Solutions

Online Performance Strategies for Managers and Supervisors from the Division of Personnel

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Quick Tip:

From the editors of *Solutions*

Your job as a manager is to "plan, organize, control and direct." Don't let yourself waste valuable time by falling back on what you did before you became a manager. We know you enjoy it and you are good at it. That's why you were promoted. Now you need to concentrate your efforts on managing, not on "doing".

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The tyranny of the urgent can cause priority overload

By: Jim Clemmer, bestselling author and internationally acclaimed keynote speaker, workshop/retreat leader, and management team developer on leadership, change, customer focus, culture, teams, and personal growth.

The tyranny of the urgent lies in its distortion of priorities. So we've got to choose — from all our long-range options, alternatives, and possibilities — to establish short-term goals and priorities.

"He that is everywhere is nowhere."
— Thomas Fuller, 17th century historian, and author

A frantic manager burst into a travel agency and exclaimed, "I need an airplane ticket immediately!" "Where would you like to go?" the travel agent asked. "I don't care. Just get me on a plane. I've got business everywhere" was the desperate reply.

Author and consultant, R. Alec Mackenzie once observed, "Urgency engulfs the manager; yet the most urgent task is not always the most important. One of the measures of a manager is the ability to distinguish the important from the urgent, to refuse to be tyrannized by the urgent, to refuse to manage by crisis." Unsuccessful organizations are often beehives of activity and hard work.

Reflecting on the performance of his struggling company, a departmental manager observed, "We have lots of projects, goals, and priorities. We're constantly making lists and setting action plans. But we seldom see anything through to completion before some urgent new priority is pushed at us. Our division manager's thinking seems to be 'random brain impulse.'

He's like a nervous water bug that flits from one strategy to another."

In the midst of tumultuous change, many managers are confusing "busy work" activity with results. Missing what's really important to long-term growth and development, they allow themselves to be tyrannized by short-term urgencies. But we just can't do it all. The list of dreams we could pursue to realize is a lengthy one.

The number of improvements we could make to our performance gaps are countless – so we've got to choose. From all our long-range options, alternatives, and possibilities, we've got to establish short-term goals and priorities. There are as many things we've got to stop doing, as there are actions we've got to start taking. Some actions will drive us forward, many will hold us back, and some won't matter much either way.

But without clear targets and a strong sense of what's most important, you — and everyone on your team or in your organization — won't be able to tell the difference.

Effectively establishing goals and priorities has both strategic and tactical components. The strategic decisions are the goals and priorities we choose to pursue. Tactics are how we get organized and manage our time to reach those goals.

Workforce Management

PERforM

By now, most supervisors and agency personnel have received training or information on the PERforM system. If you've had the opportunity to use the system, you may have questions about the information that appears on your homepage or about situational processes.

The reporting structure used for PERforM is maintained in the SAM II-Human Resources system. Specifically, the Position Control User Defined Window 3 (PUD3) screen is used to store the rater (supervisor) position number for each existing position. If you are a supervisor, this means that your position number appears on the PUD3 screen for each of the employees under your responsibility. This information is used to create a "chain of command" and to populate the employee lists that appear in PERforM. Therefore, if organizational supervisory changes occur, your agency's human resources office should be notified to allow updates to be made to the appropriate PUD3 screens.

The information contained on the PUD3 screen is also utilized for a "bumping" process. Behind the scenes, "bumping" occurs when the supervisor position number provided on the PUD3 is vacant or the incumbent of the position is in a leave of absence (LOA) status. During each nightly cycle, the system looks up the "chain of command" and automatically adjusts the user roles and employee lists when appropriate. In effect, the role of rater (supervisor) is "bumped" up to the responsibility of the second-level supervisor and the role of reviewer (second-level supervisor) is "bumped" up to the responsibility of the next-level supervisor in the "chain." The system will automatically readjust the roles when the supervisor position is filled or the incumbent of the position returns from a LOA to an active employment status.

The "bumping" process and certain employment changes can affect the objectives and Performance Plan of employees. Objectives are tied to employees, so they will transfer with them as they change raters and/or reviewers. It is likely that a new rater will edit existing objectives, because his/her expectations for the employee differ from those of the previous rater. To ensure the employee is aware of the revised objectives, a new Performance Plan should be printed and reviewed with the employee.

As you can tell, the PERforM system relies heavily on the SAM II-Human Resources system. You could say the PUD3 screen and the processes that occur behind the scenes are the "driving force" behind the information you see in PERforM.

If you have questions about any of the information contained in this article or about the PERforM system in general, your emails are welcomed and can be sent to **perform@oa.mo.gov**. Also, if you would like to be notified of the latest PERforM updates and information, you are invited to subscribe to the PERforM News Distribution List at **www.perform.mo.gov**.

