

# Solutions

Performance Strategies for Managers and Supervisors from the Division of Personnel

## Summer 2009

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## Quick Tip:

From the editors of *Solutions*

**Use action items to focus employee direction.** Generate a list of action items with your employees to help them understand what their most important contributions should be each week. Your employees will appreciate and realize how their work affects the overall goals of the organization; and you can assess how well they've done in accomplishing the items on their list. If your employee's targets are met – congratulate them!

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### FEATURE ARTICLE

## Influencers: Three Ways Effective Leaders Influence Change

By Joseph Grenny

Most leaders have given up on influence. They cope and carp rather than influence and lead.

For example, one VP of Sales knew precisely what his sales people needed to do in order to double their sales. But he'd concluded it was impossible to influence his global sales force to follow these proven practices, so he focused his attention on *selection*. He hoped just finding people who naturally behaved like top sales people would be the path to boosting sales. It wasn't.

An executive at an auto manufacturer lamented the unproductive conflict he'd seen in his 20-year career between engineering and manufacturing. When we asked him what could be done about it, he responded, "You've got to treat some of these things like low back pain—you take a pill and just live with it."

Over the past 20 years, we've sought out and studied a different kind of leader. We've tried to find those who had remarkable abilities to influence change—rapidly, profoundly and sustainably. We've studied up close the methods used by one remarkable influencer who—with no formal authority—has changed behavior in thousands of US hospitals. We've looked first hand at one influencer who has saved five million lives from AIDS—simply by influencing behavior change in a country of 60 million people.

Here are three things these influencers do that accounts, in part, for their remarkable and repeated success:

**Find Opinion Leaders.** Ralph Heath at Lockheed Martin had to get the F-22 Raptor from design to production in record time—or risk losing a multi-

billion dollar program. To do so, he had to influence the behavior of 5000 engineers and skilled craftspeople who had developed a slow-paced prototype-it-forever culture.

Heath knew he didn't have time to develop the rapport and relationship he'd need to lead change with all 5000 of his people. So he did what all effective influencers do—he focused on *influencing the influencers*. He spent disproportionate time with both the formal leaders and the *opinion leaders* in the organization. Opinion leaders are those who may not be bosses, but who are highly respected by the rank and file workers.

It turns out you don't have to have relationships with everyone to influence change. You just need to have relationships with those who do!

**Change the data stream.** Few leaders use one of the most potent and relentless sources of influence available: their influence over an organizations' data stream. The data stream is the universe of reports, emails, charts, metrics, signage and other sources of information that *set the mental agenda of an organization*. Most organizations are clogged with data flying everywhere—so there is no coherent message or mental agenda whatsoever. When leaders want to get attention and issue a new report, it competes for attention with everything else—and gives no influence.

Pat Ryan, a senior manager at Oklahoma Gas and Electric, discovered that one of the most important ways community members judged the responsiveness of their company was on the speed with which light poles were repaired after reports. The problem was that the company treated streetlight repairs as "backlog work"—something to be done when there's nothing else to do.

*continued on the next page.*

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confrontations  
And Influence Others  
AUGUST 20, 2009

## Influencers: Three Ways Effective Leaders Influence Change

Continued from page 1

**Connect to Values.** Many behaviors are tough to get people to take action on. For example, leaders in hospitals have tried for 50 years to increase compliance with hand washing requirements. In many hospitals employees wash as little as 30 percent of the time they should. The result is millions of infections spreading through hospitals yearly.

A middle manager at one East Coast hospital attempted to influence this intractable problem. One element of her influence strategy was to help people realize the vital, moral issue at play every time they made a decision to wash—or not.

People are willing to do even tough, boring, routine or painful things—if these things connect to their deepest values. And yet, leaders spend so little time helping people reflect on the moral implications of their behaviors. As a result, these leaders have little influence.

This manager began tracking the consequences of every unnecessary infection in her hospital. Each time an infection occurred, she gathered her team and *told them the story*. She—or a member of her team—described the additional pain, cost and injury that resulted because of this lapse. Over time, as people began to think more carefully about the values they were putting at risk, hand washing compliance soared.

The fundamental job of leaders is to influence the behavior of others. If leaders expand the number of ways they know how to influence change, they can move from carping and coping, to influencing and leading.

Joseph Grenny is the coauthor of the New York Times bestsellers *Influencer: The Power to Change Anything*, and *Crucial Conversations*. He is also a sought-after speaker, consultant and cofounder of VitalSmarts, an innovator in corporate training and organizational performance based in Provo, Utah.

