opportunity," did not extend to ground-level decisions that had to be made in the new document. Virtually all of the city's activists paid lip service to the idea of creating affordable housing, but differed on where it should go.

The more progressive housing activists were convinced that the number of affordable units the city needed -- as many as 65,000 over the next decade, by one estimate -- could be produced only through adding density to the city's residential neighborhoods, mostly by creating more accessory dwelling units on single-family lots and allowing medium-sized apartment buildings to be built on blocks of one- or two-story homes. The neighborhoods weren't buying this. Homeowners imagined eight-story condo towers dwarfing their modest bungalows. The city, which had been assiduous in conducting more than 100 "listening sessions" before it sat down to write, didn't do a very good job of quieting peoples' fears.

The second version of CodeNext was finished in the fall of 2017. It moved most of the projected affordable housing to busy commercial corridors where tall apartment buildings wouldn't offend homeowners. This placated the neighborhood associations, but it left the housing activists complaining that there simply wasn't enough space on these corridors to give the city more than a fraction of the affordable units it needed.

So the planners went back one more time and produced CodeNext 3, an attempt to forge a compromise the two sides could each accept. It didn't work. The neighborhoods remained wary, and the housing activists continued to argue that the number of affordable units likely to be created was much too small. "You just have this tiny narrow strip where they're allowing development," said a spokesman for AURA, a grassroots housing advocacy group. "They haven't widened out the corridors at all."

The only thing certain about CodeNext 3 was that it didn't have enough votes on the city council to become law. On Aug. 1, Mayor Steve Adler admitted defeat. "It seems evident," he wrote, "that we're not going to get to a place of sufficient consensus." He described the entire process as "divisive and poisoned ... marked with misinformation." The mayor asked the city manager to come up with a new plan, but offered no specifics on what that might involve.

It would be going too far to say that civic engagement killed CodeNext. But the more that mass meetings were held and the more that people morphed from passive citizens to activists, the harder it became to hammer out a deal. "This started out as a battle between diehard neighborhood activists and a couple hundred urban activists," one participant recalled. "Then it grew to include hundreds, thousands of new people."

It isn't hard to imagine how something like this would have been handled in the 1960s. A select group of middle-aged white businessmen, led by the mayor and the chamber of commerce, would have spent a few weekends squirreled away in a country club and emerged with a master plan for the city's future. This is literally what happened in Dallas in 1966.

No one is suggesting a return to that style of government. Cabaldon isn't arguing for it. "Simply trusting the elected officials to make all the decisions," he admitted, "is not the right answer either."

But paying a little attention to the insights of Cabaldon and Wilson might not be a bad idea. Public policy doesn't get better just because more people are showing up to meetings. Often it gets worse. It improves when voters elect officeholders with a pragmatic sensibility and then give them some leeway to do the right thing and explain their decisions to the public. That's called representative government. It's a lovely thing when it works.

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