

ETHICS

Larry "Nick" Nicholson

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

W. Clement Stone, businessman, philanthropist, author

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SNAPSHOT

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

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

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

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

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

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

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



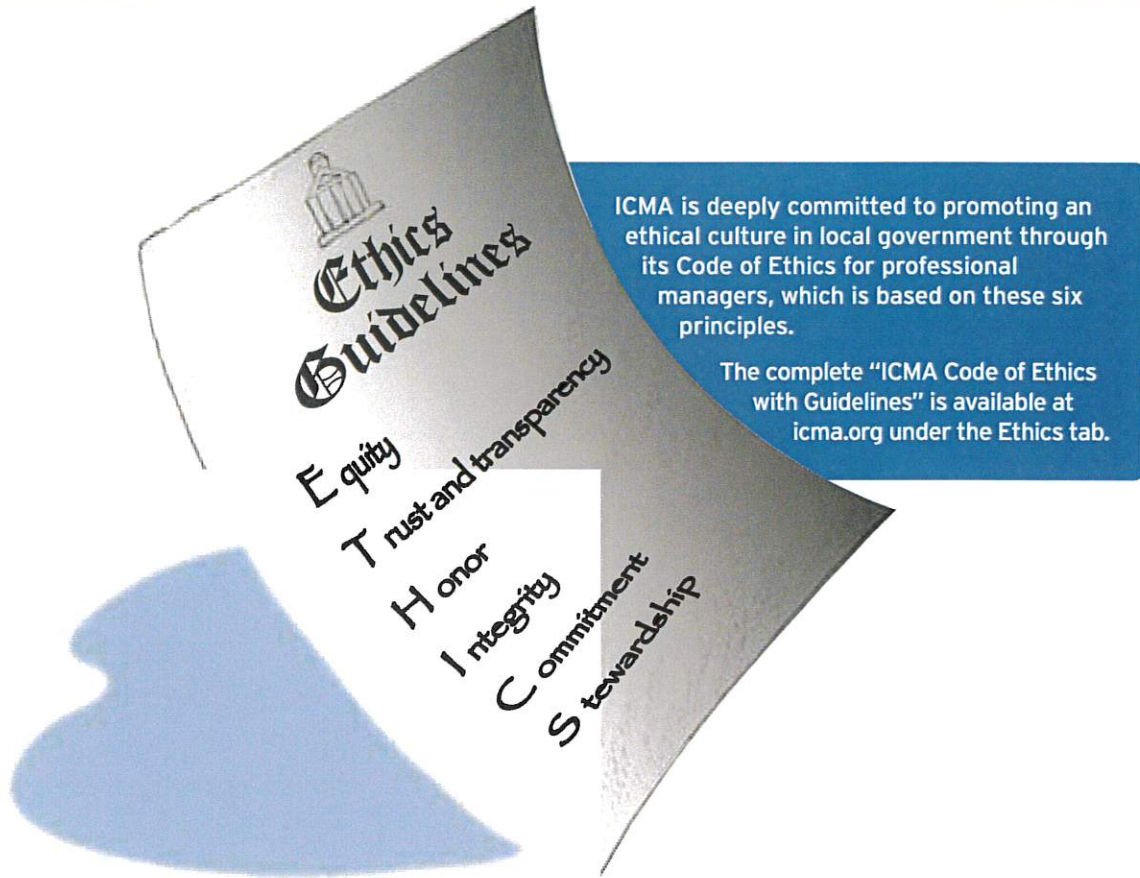
What is ethics?