Written By:
Marian Luebbert, Division of Personnel

Self-Direction
Think your way past harsh criticism

Receiving harsh criticism from a team member, co-worker, or even your boss, especially unexpectedly, is always a shock. First, we feel terrible – then defensive, resentful, and eventually angry at the person who accused us.

We may blow up at him or her or we may retreat in surly silence, but either way our relationship with that person suffers, as well as our work and our life in general.

Sometimes it's hard to know what to do to. Janelle Hail, a writer and speaker who is also founder and CEO of the National Breast Cancer Foundation, suggests that we bypass this dead end by separating the offender from the offense. Ask yourself the following questions:

What are the facts? Instead of letting those painful words run around confusingly in your head, face them squarely: *How accurate was the criticism?*

How did your accuser act? Did he or she seem angry, gloating, sarcastic – or worried, fearful, panicky? Look past your emotional state to see his or hers clearly – part of the problem my lie there.

Was your accuser's behavior typical? Has previous criticism to you or someone else been as harsh? What current factors – such as impending deadlines or family problems – could make the person behave differently? You may not be the only one with problems.

This brief analysis will help you respond rationally instead of in anger and haste. You may indeed need to apologize or change your ways, but your accuser may also be regretting what was said or the way it was said. Now it's time to talk things over and begin taking positive steps.

Perceptiveness
Unconventional leadership approaches

Here are two approaches to leadership that have served one senior manager very well:

Think and act as if you work for your employees – not the other way around.

Words like "boss" and "direct report" or "subordinate" reinforce the idea that your employees work and support you. A more fruitful way to think about the relationship is that you should carry the support role.

Your support takes many forms. You have to ensure employees have everything they need to do their jobs well – tools, resources and information. In addition, you should serve as a sounding board for new ideas, a facilitator to help get things done and a mentor skilled and willing to give advice and feedback. To offer this kind of support and do it well, you have to work on yourself. It's not easy. You must be approachable, open-minded, empathetic and a skilled listener.

Don't try to motivate people. Instead, focus on removing de-motivating conditions.

People want to work and do their best. Let them! One way to do this is to spend time thinking about conditions that might de-motivate employees and remove them. You'll gain much more by eliminating de-motivating conditions than by creating new incentives, bonuses and perks.

Integrity
Eliciting trust from others

You shouldn't bad-mouth a bad boss, says leadership expert Stephen Covey. "Be loyal to people in their absence. Then, watch how others begin having more faith and confidence in you – because they know that you won't be talking about them behind their backs."

Solutions

Mentoring
The benefits of cross training employees

Cross training or job rotation is assigning employees in the same basic job classification to different job assignments of other employees in the same or similar job classification.

The opportunity to cross train can also occur when an employee expresses an interest in performing different work duties that others are assigned – or when an employee offers to help a co-worker with other work due to the employee's momentarily reduced workload, or "downtime." In addition to increasing the team's overall performance – it also helps to reduce the fatigue of any employee who typically prefers not to perform the same duties over and over.

Changing assignments may also encourage the use of new or different skills and abilities which provide new challenges to the employee and increase their value to the organization. Delegating some authority to employees to make job assignment changes can also give the employee some personnel autonomy over their work. As a result, employees learn to do other jobs, giving management some flexibility in making assignments during peak work load times or when employees are absent due to vacation, sickness, or other absences.

The employee that is crossed trained may not be as efficient as the employee who performs the task on a regular basis. However, the employee should still be able to do the basic job duties and keep the work flow moving – a benefit for the organization and customers alike.

Employees involved in cross training activities should be evaluated on how well they learn their new job duties during the year via their annual appraisal. Likewise, supervisors can be evaluated on their effectiveness in cross training their staff throughout the year.

Upon occasion, supervisors and employees have contacted the Division of Personnel asking about cross training or job rotation in their offices. There are no statewide rules or policies for or against cross training – but the need to do it does make sense.

Some supervisors initiate it and some employees just go ahead and do it. In your office, it may be appropriate to ask your manager or Director before starting it.

If you are looking for additional ways to develop career planning strategies and promotional opportunities for employees and supervisors in your agency, cross training may be of interest to you.

Managers: Use these strategies to help employees manage their careers

The old "employment contract" is gone, and employees aren't guaranteed lifetime employment anymore. They are responsible for managing their careers, and as a manager, it's a good business strategy to help them. It builds loyalty and trust and makes for wiser, more efficient workers. Here are some programs that any manager can easily put in place.

