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

Spring 2008

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Quick Tip:

From the editors of *Solutions*

Pledge the highest commitment to your career and your work, whatever it is. Believe in it more than anything else. When your co-workers and managers see your passion and enthusiasm it will ignite their passion. Once you have ignited their passion you are not only leading but also inspiring.

Remember...

The world is before us and we need not take it or leave it as it was when we came in.

James Baldwin

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Self-Direction

The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Disengage and Sometimes Leave

By Leigh Branham

In case you haven't noticed, there is an emerging "employer-of-choice" movement among American employers, both in government and business. The reason is simple to understand –78 million boomers are on the verge of retirement, with only 44 million Generation Xers in line to replace them.

When the economy eventually recovers from its current slump and again resumes its job-creation rate of 1.5 to 2 million jobs a year, where will the replacements come from?

Smart employers are anticipating the crisis and putting their energies and resources into creating "magnet-for-talent" work environments. For a glimpse into what some of the most progressive organizations are doing to engage and retain their employees, check out *Fortune's* annual (January) Great Places to Work issue. What separates the best employers from the rest is a better understanding of what employees need and want.

Employee's real needs are too often "hidden" from the very people who most need to see them clearly—line managers. The *Harvard Management Update* reported that 89% of managers believe that most employees are "pulled" away by better pay. Yet post-exit survey data (based on 19,700 surveys) from a third-party – Saratoga Institute – revealed that in 88% of voluntary turnovers, some factor other than better pay was the root cause. This astounding disconnect between belief and reality allows managers to deny responsibility for correcting and preventing the root causes of employee disengagement.

I was pleased that Saratoga was willing to let me analyze the data and verbatim comments from these surveys. As I read more than 4,000 comments one by one, I organized them by major themes, of which there turned out to be seven. This led me to write *The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave: How to Recognize the Subtle Signs and Act Before It's Too Late* (AMACOM Books, 2005).

Here then, are the seven hidden reasons employees disengage and leave, offered in no particular order because they vary in importance among different cultures and for different individuals. Each reflects the employee's "felt loss" of one or more of the following basic needs—trust, hope, worth, and competence.

Reason 1: The job or workplace was not as expected.

About 35% of American workers quit in the first six months on the job. Why? Many workers have an unrealistic expectation about the job or workplace, or in some cases are deliberately misled during the interviewing process.

What to do about it: Find a way to give job interviewers a realistic preview. Many new hires in state government jobs are shocked to realize that what they thought would be a "cushy" government position is in reality far more demanding and fast-paced then they could have imagined.

Managers need to take the time to describe the demands of the job in detail, give tours of the workplace, let applicants be interviewed by their future peers, and find ways when possible to give candidates an "experiential sample" of the job activities before hiring them on full-time.

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The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Disengage and Sometimes Leave

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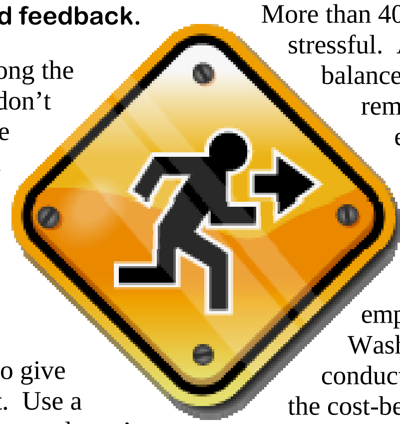
Reason 2: A mismatch between job and person.

We hire and promote hurriedly and carelessly, believing we can train the wrong people to become the right people — that we can put in what was left out. As evidence, consider how many technically competent professionals get promoted and struggle as managers.

What to do about it: Employers of choice analyze the talents and personality factors that separate the best performers from the average ones in each job role. They use multiple interviewers, ask behavior-based questions, and check references with skill and persistence.

Reason 3: There is too little coaching and feedback.

More than 60% of employees – especially among the 28-and-under Millennials (Gen Y) – say they don't get enough feedback. Many managers just give feedback once a year at performance appraisal time. That's like a basketball coach telling his players at the beginning of the season, "You're going to go out and play 30 games, and at the end of the season, I'll evaluate your performance."