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

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


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

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



Ethics in action

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



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

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

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


Modeling ethical behavior

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

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

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

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

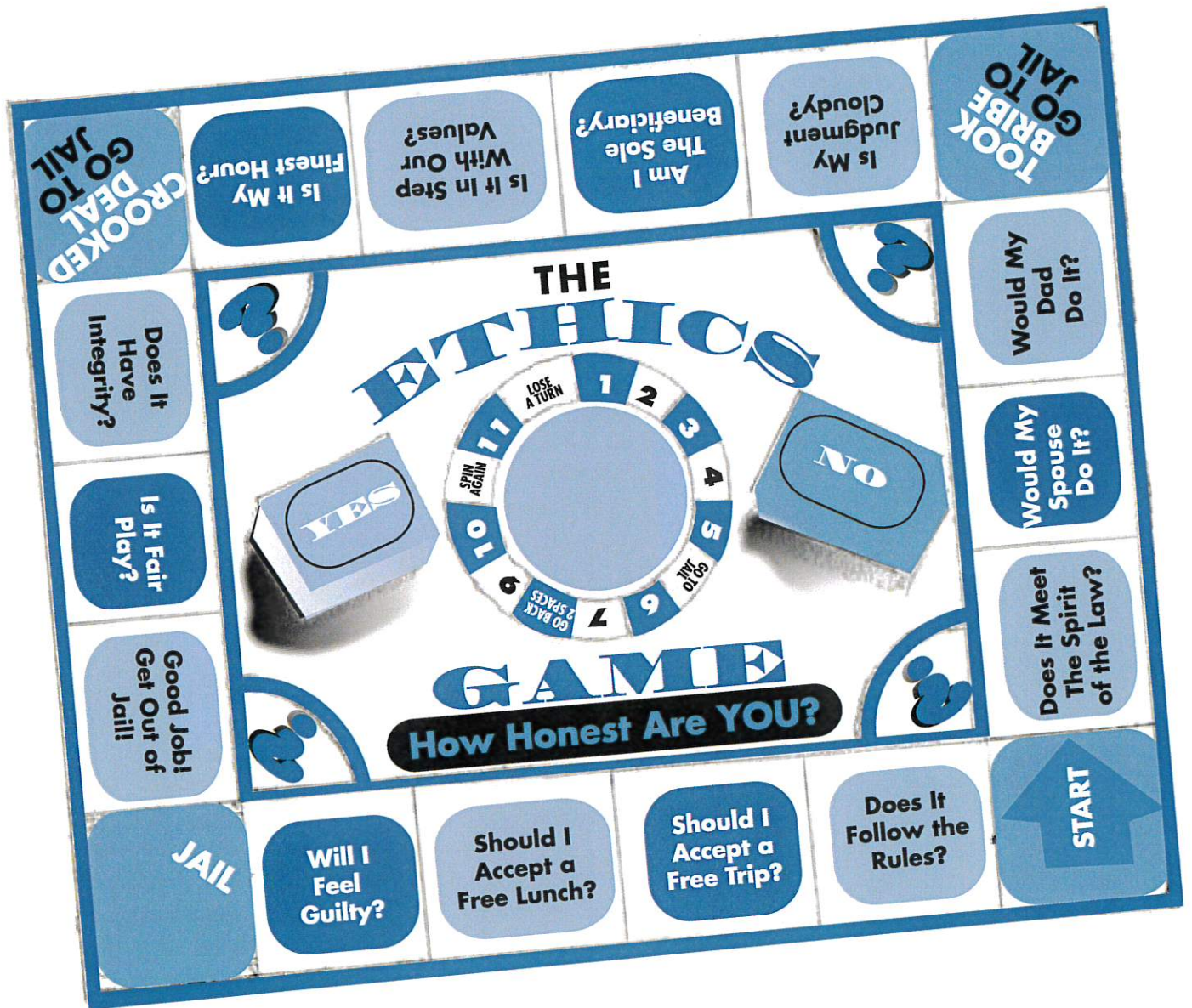


It also means that you publicly support the decisions made at all levels of your government organization regardless of whether you participated directly in the decision-making process. Simply repeating the “party line” is not enough; your actions as well as your words should show support. It is an unavoidable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

The following guidelines will help you model ethical behavior:

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

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



Coaching employees to ethical behavior


As a supervisor, coaching is a daily responsibility designed to

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

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

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

As a supervisor, you are responsible for creating a strong ethical environment in your unit by modeling ethical behavior, making ethically sound decisions, and help-



ing your employees solve their ethical challenges. When you are confronted with a decision that may have ethical implications, don't hesitate to ask your supervisor or department head for guidance, just as you expect your employees to come to you when they are struggling with an ethical issue.

