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## **Supervising Difficult People**

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INTRODUCTION .....	4
OVERVIEW.....	5
BEHAVIORAL CAUSE AND EFFECT .....	7
IDENTIFY THE BEHAVIORS.....	7
HIDDEN REASONS BEHIND THEIR BEHAVIOR.....	10
ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE .....	15
UNDERSTANDING PERFORMANCE & PRODUCTIVITY.....	15
THE VALUE OF SETTING MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE GOALS .....	15
<i>The Elements of Effective PERFORMANCE Goals.....</i>	17
PRACTICE EXERCISE .....	17
<i>The Difference between Busy and Productive.....</i>	18
<i>Meeting “Fuzzy” PERFORMANCE Expectations.....</i>	20
A SOURCE OF WORKPLACE STRESS.....	21
THE CRITICAL TRIO FOR EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE GOALS .....	22
<i>let’s define and Measure Performance .....</i>	22
<i>Defining “Hard” PERFORMANCE Measurables.....</i>	23
Section Review .....	26
<i>Defining and measuring “Soft” PERFORMANCE Measurables .....</i>	27
<i>Employees Rating Each Other: Good or Bad Idea? .....</i>	30
A PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SAMPLE .....	32
IT’S SHOWTIME.....	35
<i>PERFORMANCE Feedback Loops .....</i>	35
<i>PERFORMANCE Problem Flowchart.....</i>	36
MOTIVATION: WHAT GETS PEOPLE GOING .....	38
THE SOURCE OF MOTIVATION .....	42
THE BIG MOTIVATIONAL PICTURE .....	43
THE COMPONENTS OF MOTIVATION.....	47
WHAT WOULD MOTIVATE YOUR EMPLOYEES? .....	49
COUNSELING OR COACHING: WHEN AND HOW? .....	50
COUNSELING BASICS.....	50
COACHING BASICS .....	54
<i>Getting Employees To Start Doing Right things.....</i>	55
<i>Getting Employees to Continue Doing the Right Things .....</i>	56
<i>Coaching 3 Levels of Employee Performance.....</i>	59
<i>A Quick Review of Performance .....</i>	60
SUPERVISORY LEGAL CONCEPTS.....	61
DOCUMENTATION FUNDAMENTALS .....	63
THE DIFFICULT BEHAVIOR TYPES .....	65
THE BULLY.....	65
<i>Verbal Bullies .....</i>	65
<i>Not Just “Harmless Fun”.....</i>	66
Understanding Harassment .....	66
Harassment as Intimidation.....	67
Sexual Harassment.....	67
Retaliation.....	68
<i>Keeping Secrets and Your Obligation to Act.....</i>	68
<i>Examples of Harassment Court Decisions .....</i>	70
THE COMPLAINER.....	71
<i>The Chronic Pessimist .....</i>	71
<i>Feel Paralyzed .....</i>	72

THE SNIPER .....	73
THE CRUDE JOKESTER .....	73
THE GOSSIP .....	74
THE KNOW-IT-ALL .....	74
THE INDECISIVE .....	75
THE EMOTIONALLY FRAGILE .....	75
THE UNRELIABLE .....	76
THE SLACKER .....	76
THE “BROWN NOSER” .....	77
THE PHONY .....	78
CAN’T SAY “NO” .....	78
THE VOLCANO .....	79
<i>STAGE ONE – Irritating daily Events</i> .....	79
Ways to Handle Stage One Conflict .....	79
<i>STAGE TWO – Requires Winners &amp; Losers</i> .....	80
Ways to Handle Stage Two Conflict .....	81
<i>STAGE THREE – Eliminating the Enemy</i> .....	82
Ways to Handle Stage Three Conflict .....	82
<b>CONFLICT ASSESSMENT CHECKLISTS</b> .....	83
<b>PERSONAL CAUSES FOR EMPLOYEE CONFLICT</b> .....	84
Differences In Values .....	84
Assumptions .....	84
Competing For Scarce Resources .....	84
The Inability To Handle Change .....	84
<b>THE BASIC STEPS TO MINIMIZE CONFLICT</b> .....	86
<b>STRATEGIES TO HANDLE FOUR DIFFERENT CONFLICT STYLES</b> .....	87
The “COMPETITOR “STYLE .....	87
The “ACCOMODATOR “STYLE .....	87
The “AVOIDER “STYLE .....	88
The “COLLABORATOR “STYLE .....	88

## INTRODUCTION

There have been many times toward the end of my long career of managing employees in public and private venues when I have said to myself, *“I wish I knew then what I know now about dealing with people.”*

People say that experience is the best teacher. Well, I would like to add embarrassment, regret, and frustration are good teachers, too. I wish there had been someone I could have used as a sounding board to talk about the problems I was having with some difficult employees. Maybe gotten some suggestions about more things to consider than just my narrow, inexperienced perception of the situation.