Host monthly "Career Development Days" with employees. Set aside one day a month to sit down with employees one-to-one and discuss where they are in their career, where they want to go, what skills they'll need to get there, and what opportunities are available in the department and in the company at large (state government). Take notes at each meeting, so you can track progress.

Start a "Professional Development Club." Assign each of your employees a different industry-related article. Once a week, have a "Reading Meeting." Ask employees to relate any interesting stories, trends, or products that they uncovered in their reading.

When you attend a conference, bring it back with you. Whenever you attend a conference, take detailed notes, and turn them into a presentation for employees. Bring them up-to-speed on the hot topics, what they should read up on, new skills and opportunities, and so on. (This is also a great way for you to remember material)
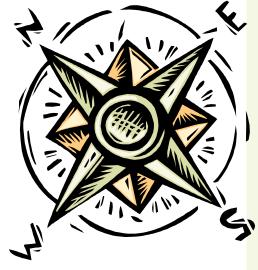
Ask managers to hold in-house seminars. Employees can benefit from learning how a business is run: basic accounting, financial forecasting, budgeting, and so on. Ask managers in these areas to conduct seminars on different topics for your employees – and offer to do the same for them.

Be a "mentor headhunter." You can't be a mentor to everyone; but you can help employees find mentors elsewhere in the organization. Use your influence and standing to reach out to other managers.

"I start with the premise that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers."
-Ralph Nader

"Possibility" of serious illness can earn FMLA coverage.

Issue: Employees are entitled to leave while being tested for "serious condition" under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Risk: Extends FMLA coverage

Action: Grant FMLA leave to employees while in this "limbo" stage.

Don't take disciplinary action against employees who take leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to determine if they have a serious illness.

Until you find out how sick the worker is, err on the side of legal caution: Assume that his condition is serious enough to apply under FMLA.

FMLA lets qualified employees take up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave a year if they suffer a "serious medical condition." But recent court rulings have said that if an employee just thinks he has a serious condition, he can take FMLA leave to have the condition checked out.

A Michigan court ruled against a company that fired truck driver James Woodman for taking unauthorized leave while he underwent doctor-recommended tests after suffering chest pains.

The company had argued that Woodman wasn't covered under FMLA because he had not suffered a heart attack, and thus, didn't have a serious condition. But the court said FMLA applied because Woodman's doctor determined that the absence was necessary until further tests could determine the condition's severity. (Woodman v. Miesel Sysco Food Serv. Co, No. 226002, Mich Ct. App.)

Final Tip: Remember that it's your burden – not the employee's – to determine if a leave request is protected under FMLA. Employees don't need to request "FMLA leave" explicitly. Familiarize yourself with the definition of a serious condition so you know FMLA-protected leave when you see it.

For a definition of serious illness, go to:
www.dol.gov/elaws/esa/fmla/shc.asp

Management vs. Leadership

By Jim Clemmens

Leadership and management are two distinctive and complementary systems of action. Each has its own function and characteristic activities. Both are necessary for success in an increasingly complex and volatile business environment...strong leadership with weak management is no better, and is sometimes actually worse, than the reverse. The real challenge is to combine strong leadership and strong management and use each to balance the other." **— John Kotter, Management/Leadership Author and Professor of Organizational Behavior, Harvard Business School**

The terms "management" and "leadership" are often interchanged. In fact, many people view them as basically the same thing. Yet management is as distinct from leadership as day is from night. Both are necessary for a high-performance organization. By contrasting them and understanding their differences, we can better balance and improve these essential roles.

One key distinction between management and leadership is that we manage *things* and lead *people.* Things include physical assets, processes, and systems. People include customers, external partners, and people throughout our team or organization (or "internal partners").

When dealing with things, we talk about a way of *doing.* In the people realm, we're talking about a way of *being.* In our consulting and training work we often add a third element – technical – to management and leadership to form what we call a "Performance Triangle." This adds another dimension to the question, "how should the organization's focus be allocated to each area?" While apparently simple, the question is often a very difficult one to answer, since there is no universal formula that applies to all organizations. Some need more technical skills or better technologies. Others need the discipline of better systems and processes. Most need a lot more leadership.

The triangle depicts the balance between the three critical success factors. Imagine a pendulum swinging in the center of the triangle. It's very difficult to keep the pendulum in a state of equilibrium. In some cases, organizations may need to swing the pendulum in one direction because that's where it's weakest.

The most common weakness, however, is in leadership. The triangle illustrates that a well-balanced organization has leadership at the base. This allows management and technology to serve rather than enslave producers, servers, and customers.

Another complicating factor is that needs are easily misidentified. For example, we have found that most organizations have communication problems of one kind or another. Often these are seen as leadership issues. Many times they are. But just as often the roots of the problem are intertwined with poor processes, systems, or structure – all of which are management issues.