Tools for ethical decision making

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

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

A Guide to Ethical Decision Making

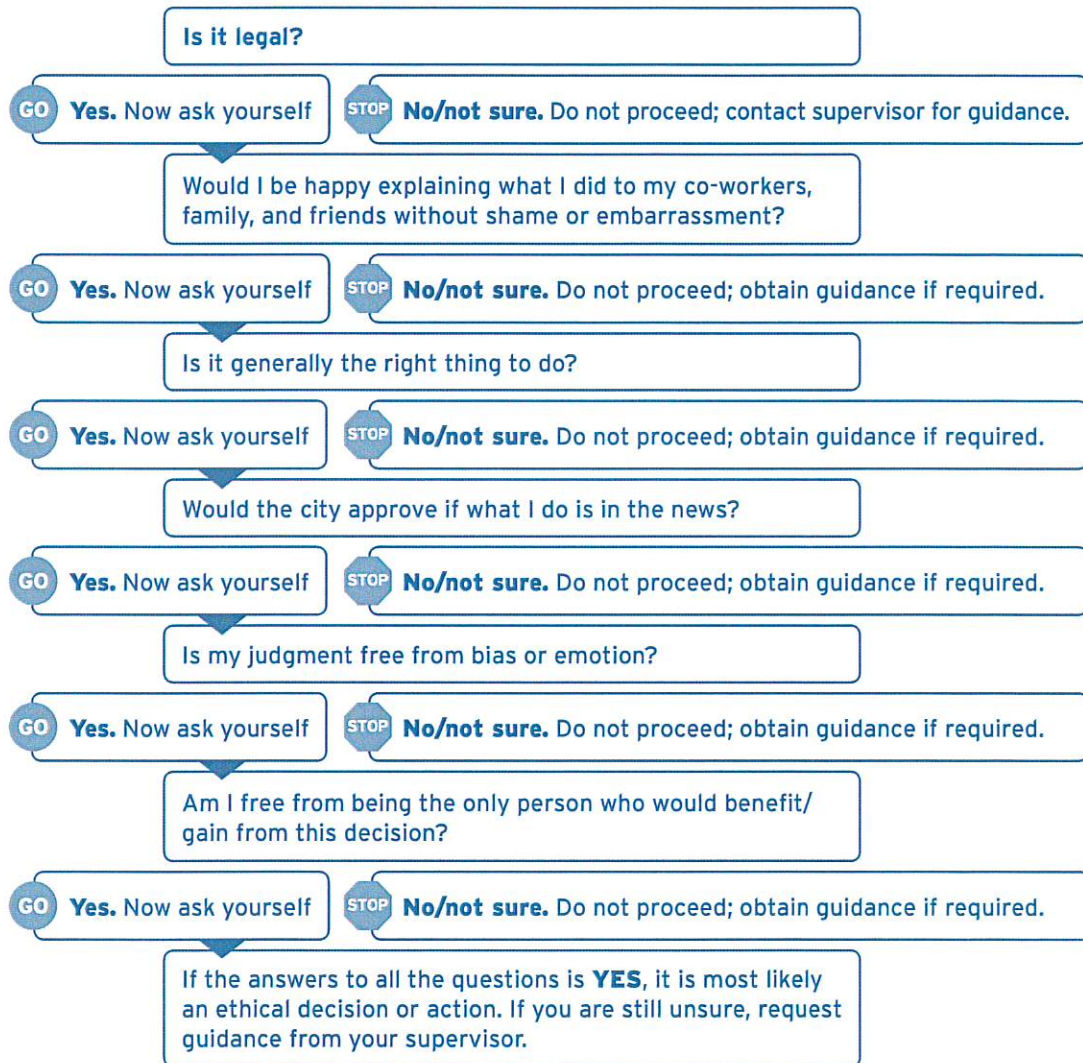
You can use these six questions (which comprise ICMA's "Guide to Ethical Decision Making") to assess whether a possible action is ethical.

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

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

ETHICAL DECISION TREE

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



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Other decision-making tools

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

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

The **parent or child on your shoulder test** asks, “What would I say to my children or to the person who brought me up about the action I’m about to take?”

“If the thought of what you would say makes you uncomfortable, don’t do it. For example, if you are thinking about “borrowing” lunch money from the petty cash and replacing it tomorrow, how would you explain this action to your child?”