This course is an attempt to provide that sounding board to you so you do not have to repeat the mistakes I made. Make some new ones and we can advance the art of supervision and management a little bit. Otherwise, if each generation just repeats the mistakes of the previous one, we simply spin our collective wheels and do not move forward.

Once you get into this course, you may think we are taking a long time to get to the meat of *Supervising Difficult People* and you would be right. The reason we do not jump right into dealing with these issues is that some *background knowledge is necessary to help you understand what may be causing the problems.*

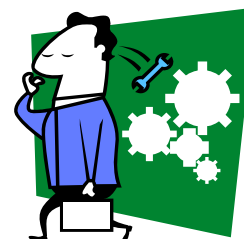
Once you have an understanding of the background information, you can use that knowledge in solving the problems we address here plus any new ones that you encounter on the job. Ideally, you will be able to transfer the situational understanding that you gain from this material to many situations at work.

Please share any ideas you gain from this course with your friends and share with me suggestions for improving the course or adding to it.

Something else I have learned over many years of doing this is that **NONE OF US IS AS SMART AS ALL OF US!**

## OVERVIEW

A fact of work life for everyone in a supervisory role (this also includes the terms “management” and “leadership”) is that at some point, you will have to deal with difficult people. Unfortunately, their behavior is rarely difficult enough that you have reason to terminate them on the spot and be finished with the problem. No, they seem to do just enough to become a constant irritation for you but never enough at once to get rid of them.



Your success as a supervisor depends on your ability to deal with them effectively enough that they do not consume a disproportionate part of your time and impede the productivity of your team while getting them to stop the negative behavior. In short, *you cannot allow a minority of employees acting badly to consume the majority of your attention.*

The good news is that you probably have a few good ones that require minimal ongoing care and maintenance to maintain your group’s productivity. A supervisor should not inadvertently reward the difficult behavior of a few with most of your attention.

Otherwise, some of your better performers may feel the need to act out to get your attention, too, just as children do in elementary school. (Just because you have employees you consider to be “adult” because of their age does not mean they are also adults behaviorally or emotionally!)