What to do about it: Train managers in how to give feedback, so they can overcome their fear of it. Use a simple "Get-Give-Merge-Go" model — get the employee's perspective first, then give your own, then merge the two into an agreement on next steps. Whatever coaching model you use, it should call for frequent feedback, careful listening, and assume an adult-to-adult partnership between manager and employee, not parent-to-child.

Reason 4: There are too few growth and advancement opportunities.

While 85% of employees say career growth is a key reward, only 49% say their employers are providing it. They cite managers who are reluctant to discuss career issues with their employees, and managers who hoard and stifle talent by blocking movement to other departments or units.

What to do about it: Some senior leaders have "what's-wrong" meetings with managers whose employee survey and exit interview results reveal a high incidence of career growth complaints. In turn, the organization provides career-growth workshops for employees, supported by career-coach training for managers. Such training prepares both parties to initiate meaningful discussion of talents, needs, and new options within the agency.

Reason 5: Workers feel devalued and unrecognized.

There are at least a dozen ways workers feel devalued—inequity of pay for similar work, not being acknowledged for a job well done, not being treated with respect, not receiving the right resources, and having to work in unacceptable physical work environments, to name a few. All these are symptoms of viewing employees as insignificant, interchangeable, or disposable. The desire to be acknowledged and valued is our deepest craving, yet 60% of employees say they feel ignored or taken for granted.

What to do about it: Ask your staff what they think and really listen. As Captain of the Navy's *U.S.S. Benfold*, Michael Abrashoff inherited a ship with a 28% *retention* rate! In one year he achieved 100% retention, and transformed the ship's performance from worst in the Pacific fleet to the best. How? By getting to know each crew member, listening carefully to their ideas, and implementing as many as possible.

Reason 6: Stress from overwork and work-life imbalance.

More than 40% of Americans say their jobs are extremely stressful. Another 70% say they don't have a healthy balance between work and personal lives, and, remarkably, 60% would give up some pay in exchange for more personal or family time. Generations X and Y workers will continue to insist on having more time outside of work to live their lives.

What to do about it: Explore options that meet employees' needs and pay-off for the organization. Washington-based Fannie Mae, for example, conducted a study of its elder-care services to evaluate the cost-benefit of having a full-time clinical social worker. In her first two years on the job, the elder-care director saw 400 employees (about 10% of the organization's 4,000+ workforce), which equates to about $3.5 million per year in avoided productivity due to elder-care responsibilities.

Reason 7: Loss of trust and confidence in senior leaders.

The Gallup Organization reports that employers with high trust levels outperform those with low trust levels by 186%. Yet only 39% of American workers trust their senior leaders. Only 50% believe management is concerned with their well-being; and only 40% believe their organizations are well-managed. And 82 % believe that their senior leaders help themselves at the organization's expense.

Employees in both the private and public sectors look at their senior executives and see too much self-interest, short-term focus, and ego-driven decision-making. There are of course plenty of employee-focused, trustworthy, and loyalty-inspiring senior executives, but apparently not enough to go around. CEOs cannot inspire commitment from their workforces unless they can first show they are committed to them.

What to do about it: Adopt what I call a "give-and-get-back" mindset that is typical of "servant leaders." When Quint Studer took over as CEO of Pensacola Baptist Memorial Hospital a

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few years ago, he realized he needed to do something drastic to raise morale. So, he gave the gift of time and availability to employees—he moved his office from the executive level on the 8th floor to the ground floor where he could interact daily with nurses and patients. He listened and he acted on their concerns. What he got back was--more engaged employees who worked harder, and achieved dramatic increases in customer satisfaction scores.

One Thing You Need to Know

What every employer needs to know is that 90 percent of voluntary turnover – and disengagement – is avoidable. While the employee shares much of the responsibility for staying engaged, most of the levers that increase employee engagement lie within the power of the direct manager or senior leaders to control.

As powerful and important and necessary as pay and benefits may be, the most powerful solutions continue to revolve around the simple-but-not-easy-to-implement intangibles – everyday good management and healthy cultures.