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

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

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





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

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

Leading your employees toward ethical behavior

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

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

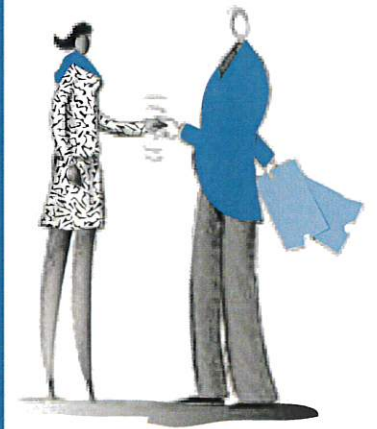
You can lead your employees toward ethical behavior by

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

RELATIONSHIPS WITH VENDORS

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

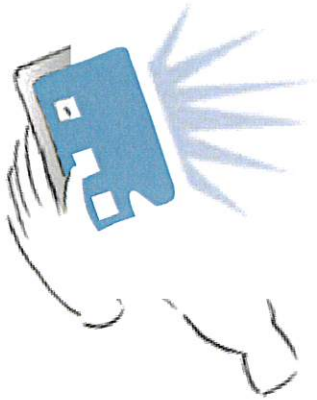
Cordial relationships with vendors make sense; there is no reason that conducting business can't be a pleasant experience. However, vendors are always interested in furthering their business and don't have to be concerned with the local government's rules—that's your job. For example, it is acceptable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



Summary

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

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



CHECKLIST

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

Endnotes

- 1 *Code of Ethics* (Peoria, AZ: August 2010), 5.
- 2 Kevin Duggan and Kevin Woodhouse, "A Code of Ethics That Packs a Punch," *PM (Public Management)* 93 (November 2011): 6-10.
- 3 *Remember the Titans*, Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2000.



Supervisory situation 3-1

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

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

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



Supervisory situation 3-2

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

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



Supervisory situation 3-3

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

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

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



STRATEGIC PLANNING, MANAGEMENT, AND EVALUATION

Barbara Flynn Buehler

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

Peter Drucker, writer and management and leadership consultant



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SNAPSHOT

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

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

This chapter will help you answer these questions:

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

Before you became a supervisor, you were responsible only for your own work. Now you are responsible for taking your organization's vision and strategic goals and turning them into action through the work of your employees.

Carrying out that supervisory role begins with understanding your organization's strategic plan and then connecting it to your division's day-to-day work.

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

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

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENTS

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

Mission: What the organization does to move toward the vision

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

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

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

Measures: quantitative or qualitative indicators of progress.


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

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

Start with vision

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





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

Creating strategic goals

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

Two useful tools for working with employees to set strategic goals are VISTA¹ and SMART². Both are acronyms that define typical components of successful goals.

VISTA Goals

Visualized
Inspirational
Specific
Time Bound
Assessable


SMART Goals

Specific
Measureable
Attainable
Relevant
Timely

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

Visualized

The first step in creating goals is to *visualize* the outcome. What is the mental picture of success, whether the outcome is repaving fifty miles of streets or constructing a spreadsheet to keep track of completed building inspections? Once employees have



this picture in mind, they'll be better able to describe specific objectives and outcomes. When a work team collaborates to create a shared mental picture of desired goals, team members become committed to working toward the same outcome.

Inspirational

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

Specific

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

Time bound


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

Assessable

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

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

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



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

Developing a procedures manual

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

A good manual

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

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

Planning the work and working the plan

Once you have a vision, clear goals for your work, and clear processes in place for how to accomplish the work, it is your job to guide your team to achieve results. Even the most motivated and responsible employees benefit from regular guidance

in achieving their goals. Your responsibility as a supervisor is to provide structure and order to your team's work.

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



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Step 1: Plan

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

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

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

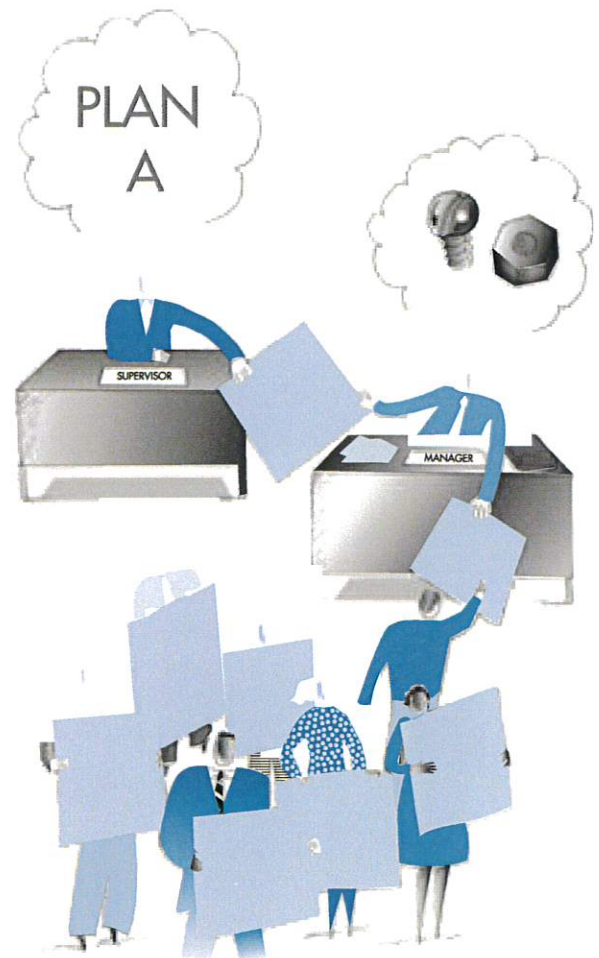
Operational planning involves breaking a strategic plan into the specific steps required to accomplish the work. Breaking plans down into bite-size pieces will make the activities more manageable for you and your staff. Depending on the nature of your team's work, operational planning may be done on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