**"It's a funny thing, the more I practice the luckier I get."**

**-Arnold Palmer**

## Verbal Communication

### Four steps to speaking like a leader

If you consistently get results, you're a high-impact leader. One sign of this ability is that your conversations follow a predictable progression that leads to results. Unfortunately, some conversations, in contrast, are marked by misunderstood facts and emotions, argument, personality conflicts and misaligned goals.

Most people aren't natural communicators – but we can all improve. Here are four steps that will help you structure more powerful conversations.

**Step 1: "What's up?"** To advance your agenda, it's important to advance everyone else's agenda. In their conversational exchanges, high-impact leaders make an emotional connection that enables others to open more readily and share their concerns.

**Step 2: "What's so?"** Typically, people move more quickly from facts to inferences and assertions. But by establishing an emotional connection, high-impact leaders make it possible for both sides to join in a sometimes

exuberant exchange that uncovers the real assumptions and facts. As a result, the conversation has a greater likelihood of spiraling up to the next level that leads to new designs and perspectives.

**Step 3: "What's possible?"** Take time to imagine even better alternatives. In the best conversations, the "leader" and the "follower" benefit from each other's ideas and create newer, deeper insights and possibilities.

**Step 4: "Let's go!"** This is the final, crucial point of the conversation – getting a mutual commitment to action – and confirming it. Without this confirmation, in the newfound burst of enthusiasm, conversational participants think everyone is in agreement when they sometimes aren't. There's also another reason to make sure all participants are clear about follow-up actions: This clarity adds to each person's ownership and commitment to act.

Adapted from Phil Harkins, *Power Conversations Leadership Strategies*  
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## Decisiveness

### Take charge of change to succeed as a leader

One of the crucial differences between management and leadership is that, while managers take care of day-to-day responsibilities, leaders bring about change. Change keeps your organization moving forward. Here's how to lead in the right direction:

**Know when to change.** Keep an eye on trends and developments in your industry, as well as your business unit's performance. Be alert to signals that change is necessary – for example when new technology can improve work processes, or your team's productivity takes a sudden drop.

**Set concrete goals.** Change is a step-by-step process. Make each step realistic and specific so everyone understands what you want and why.

#### Communicate change clearly.

You'll have to do this over and over again until it sinks in: Tell people exactly what you want them to do differently, and why it's important, in objective terms so they can't misunderstand your intentions. Communication will be one of your biggest and most important tasks.

#### Identify the consequences.

Motivate your people by letting them know what to expect – both if the change is successful and if it's not. Discuss what can be gained or lost so that everyone knows what's at stake.

Adapted from "For a more successful employee referral Program, think experience," by David Lee, on ERE.net  
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## Bringing ideas to life: seven principles for pulling together

By Rick Maurer

Some idea people really don't care how they're heard. They're movers and shakers who pride themselves on being able to create and implement ideas on their own. Others care more about interpersonal relationships than ideas. For them, what's truly important is being aware of and sensitive to the needs, notions and feelings of colleagues, not bringing great ideas to life.

But being *just* an idea person or *just* a relationship person limits your effectiveness in the workplace. The way to bring an idea to life is to focus on developing the idea and enhancing your relationships with coworkers simultaneously.

Go into the conference room with the *intention* of sharing your idea and involving others in shaping, strengthening, and implementing the concept in its final form. By engaging others in the innovation process, you'll emerge with superior results and stronger bonds between people.

**Intention** is one of the seven principles for pulling together. The others are:

**Recognize resistance.** People resist ideas—and those who generate them—for three reasons. Either they don't get the idea, they don't like the idea, or they don't like you. Identify the type of resistance you're facing and you can work through them, turning opposition into support.

For example, if someone doesn't get your idea, find a different way to explain it, and offer data, examples and anecdotes to make concepts clearer. If people exhibit the other types of resistance when you make a suggestion—"I don't like it," or "I don't like you"—their emotions are clearly involved. You'll need to listen carefully to what they have to say and engage in conversational give and take to get at the deeper issues underlying their resistance.

**Consider the context (time + place + relationships = the success or failure of your idea).** Interpersonal and other contextual 'land mines' are scattered throughout most work environments. If you don't survey the land and step carefully, you'll set them off and you and your idea will suffer.