About the Author:

Leigh Branham is Founder/CEO of Keeping the People, Inc, Overland Park, Kansas, a management consulting firm that helps organizations analyze the root causes of employee disengagement and turnover, then develop and implement employer-of-choice strategies. He is the author of two books on the subject of employee retention, *The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave: How to Recognize the Subtle Signs and Act Before It's Too Late (AMACOM Books)*, which "The Library Journal" selected as one of the best business books of 2005, and *Keeping the People Who Keep You in Business: 24 Ways to Hang On To Your Most Valued Talent (AMACOM, 2001)*. Leigh also publishes a quarterly e-letter, "Keeping the People Report", and speaks frequently to audiences in the U.S. and internationally on a variety of HR and leadership topics. He can be reached at LB@keepingthepeople.com or by visiting his website: www.keepingthepeople.com

Integrity

Raising the trust level

Leigh Branham presented a day long presentation on the topic of employee retention and engagement for supervisors and managers in various state agencies on behalf of the Division of Personnel on February 28, 2008. During the program, participants were asked to provide a written response to the following question:

"What should senior leaders in State government do to raise the trust, confidence, and engagement level of the workforce?"

*Following is a synopsis of the responses:

- ☐ Senior leaders need to understand work processes before they make changes to it...don't micromanage everything.
- ☐ Senior leaders need to promote and identify the substantive purpose of agency.
- ☐ Hold staff accountable in a timely manner.
- ☐ Be more connected with line staff, especially when implementing new programs and work requirements.
- ☐ When you ask for input, use it. Talk to employees like they are equals, not replaceable workers.
- ☐ Allow mid-managers some latitude in taking work time for morale-building activities.
- ☐ Bring back within-grade increases so state employees can sustain a middle-class lifestyle.
- ☐ Survey employees to see if there are any simple changes management can make to make things better.
- ☐ Create more promotional opportunities.
- ☐ Encourage cross-training to allow employees who have mastered one function to view how a different part of the same organization functions.
- ☐ Political appointees are a way of life, but they should listen to senior level career staff who know their employees and processes.
- ☐ Continue to promote a long-range plan for compensation. Obtain commitments to fund and stand by it through administrative and legislative changes.
- ☐ Communication does not go down the agency pipeline. Meetings are held, communication is received by some, but then it's not filtered down to everyone soon enough to do any good.
- ☐ Upper management should understand how their decisions impact people and their ability to perform their jobs. When workloads increase, adjustments should be made to ensure employees can remain successful even with their new responsibilities.
- ☐ Make an effort to know your employee's names and ask their opinions regularly.
- ☐ When it is feasible, allow employees to work from home and/or have adjusted work schedules to accommodate family needs – regardless of where the employee works regionally. Being present five days a week from 8 - 5 doesn't necessarily equate to productivity or efficiency.
- ☐ Support mid-management by including them in decision-making process since they are often the ones who have to "sell" new ideas to staff.

*Because respondents were told their responses would be anonymous, all comments were edited to ensure anonymity.

"Every great success is an accumulation of thousands of ordinary efforts that no one sees or appreciates." Brian Tracy

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Mentoring

Avoid these coaching errors

You have a talented staffer who needs help developing a new skill. As you coach him or her, heed this advice from the baseball diamond:

Don't bring players up from the minor leagues until they're ready. Make sure your staffers master the skills you teach them. Impatient coaches will often stop teaching before their employees achieve proficiency. You can't rely on your students to know when they've mastered a new skill.

Example: Don't ask "Do you understand how to use the spreadsheet program now?" Instead, say "I'd like you to create a spreadsheet using last month's figures."

Don't give players too many "signs" when they bat. Don't bombard people with too much information at once. Let employees master one step of a new task before moving on to the next.

Example: "Let's make sure you're comfortable with formatting. Then I'll show you how to import figures from other reports."

Don't let players catch with one hand. If employees practice a skill the wrong way, they'll get stuck doing it that way. Good coaches give feedback when an employee is making a mistake. That doesn't mean you have to jump on a person the first time he/she does something wrong, but don't let incorrect behavior persist.