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

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

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

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



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

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

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

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

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

SAMPLE PLANNING FORM

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

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

SAMPLE EMPLOYEE SCHEDULE: WHO WILL DO WHAT BY WHEN

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

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

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

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

Step 2: Do

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

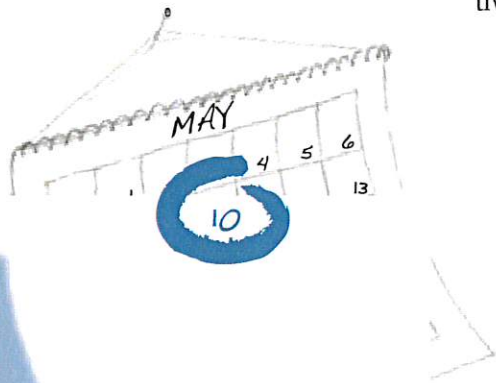
Delegation helps you get the work done by empowering your employees. It gives team members more opportunities to learn and grow, and it can make their jobs more challenging and interesting. Instead of doing the work, you will spend more time coaching employees to ensure that they are successful.

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

Step 3: Check

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






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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

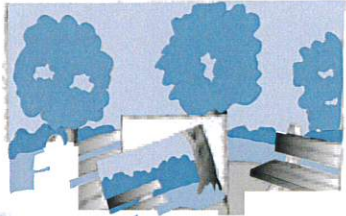
Step 4: Act

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

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

Plan-do-check-act with employees

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



Plan

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

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

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

Do

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

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

Check

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

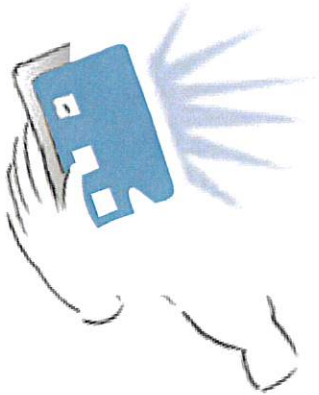
Act

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