While it is important to recognize the differences between leadership and management, it is also important to appreciate that the two have complementary strengths as well.

Management	Leadership
Processes	People
Facts	Feelings
Intellectual	Emotional
Head	Heart
Position Power	Persuasion Power
Control	Commitment
Problem Solving	Possibility thinking
Reactive	Proactive
Doing things right	Doing the right things
Goals	Vision
Light a fire under people	Stoke the fire within people
Written communications	Verbal communications
Standardization	Innovation

Warren Bennis, Professor of Business Administration at the University of Southern California, has been extensively studying and writing about leadership for many decades. He explains why leaders are so much more successful than managers in harnessing people power: "Management is getting people to do what needs to be done. Leadership is getting people to want to do what needs to be done. Managers push. Leaders pull. Managers command. Leaders communicate."

Both management and leadership are needed to make teams and organizations successful. Trying to decide which is more important is like trying to decide whether the right or left wing is more important to an airplane's flight. I'll take both please!

Excerpted from Jim Clemmer's book, "*The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success.*"

View the book's unique format and content, Introduction and Chapter One, and feedback at www.theleadersdigest.com. This book is a companion book to *Growing the Distance: Timeless Principles for Personal, Career, and Family Success.*

During the last 25 years, Jim Clemmer has delivered over two thousand customized keynote presentations, workshops, and retreats. Jim's five international bestselling books include *The VIP Strategy*, *Firing on All Cylinders*, *Pathways to Performance*, *Growing the Distance*, and *The Leader's Digest.* His web site is www.clemmer.net.

One way to deal with an attitude problem

Say you have an employee with a "bad attitude." He won't participate in meetings – and when he does – he's usually very rude. How can you talk to the employee and get him to turn things around?

First, (if you're the supervisor) analyze the problem – take notes, record how often it happens and list its impact. Once you have a list of examples, talk to the employee.

As management consultant Dick Grote advises, during the discussion make sure you don't refer to the employee's attitude as "bad." Instead, describe his behavior using examples.

For instance, tell him: "I expect everyone to be a team player, and there have been several cases of you not doing so. For example, when Bill offered an opinion today, you said 'that's stupid' and rolled your eyes."

After giving some examples, use a phrase like "Help me understand what's going on" to get the employee to open up.

Then listen and look for solutions.

How to admit your mistakes

When you make a mistake, give a succinct, forthright apology. It will offer damage control and earn trust. With all these things in its favor, why is it so hard to make a good apology? Once reason: We don't know the proper techniques for making an apology. Here are two that will help:

1. **Apologize in terms of past-present-future.** If you've done something wrong, don't defend or justify your behavior.

One manager had to apologize to colleagues when it was uncovered that he had taken credit for a project his colleagues had worked on. What he had done was indefensible. Here's what made it easier for him to express his contrition: The manager "framed" his poor behavior as an action done in the past that he now recognized to be wrong – and promised never to do it again.

"You all know what happened last week," he told his team. "I didn't give it much thought then, but now I know what I did was wrong. I've already cleared up the misperceptions I caused about who really worked on the project. As we go forward, I hope and expect to win back your trust."

2. **Don't apologize if only regrets are called for.**

Reserve saying *"I'm sorry"* for actions that were willfully wrong or intentionally deceiving. For honest mistakes and inadvertent errors, express *regrets*.

A manager who made a very bad business decision – so bad that it had to be reversed – didn't apologize for it. Why? Because it turned out that when he made the decision, he was relying on the wrong information. Of course, something had to be said, and it was. "I made a mistake," he told his team, "and I regret that."

Keep applications, resumes clean and free of notes

During the hiring process, never note an applicant's race, sex, religion, age or national origin on their application or other documents unless you're required to do so under affirmative action laws. If you are required, it's best to use a "tear off" sheet that's kept separately from applicant files.

Even better: Managers should refrain from writing anything on applications or resumes. Since you must retain those documents, making notations of any kind – including "secret codes" or private rating systems that identify or categorize applicants – could create a dangerous paper trail that may be tough to explain later.

Example: Say you circled an applicant's 1971 college graduation date on his resume. Could that be evidence of age bias? Possibly.

Case in point: After a farming supply company gave applicants written tests, it noted the applicant's race and sex on the test. The well-meaning goal: assess whether the test had a negative impact on minority hiring. A group of applicants sued for hiring bias. The company argued that it merely "observed" the applicants race and sex. The court didn't buy it. While the company didn't formally request the data, it still technically used the information for employment. As a result, the court let the applicant group pursue a class-action suit. (Modtland v. Mills Fleet Farm, No. Civ. 04-3051, D. Minn)