Example: "I noticed you're not saving your work regularly as we discussed. You can lose a lot of valuable work that way. Please start saving after you enter each new column of figures."

Adapted from "Getting a Project Done on Time"
Paul B. Williams ACACOM
Communication Briefings
Briefings Publishing Group
1101 King Street, Suite 110
Alexandria, VA 22134
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Perceptiveness

The 8 keys to leadership greatness

To reach your full potential as a leader, apply these eight laws identified by retired Air Force Reserve Maj. Gen. William A. Cohen, as a professor of leadership at California State University:

1. Maintain absolute integrity.
When Leonard Roberts became CEO of Arby's, the fast-food chain was struggling. He turned it around by promising more service, support and money to his franchisees. When Arby's owner refused to pay staff bonuses, Roberts resigned from the board in protest and the company eventually fired him. He survived that firing—and a subsequent firing as CEO of Shoney's for a similar stand—to take the reins of Tandy Corp., largely because of his renown in the franchise world. "You cannot maintain your integrity 90% and be a leader," Roberts says. "It's got to be 100%."

2. Know your stuff.
Not yet 30 by the time he directed Jaws, Steven Spielberg already was a self-made man. Rejected twice by USC's film school, Spielberg simply took over an abandoned trailer at Universal Studios, started making contacts and cranked out a short film. The studio signed him to a 7-year contact because Spielberg proved that he knew his stuff.

3. Declare your vision.
In fewer than 25 words, can you recite to yourself how your organization contributes to the public good and where you plan to be in five years? "Most companies fail in their growth because they don't have a vision," says former Southwest Airlines CEO Howard Putnam. "When you have a vision and someone comes to you with some convoluted idea, you can hold it up to the vision and ask: 'Does it fit? Does it fly? If not, don't bother me.'

4. Show uncommon commitment.
Dell Computer Corp. rose from nowhere to No. 1 in six months because of Michael Dell's commitment to speed. He also saved money through assembly and distribution deals that saved even more time. Is Michael Dell uncommonly focused on faster, smarter, better? Says former Intel CEO Andrew Grove: "I have bruises on my back from Mr. [Dell] when we can't keep up with them."

5. Expect positive results.
Start by turning disadvantages into advantages. In the early 1900s, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie commissioned reporter Napoleon Hill to research success. One of Hill's discoveries – hidden within every disadvantage or obstacle lay an equally powerful opportunity. Successful leaders look for those opportunities.

6. Take care of your people.
Mark Peters worked as director of operations at a Florida fire alarm company. Peters oversaw five managers, four of whom held college degrees. The one who didn't, Irv, became Peters' go-to man, but he earned far less than the other four because of the company's bias toward degreed employees. Peters wound up pleading Irv's case to the company president. And ultimately, he won both the raise and Irv's loyalty.

7. Put duty before self.
Homer Laughlin China Co. survived the Great Depression but, by the late 1970's, cheap imports almost did it in. Laughlin's owners were well-positioned to call it quits, but they knew that liquidating the firm would destroy their community. So, they stuck it out for the good of their fourth- and fifth- generation workers. They invested in a new kiln and revived an old design called Fiesta. Bloomingdale's launched the revived brand, and Homer Laughlin is now the largest U.S. Pottery company.

8. Stand out in front.
When Peter Ueberroth agreed to run the 1984 Olympics Games in Los Angeles, he promised they'd make $15 million in profit. That seems impossible. Ueberroth plunged in and personally negotiated sponsorship contracts worth millions. During the Games, Ueberroth led the way by wearing the uniform of a different Olympic worker each day. By the time the Games ended, they'd made $215 million in profit.

Adapted from "The Stuff of Heroes: The eight Universal Laws of Leadership," William Cohen
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Technical Knowledge

Applying Consistent Discipline

A black employee got into a fight with two white employees and called one of them an offensive name. He was fired. He then brought a lawsuit against his employer claiming that the white men had called him racial epithets and should also have been fired but were not.

What happened: Lamonte Young, an African American, worked for American Airlines as a fleet service clerk in Missouri from 1995 until 2002 with a good work record.