Summary

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

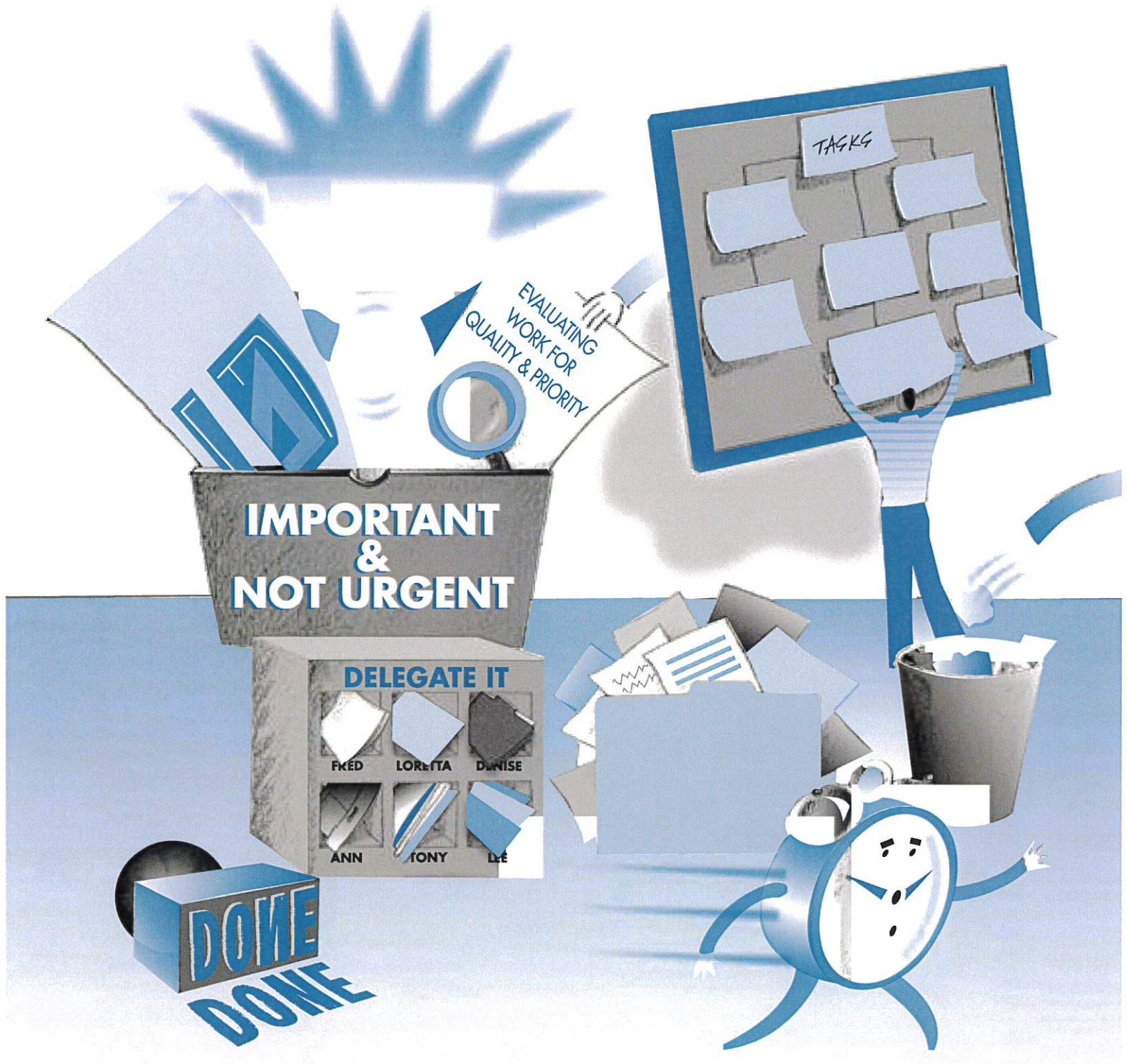


CHECKLIST

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

Endnotes

- 1 Ross Page, *Everyone Agrees With TOM!* (London, United Kingdom: Ross Page, 2007).
- 2 George Doran, "There's a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management's Goals and Objectives," *Management Review* 70 (November 1981; AMA FORUM), 35-36. [According to Wikipedia, this is the first reference to S.M.A.R.T. goals.]



**IMPORTANT
&
NOT URGENT**

DELEGATE IT

FRED	LORITA	DANNIE
ANN	TONY	LEE

DONE
DONE

TASKS

EVALUATING
WORK FOR
QUALITY & PRIORITY

ORGANIZING YOUR WORK AND TIME

Barbara Flynn Buehler

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

Michael Altshuler, entrepreneur and motivational speaker

5



SNAPSHOT

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

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

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Use the Eisenhower Matrix to Prioritize

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

The Eisenhower Matrix

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

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

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

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

Prioritize your tasks

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

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





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

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

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

Schedule your work

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

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

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

Managing assignments, paperwork, and e-mail

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

Separating information from action

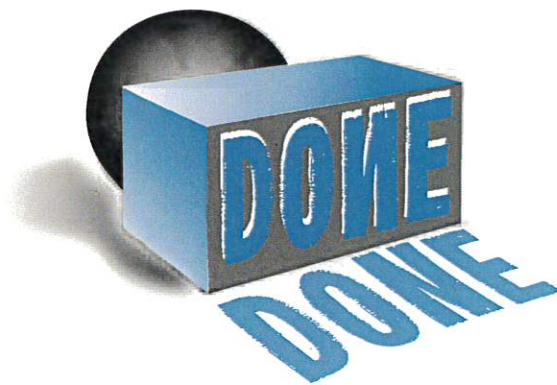
In reviewing memos, e-mails, telephone messages, and meeting action lists, separate information provided to you as a courtesy from action requests. Information provided to you as a courtesy may be sorted into four categories:

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

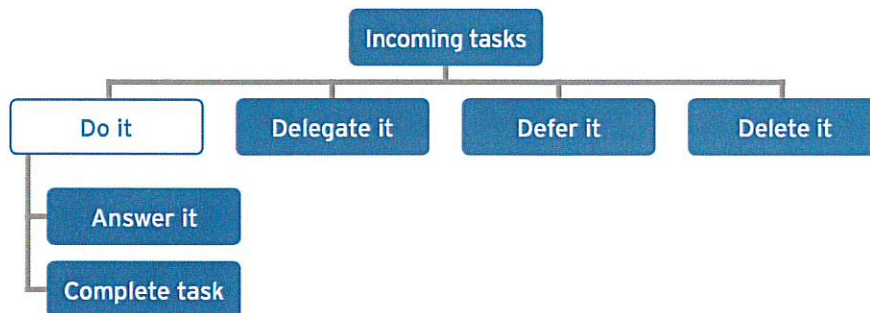
You'll be more productive if you select the appropriate category the first time you look at something. Avoid wasting time figuring out what to do with the information.

Action requests can be categorized similarly in these four categories:

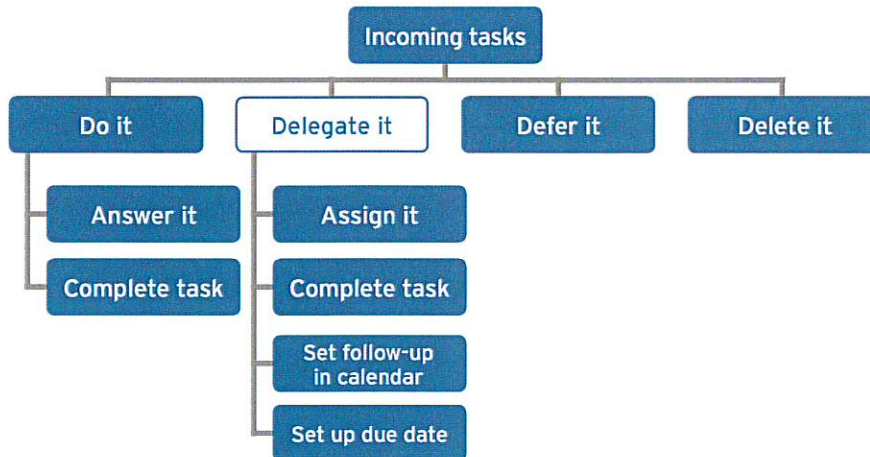
1. Do it
2. Delegate it
3. Defer it
4. Delete it.



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



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



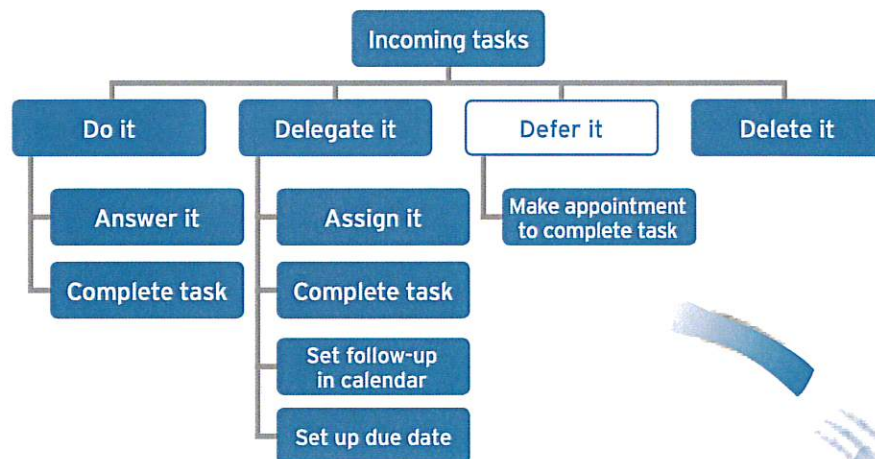


DELEGATE IT

SUPERVISORY TIP: DELEGATE MORE!