'Land mines' to consider include:

1. Your relationship history with colleagues and coworkers
2. The way ideas have traditionally been presented and received in your organization
3. The impact your idea may have on others—for instance, it might threaten someone's job or status
4. How the idea might fly given the current economy
5. Your organization's current financial picture

**Avoid knee-jerk reactions.** When someone cuts you off in traffic, is your impulse to speed up and let him or her know you didn't appreciate it? If so, speeding up (and possibly tailing the person with your bright lights on) is your knee-jerk reaction to the 'trigger' of being cut off. Not only does your reaction not help the situation; it could cause an accident and turn what might have been a relatively minor irritation into a very big deal.

*The better response?* Take a few deep breaths and slow down to put some space between you and the inconsiderate driver in front of you. It's the smarter and safer way to react. Slowing down and breathing deeply is a smart response to triggers in the conference room too.

When someone resists your idea by saying, "I don't like it, it's stupid," you might be tempted to knee-jerk with defensiveness ("No, you're stupid."); sarcasm ("Why don't you grace us with one of your wonderfully creative ideas, then?"); force of reason, (you believe that if you explain the idea repeatedly, they'll see its wisdom and beauty and like it); or moving ahead as if the resistance—and the resister—don't exist.

The best way to avoid knee-jerking: Discover your triggers and practice stepping back, breathing, consciously relaxing your body and mind, and focusing your attention on positively reconnecting with the people resisting.

**Pay attention.** Attempt to detect every detail. You can't influence others if you don't pick up on the positive and negative signals they send by way of body language, verbal cues, tone of voice, and so forth. Listen to their concerns with a willingness to be changed and a willingness to see your idea develop beyond your original conception; observe the interactions between you and those you're working with; and note what kinds of actions—or inactions—follow the group's decision to proceed with your idea.

The power of paying attention will guide you in your efforts to bring the idea to implementation.

**Shut up and listen.** Dig deeply. Want to know what others need or want from you? Wish you knew if they understood your idea, or if they trust you? The only way to get answers to these questions is to put your goal aside temporarily and check in with the people you're working with. Then, shut up and listen to what they have to say, even when their answers make you uncomfortable.

**Connect without compromise.** Make room for others to join you in developing your idea—and be ready and willing to turn it into our idea. When others see that you're eager to hear their fears and concerns, to be influenced by what they have to say, and to blend your goals with theirs, their opposition will turn into support and everyone will win.

Rick Maurer is an advisor to organizations on ways to lead *Change without Migraines*. He is author of many books on change including *Why Don't You Want What I Want?* and *Beyond the Wall of Resistance*. You can access free articles and tools at <http://www.beyondresistance.com>.

"Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference."

-Winston Churchill

## Orienting for success: set early goals to guide new employees

The first 90 days on the job are critical to any new employee's long-term success with your organization. In those first three months, new employees will create habits and chart courses that eventually lead to career satisfaction and success – or to unhappiness, failure and a potential early departure.

As a leader, you wield critical power that can influence new hires. Do your best to help them succeed by focusing on more than meeting new teammates, learning procedures and filling out paperwork. Set aside time to clearly outline specific steps that will position them to succeed in their new role.

### Don't Wait

Mistakenly, many leaders think it is best to “ease” new hires into the job, letting them spend a few weeks observing their co-workers before getting their feet wet. In truth, the sooner you give the newest member of your team an achievable goal and turn them loose to meet it, the better off each of you will be. You can take this approach to two types of new hire personalities:

**Eager achievers who crave a challenge.** Give them a major but not critically important task – but don't just turn them loose. Guide them with step-by-step instructions, allow them to ask questions and then let them take over. Check in with them frequently, but give them latitude to deliver results.

**A Note of Caution:** Avoid sending signals that “the expected” is the only “safe” option. Because they are not mired in the organization's traditional approaches, new hires often bring new energy and ideas that can lead to long-term improvements. Let new hires know that you are open to new approaches and that you are willing to entertain new ideas. Also, you may need to curb some negativity from more tenured staff. Don't allow them to say, “That won't work” or “That's not how we do things around here.”

**Overwhelmed outsiders who need to take it slower.** When you hire people who are new to your agency or state

government in general, you may need to choose a more low-key approach to build their confidence and familiarize them with the organization's culture.

Consider choosing a simple, low-pressure task that can deliver a sense of accomplishment and slowly build both confidence and competence—but make sure the new hire understands the business reason behind assigned tasks. If not, they may mistake the assignment for busywork. Also, attach a deadline to each goal to increase the urgency and to give you a way to measure the new hire's success.