In 2002, American issued a new conduct policy that promised strict punishment for employees who engaged in offensive or discriminatory speech on company grounds. The policy stated that employees were not allowed to engage in “hate-related behavior,” which American defined as a behavior stemming from hatred of another person based on race, religion, or other protected characteristic. American trained all of its employees in the new policy and announced that it would take a zero-tolerance approach to disciplining hate-related conduct; any employee who engaged in such conduct would be dismissed immediately.

On October 9, 2002 Young was making a personal call on the telephone in a break room when two white employees, White and McAndrew, entered the room and asked him to hang up so they could make a business call. Young refused. The men exchanged expletives and Young reportedly threatened to hit the other men with the phone. Young called McAndrew a “gay” and a “faggot.” Young claimed that the other men called him the “N word,” which they denied.

Young’s supervisor interviewed all three men and determined that Young had violated the ‘hate-‘related’ provision of the new policy because Mcandrew was a homosexual. She did not find that McAndrew or White had used hate-related words. Young was fired and McAndrew was not.

Young sued American, alleging that the company had discriminated against him on the basis of race because it had not fired McAndrew or White, whose conduct he claimed was similar to his. The trial court dismissed the case. Young appealed.

What the court said: In order to make his case of discrimination before the Missouri Court of Appeals, Young had to show that he was a member of a protected group, that he met his employer’s legitimate expectations, that he suffered an adverse action, and that the adverse action was probably the result of discrimination. American argued that Young had not met its legitimate expectations because he had violated its conduct policy.

The appeals court found that Young’s work record had been satisfactory for 7 years, and that a single violation of a company policy did not mean that Young had not met his employer’s legitimate expectations.

As for discrimination, the crucial issue was whether the white and black employees were similarly situated to the extent that American’s firing of Young amounted to illegal discriminatory treatment. American argued that Young was not similarly situated to McAndrew and White and that his conduct was worse than theirs. The trial court had not decided whether this was true because it had dismissed the case. At trial, Young had presented a handwritten statement about his experience and testified that McAndrew and White had used racial expletives that could have been found offensive by any reasonable African American.

The appeals court sent the case back to the trial court to determine the facts, specifically to decide whether McAndrew and White had used racial epithets and if so, whether this language constituted a violation of American’s hate-related behavior policy. This determination would allow the court to decide whether young had been a victim of racial discrimination. *Young V. American Airlines*, Missouri Court of Appeals, Eastern District, No. ED85898 (12/31/05)

Point to remember: Firing an employee of one race for a specific act, while retaining two men of a different race—who may have done the same thing—is a dangerous move. All incidents of this type require thorough investigations of both sides of the story. An antidiscrimination policy is a great idea, but it must be applied equally to everyone—that is, after all, the whole point behind such a policy.

What to Do About Personnel Problems, Business & Legal Reports Inc.
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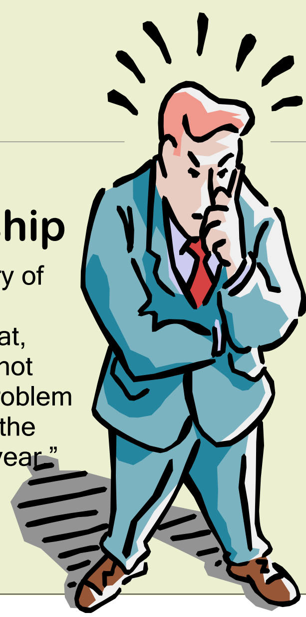
Problem Solving

Problem ownership



John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State during the Eisenhower administration, suggested that, “The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with, but whether it’s the same problem you had last year.” Thomas J. Watson, former head of IBM, said, “I never varied from the managerial rule that the worst possible thing we could do would be to lie dead in the water with any problem. Solve it, solve it quickly, solve it right or wrong. If you solved it wrong, it will come back and slap you in the face and then you can solve it right. Doing nothing is a comfortable alternative because it is without immediate risk, but it is an absolute fatal way to manage business.”

Determine that the thing shall be done, and then you shall find the way.