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

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



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

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



Using folders to organize action

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

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

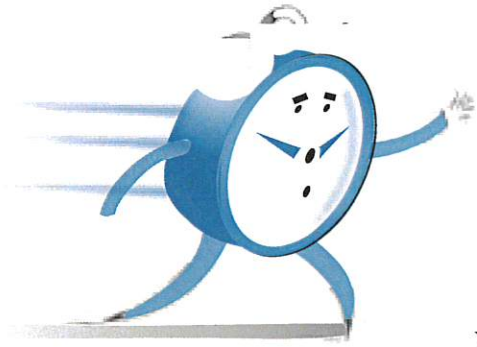


The advantage of using the same structure for both electronic and paper filing is that you only have to learn one system. You are more likely to be able to find what you are looking for if you arrange both systems in the same order. You also don't have to maintain paper duplicates of electronic copies.

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

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

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



Conquer procrastination

Procrastination is delaying action items that should be done now. If you're a procrastinator, you might be tempted to defer your most important tasks even though you have a clearly prioritized task list. Some people are motivated by tight deadlines so they wait until the last minute to start working on a project. Others may be intimidated by a particularly tough assignment so they put it off in favor of easier or more familiar tasks. And, others are paralyzed by the perfectionism that interferes with getting the job started or finished.

Whatever the reason, procrastination often produces personal stress and anxiety. These feelings can promote further procrastination, leading to a spiraling loss of productivity, and failure to meet important deadlines or successfully complete job responsibilities.

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


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

Managing meetings

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

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

Causes of Procrastination	Tips for Tackling Procrastination
Dislike the task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a game of it • Set an artificial deadline for yourself • Visualize the relief you'll feel when it's done • Reward yourself with the promise of a fun task once it's done
Bored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work for a fixed period of time on the task • Where possible, trade tasks with someone else • Take a short break, then come back to it
Too tired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get up and walk around • Focus on a simpler task for a set period of time • Set aside a specific time to get the tough task done when you have more energy • Get plenty of rest leading up to a big project • Drink water and eat nutritious foods to keep your brain fueled
Afraid of failing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set clear goals and expectations • List potential obstacles and ideas to resolve them • Consider your strengths and how you can use them • Make a list of who could help you and ask them for help • Take small steps and keep going
Competing commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand your choices among tasks • Seek clarification from authority figures to prioritize competing tasks they have assigned to you • Commit as much to your own necessary tasks as you commit to satisfying requests from others • Explain conflicts to others and talk through possible solutions
Don't know where to start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break the task into smaller subtasks • Prioritize the subtasks with deadlines • Talk it through with someone who likes organizing things • Establish rewards for meeting subtask deadlines
Resentment of an imposed task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the cause of the resentment • Discuss issues if another person is involved • Consider whether it might be fair within your commitments and responsibilities, even if you don't like it • Create a plan for change • Just get it done to be able to move on



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


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

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

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

Step 1: Create an agenda

The top of the agenda should indicate the name of the group that is meeting (e.g., engineering division); the type of meeting (e.g., biweekly staff meeting); and the



date, start and end times, and location of the meeting. The agenda should then list each topic of discussion for the meeting and the estimated amount of time for each topic. If appropriate, identify who will make presentations or take the lead on each topic. For example, if you are inviting people to share the status of key projects and/or progress toward strategic goals, they should be told in advance so they will be prepared. You may want to allow time for a “lightning round” during which employees share what they have worked on in one- to two-minute presentations.

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

Step 2: Distribute the agenda

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

Step 3: Chair the meeting

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

Step 4: Listen

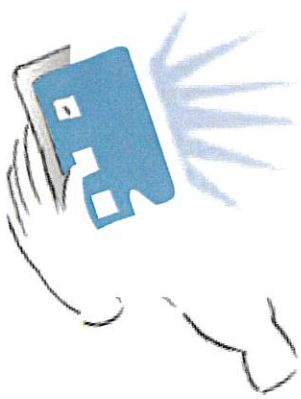
A successful meeting chair makes sure everyone has an opportunity to participate and be heard. If one or two participants dominate the conversation, invite a quieter member of the team to comment. If there are people who have not participated at all, ask them for their opinions. Once the subject is talked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

Step 5: Summarize outcomes, actions, and responsibilities

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

Step 6: Prepare for your next meeting

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




CHECKLIST

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

Supervisory situation 5-1

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

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

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

Supervisory situation 5-2

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

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



Supervisory situation 4-1

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

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

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

Supervisory situation 4-2

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

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