### Clarity is Key

Because they are eager to prove their worth—and want to avoid showing uncertainty or weakness of any kind—new hires need careful guidance as you turn them loose to tackle their first goals during their early days on the job. Follow these guidelines to set clear expectations:

**Cover all the bases.** Include information on how the employee should communicate with and report to you, how they should relate to their coworkers and with other departments, and how they should serve their customers.

**Form expectations with action words.** Strong goals start with strong verbs, such as create, carry out, treat, remain, allow, respond, use, work, grow, support, perform, report, arrive, deliver, suggest, learn, fulfill, ensure and fix.

**Leave no room for misunderstanding.** Offer examples of what you want. For example, saying “Contact delinquent taxpayers...” doesn't mean much until you attach a reason: “...to update information and schedule a payment plan.”

As your new employees begin working on their goals, they need specific and timely feedback from you. Your comments will let them know if they are on the right track—and guide them back if they have strayed from the path. Here are three things that new workers

might need from you as they tackle their first assignments:

**Appreciation.** Share your thanks when the employee accomplishes a goal, or when you are grateful for the elbow grease they have invested in the task you set before them.

**Advice.** Suggest how the employee might change, improve or repeat a specific behavior.

**Evaluation.** Formally or informally, don't hesitate to rate how well the new employee is performing according to agreed upon standards. Timing is critical. You want to give the employee time and space to define the assignment on their own terms and to design their own approach. But at the same time, you can't wait to offer correction until it's too late to change course and achieve positive results.

### Is 'perfect' the only acceptable option?

Keep in mind, every new hire will experience a learning curve. You can't expect perfection from Day One. Setting goals with and for new employees is crucial to their development. And sometimes failure is the quickest path to improvement. Letting new hires fail—but not too badly—at noncritical tasks provides you with perfect opportunities to offer gentle corrections that can help the new hire build lasting success within your organization.

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## Solutions

“The problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.”

Albert Einstein

Published quarterly by:

Director  
Chester L. White

State of Missouri  
Office of Administration  
Division of Personnel  
Training and Development

Employee Services  
Doug Smentkowski,  
Manager

Editors and Layout  
Allan Forbis  
Kelly Levy

Pay, Leave and  
Reporting  
Guy Krause, Manager

## Mediating

# 4 conflict triggers and how to avoid pulling them

What sets off conflict between employees – or even conflict between an employee and his or her manager?

On the surface, it would seem that a lot of things can do the trick. But, if you dig deeper, you'll uncover four basic human psychological needs that, when violated, create conflict.

If you know what's behind the conflict, it will be easier for you to manage it, and ideally, put out the fire. Here are four needs that serve as conflict triggers.

- 1. The need to be valued as an individual.** This need is sometimes violated when employees feel they are being treated impersonally with a "cookie-cutter" approach. Also, employees who pay no attention to colleagues' personal interests are much more likely to get into conflict with them.
- 2. The need to be in control.** This trigger may be pulled when external events tug at the employee harder than he or she can bear. One employee horning in on another's responsibilities can easily trigger conflict.
- 3. The need for self-esteem.** Clearly, we all need to feel good about ourselves. Co-workers or supervisors can pull this trigger by being overly critical or sarcastic.
- 4. The need for consistency.** Employees who "blow hot and cold" will often get into tiffs with co-workers, who feel they never know where they stand with the person. Similarly, a manager who seems to give conflicting directives can unknowingly cause conflict within his or her work team.

## Workforce Management

# Get results in 90 days when employee improvement is needed

You can't always improve an employee's performance overnight. It often takes a long-term approach. Try this 90-day improvement strategy:

**Get agreement from the employee.** Discuss the situation with the employee. Don't threaten or try to force the person to cooperate. Just explain what you see happening, and ask the person if he or she wants to do a better job. Most employees will willingly agree.

**Ask the employee for suggestions.** You'll get more cooperation and buy-in if you let the employee participate in shaping the plan. You're still in charge; you can veto any suggestions if they don't address the organization's needs, but listen with an open mind. You may hear some good ideas.

**Document the steps.** Agree on action steps: What does the employee need to learn and do? What concrete results do you expect to see over time? Set deadlines, and decide how you'll measure progress.

**Implement the plan.** Once you get started, meet every week or every other week to evaluate progress. Make adjustments as necessary. If the employee is making a good-faith effort to improve, be ready to allow more time or offer more training. Stay on top of the process until the 90 days are up.

**Reward improvement.** When the employee reaches the goal, offer praise and recognition.

Adapted from "A leadership screw driver: The 90 day Improvement plan," by Brent Filson, on the Management Help & Information Web site  
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## Strategic Thinking

# Why the best leaders act first, ask later

Aspiring leaders often assume that their role models are successful because they make careful decisions. The truth is a little more complex.