Abraham Lincoln

Workforce Management

PERforM's first rating period

The Division of Personnel is able to report that the first annual appraisal rating period using PERforM was a successful one. Overall, the system was effectively operated by the majority of users. That is not to say that along the way we did not encounter challenges.

A primary objective when developing the system was ease of use. We anticipated that the initial rating period using PERforM would be generally considered as a trial period and allow users to become familiar with navigating in the system.

Through various contacts from users and agency personnel, we received helpful feedback. Some suggestions, such as extending the length of a session before timing out, were implemented with little or no interruption to the system's availability. Other requested modifications could not be as easily applied and were recorded to be considered after the conclusion of the annual rating period.

In general, we hope that your experience using PERforM was a positive one. We acknowledge there are items that need to be addressed. The PERforM Development Team will continue to strive to make enhancements to the technical operation of the system that meet the agency needs while maintaining user friendly navigation.

We encourage you to continue referencing the website, www.perform.mo.gov, for PERforM information. We will make every attempt to post updates concerning the system on the site and/or by sending notifications to the PERforM News Group. As always, questions concerning PERforM can be sent to perform@oa.mo.gov.

Written By:
Marian Luebbert
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Team Work

Identify your button-pushers

You can always count on certain types of people to drive you crazy. Do you recognize your nemeses among this cast of characters?

Eager Beavers. These know-it-alls are always the first to chime in with opinions and suggestions. The problem is that their eager participation quashes others' contributions. *Strategy*: don't try to dampen their enthusiasm. Acknowledge their contributions, and then invite others to build on their ideas.

Challengers. Eager to establish their own authority, these types don't hesitate to argue with you or anyone else. Their aggression is often rotted in personal insecurity. *Strategy:* Acknowledge comments without seeming defensive. In fact, your best strategy may be to play to challengers' expertise. Invite and recognize their comments, and you'll soon have an ally instead of an enemy.

Ramblers. You ask a simple question and receive a long-winded and similar response. You listen in frustration as time drains away. *Strategy:* Don't let ramblers drone on. Cut in, summarize and ask for other opinions or reactions.

Side talkers. A couple of people just can't stop talking between themselves, and their behavior is distracting the group. *Strategy:* You could confront them directly, but that can lead to resentment. Instead, walk toward them, stand in front of or behind them and keep talking. They should take the hint.

Naysayers. These people find fault with everything. Their common call is "Yes, but…" Although they love to complain, they're not eager to proffer solutions, and you can't use their comments to gauge their true feelings. *Strategy:* Don't become enmeshed in their negative web. Ask them for alternatives. If they can't offer any positive suggestions, ask the rest of the group if anyone shares the concern. If not, stay focused and move on.

Quick Tip

Redirect complainers toward solutions by asking pointed questions such as: "What would you like to see happen here?" or "How can I help you handle this right now?" That lets complainers see that you won't allow the complaining to run on forever.

Adapted from "How to Handle Difficult Audiences" by Diane DiResta
Communication Briefings, Briefings Publishing Group
1101 King Street, Suite 110, Alexandria, VA 22134

Vision

Lay down your vision for team success

Vision is especially vital when you need a team to stay focused and motivated over the long term. Create a strong vision that will crash through the challenges by paying attention to these critical elements:

Define your results. Set visible guidelines. Your team needs to know its limits. Be clear on what the team must accomplish. Outcomes should be both quantifiable and qualitative: What will you produce and how will you measure it? What will the end product look and feel like? When do you need to be finished?

Map your resources. Time and money are just the beginning. Once you've established budgets and deadlines, determine what people you may need to call on so you can prepare them to assist you, and what type of equipment you'll need so you can get it all in place.

Establish accountability. Organize your efforts by explaining to team members who they're accountable to. Even without a formal team hierarchy, teammates may need to report to each other at times. Make sure they understand the reasons. In addition, clarify who in upper management the team as a whole will answer to.

Sell the impact. Spell out the consequences of success and failure. Your team will work harder if they know they're doing something important and that the rest of the organization is depending on them.

Adapted from "Career Success" By Linda M. Lopeke
Leading for Results: Management Resources
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