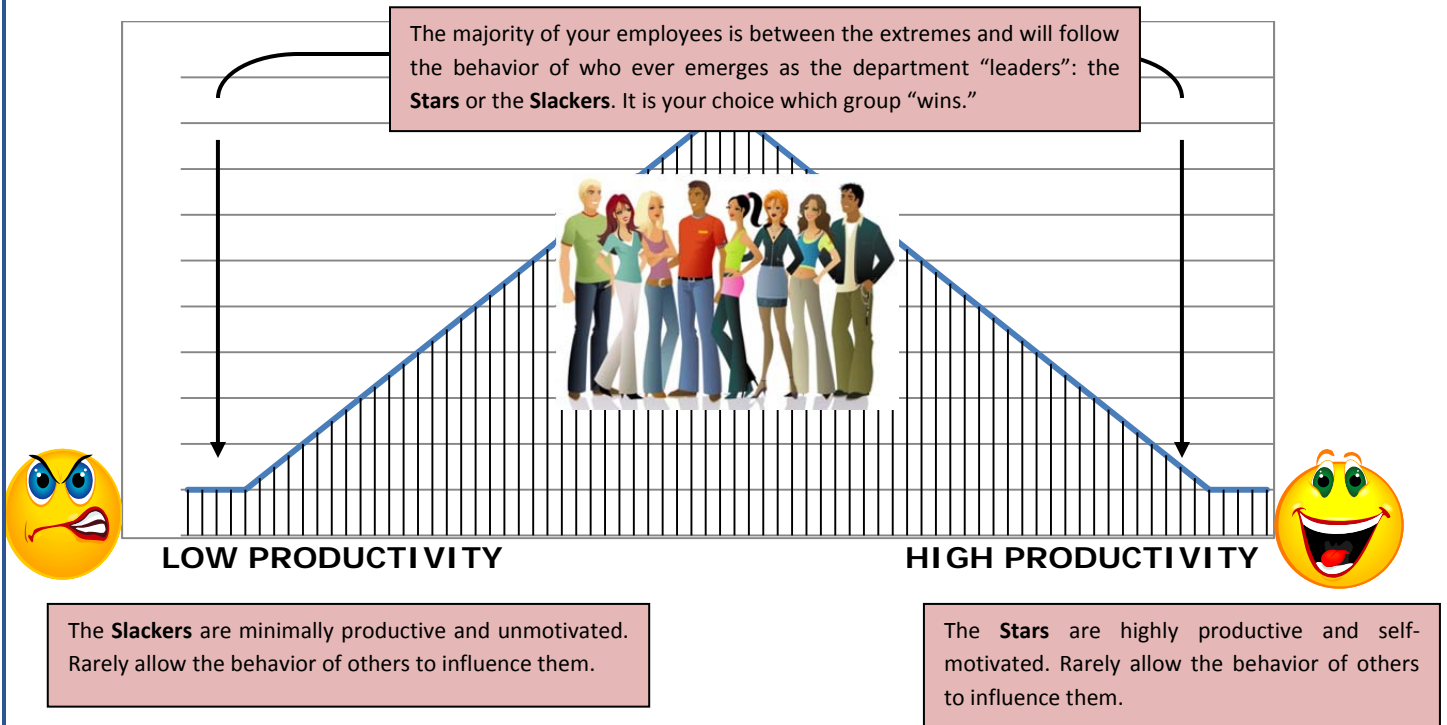
No single person, book, or self-development source can supply the key to dealing with every variation of “difficult people” - there are just too many, it would be too big, and few people would read it. Fortunately, a variation of the Pareto Effect (“20% of something accounts for 80% of the events<sup>1</sup>”) can be applied here: *most of the difficult people you will encounter can be dealt with by understanding a few simple principles.*

We will present those few simple principles in this course. These are the difficult behavior types we will cover together:

<u><a href="#">The Bully</a></u>	<u><a href="#">The Complainer</a></u>	<u><a href="#">The Sniper</a></u>	<u><a href="#">The Crude Jokester</a></u>
<u><a href="#">The Gossip</a></u>	<u><a href="#">The Know-It-All</a></u>	<u><a href="#">The Indecisive</a></u>	<u><a href="#">The Emotionally Fragile</a></u>
<u><a href="#">The Unreliable</a></u>	<u><a href="#">The Slacker</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Brown Nosers</a></u>	<u><a href="#">The Phony</a></u>
<u><a href="#">The Minimalist (Least I Can Do To Get By)</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Can’t Say “No”</a></u>	<u><a href="#">The Volcano</a></u>	

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareto\\_principle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareto_principle)

Think of the behavior potential of your team as this graph. The Stars in your department are at the high end of productivity to the right and the Slackers are at the other side doing just enough to stay employed. Most of your employees are in the middle watching to see if you emerge as the leader who deals effectively and decisively with the Slackers or if they lead you.



OK, that is almost enough preliminary conversation – just one last thing...  
Before moving to change their behavior, ask yourself this:

**“DOES THEIR BEHAVIOR IMPACT PRODUCTIVITY IN OUR DEPARTMENT OR DOES IT JUST IRRITATE ME?”**

If it truly impacts productivity, then act on it because employees are paid to be productive. But if it just irritates you without harming productivity, anything you do may result in more aggravation and drama than it is worth.

**Be sure to pick your battles and keep productivity high.**

## BEHAVIORAL CAUSE AND EFFECT

Before you consider some behavior that you are seeing as “difficult” and begin to develop strategies to deal with it, we suggest you take a few minutes to “go upstream” mentally. Try asking yourself, “*What are the specific behaviors (not attitudes) that bother me*” and “*What may be causing them to act like that?*”

If you can identify the specific behavior and its probable cause, you have a better chance of dealing with it successfully than if you simply handle everything the same way. There is an old saying that applies here: “*if your only tool is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail!*” This course will give you many tools with which to deal with the problems you will see.

### IDENTIFY THE BEHAVIORS

It is essential that you clearly identify their **behaviors** - not their **attitudes** – before acting. For example, you may want someone to stop being rude to fellow employees. If you simply say, “stop being rude”, you’ll probably get denial (“I wasn’t rude to him”) or get into a argument about semantics (“I was being assertive, not rude”) and you won’t be anywhere near a solution to your problem.