While it is true that executives who act impulsively without considering available intelligence risk making huge mistakes, it is also true that highly effective leaders believe quick action is the key to success. Here's why:

**There is no answer book.** Today's leaders face an extremely fluid marketplace. Instead of poring over old data in an effort to thoroughly understand a new challenge, leaders are better served by taking small steps to "test" their gut feelings, then refining their direction as results begin to come in.

**Timing is everything.** In this fast changing world, implementing the second-best idea now is a better strategy than doing the best idea a week from now.

**Winning is a numbers game.** Successful salespeople believe every "No" they get brings them one step closer to hearing "Yes." That's usually true for the rest of us too.

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"Many of us are taught to do our best and then let the world decide how to judge us. I think it's better to do your best and decide how you want to be judged. And act that way."

**-Seth Godin, Writer**

## Managing your own marketing campaign: Strategies to ensure a successful interview

TV commercials, radio advertisements, magazines, billboards, or even a logo embroidered on a shirt are all examples of marketing. Every day, marketing agencies are hired to promote a company's product so heavily that it leaves a mental imprint in the minds of potential customers. Effective marketing is accomplished when a simple tune, phrase, or other audio/visual element reminds you of a product you can't live without.

Advertising agencies work tirelessly to achieve these results. – so why not apply the same principals to marketing who you are and what you are capable of doing? With the workforce population rising and the number of available jobs decreasing, competition for employment has become a battle in itself. Consequently, there has never been a greater need or better time to market yourself than now.

The first step to establishing your own personal marketing campaign is to create a winning resume. Just as advertisers are limited to the time or space they have to sell a product, you are limited to space on a page – but, this isn't necessarily a bad thing. You want to give a prospective employer enough information about yourself to spark their interest and leave them wanting more.

Studies show that employers make a judgment about someone's resume in about 5 seconds. In comparison, the average commercial lasts 3 times that long, if not more! So you need to highlight your skills and strengths using key words that stand out to the employer. It's also a good idea to bold job titles to draw attention to them.

Use bullet points and short descriptive phrases on your resume instead of paragraphs. Highlight experience that is beneficial to the specific position you are applying for and omit experience that is not. The bottom line to remember is that creating a resume is not about your previous jobs, but about YOU! This is your chance to sell YOURSELF, not your previous positions.

The next step of devising your own marketing campaign is perfecting the interview. Your resume has already given the employer a preview of what you can bring to the table, but the deal isn't sealed yet. Do some research on the organization to learn about their mission and what type of work they do to get a better understanding of what you will be expected to do.

To prepare, think of possible questions you may be asked so you can answer them intelligently during the interview. A lot of employers ask situational and problem solving questions to determine how you will handle a specific situation or work under pressure. It is okay to relate their question to a situation you faced in your previous experience to explain how the issue was resolved. But remember – avoid "story telling" or making negative comments about your previous employer or co-workers. Instead, focus on the positives that involve YOU.

**With the workforce population rising and the number of available jobs decreasing, competition for employment has become a battle in itself.**

Always have extra copies of your resume with you and be ready to distribute them should the need arise.

Your appearance and mannerisms are very important too. You should dress slightly above the organization's dress code requirement. Good hygiene is also a must! From the moment you enter the organization's parking lot to the moment you leave, you should conduct yourself in a positive, polite, and professional demeanor.

And finally, RELAX. Interviews may not only be uncomfortable for you, but for those interviewing you too.

Now that you know how to sell yourself, you are ready to start the job search process. The Internet is filled with websites that list vacancies nationwide such as monster.com and careerbuilder.com. The Missouri Career Center run by the Department of Economic Development also has a website that lists vacancies in Missouri. Using their site, you can search for jobs by location, salary, and other variables. You can find the site at [www.missouricareersource.com](http://www.missouricareersource.com).

The Division of Personnel also has a website that lists all Merit and some non-merit classifications and vacancies. The website includes salary ranges, minimum qualifications, and availability, and also includes contact information in case questions arise about application procedures, eligibility, assigned scores, register status, etc. This information can be found at <http://www.oacentral.ia.mo.gov/dopweb/joa.aspx>.

Just as marketing firms have a lot riding on the success of their campaign, you too have a lot riding on trying to land that dream job. Implementing these strategies will prove beneficial when selling yourself to prospective employers.

By Lindsey Schnur, Division of Personnel