But, if you will focus on their **observable behaviors that a reasonable person would consider to be rude**, you have a much better chance of identifying the problem in such a way that they know exactly what you’re talking about and would make it hard for them to argue with you.

“**Stop interrupting him when he’s trying to make a point.**” (A reasonable person witnessing their behavior would agree that he interrupted.)

“**Stop rustling your papers (clicking your pen, drumming your fingers) when he’s speaking.**” (A reasonable person witnessing their behavior would agree that he was rustling papers, clicking their pen, or drumming their fingers.)

Suppose you were on a jury hearing a case about a former employee claiming “Unlawful Discharge” by his employer. You read the note below from a disciplinary report the defendant (the manager of the employee who is suing the employer) wrote about the plaintiff (the employee suing the employer for unlawful discharge).

*“John still has a bad attitude about work. He takes no pride in his work nor shows any professionalism in the way he deals with customers or co-workers. When I try to correct him, he gets all worked up and talks disrespectfully about the department and the company.”*

Take a moment to clarify to yourself what specific behaviors you want them to stop doing before saying anything to them. This increases your confidence level and helps you sound more assertive when you talk to them.



What questions would you have? (Maybe ‘what did he DO to make you think he has a “bad attitude?”’)

What would it make you think about the manager? (He does not sound very competent if he cannot describe the behaviors.)

**Two things are important here:**

1. *You must be able to separate the person from their behavior* so you do not appear to be a vindictive or incompetent manager or supervisor.

*“You failed to complete the assignment”* focuses on legitimate work-related behavior while not attacking the person.

*“You’re lazy! You didn’t finish the assignment!”* attacks the person and makes you sound like a bully while diminishing the work-related aspect of the issue.

Which of these descriptions would be easier for you to prove about an employee’s failure to perform as expected? Why?

This description: *Documentation of his day’s production results compared to his job description of what the company pays him to do*

[“Joe’s job description as a machine operator (attached) specifies the department standard requiring a minimum average of 30 pieces per hour. His production this week has averaged 23 per hour.”]

Or this description: *Joe has a bad attitude about work.*

The answer is the first one because it deals with objective facts. The company pays Joe for productivity and not for having a “good attitude.” (Think about this...you have probably seen an employer keep a highly productive employee that could not get along with people. The reason is that, unless they *are paid to get along with people such as waiting tables, hospitality services, or customer services*, then productivity is the priority and you must address that in a complaint unless their attitude impacts someone else’s productivity. We will talk about that later in this course)

2. You must be able to express the **OBJECTIVE BEHAVIORS** that concern you: **NOT YOUR SUBJECTIVE OPINION.**

(Think of “objective behaviors” as something everyone would agree on regardless of any personal beliefs. *He threw the pencil sharpener* is an **objective behavior** for which all observers would agree because they saw him do it. *He was rude* is a **subjective behavior** because all observers may not share your opinion of what constitutes rudeness.)

For example, telling someone to “*show a more professional attitude*” does not mean much because it does not clarify what you expect him or her to DO (a behavior) differently.



However, you should say (behaviors are emphasized):

- **“Dress** according to our organization’s policy for meeting clients (a behavior)
- **Speak** more slowly (a behavior)
- **Smile** and repeat their name in conversation (a behavior)
- **Anticipate** their questions about our product (a behavior)
- **Listen** intently and ask questions when you do not understand (a behavior)

“Observing” means you are looking for patterns of behavior. Do some situations (something new, deadlines, unexpected change...) always trigger the same reaction in them? Do they react differently to different people? Is it always the same day of the week? Think about patterns here.

And doing those things will make you seem more PROFESSIONAL.”



Which would have more effect on a nine-year-old child?

If you said, “**settle down!**” over and over or said, “**Stop running through the room! Stop jumping around! Stop slamming the front door!”**

Why do you think so?

(Probably the second one because you are identifying specific behavior. He does not have to guess about what ‘settle down’ means.)

## HIDDEN REASONS BEHIND THEIR BEHAVIOR

The longer you work with them and observe – not just see - their behavior, the more proficient you will become at identifying probable reasons for their behavior.

Think about ***what may be in it for them*** by acting difficultly in the department. These may be some of the most common reasons and suggestions on how to deal with them.

**Are they trying to get attention by being the loudest or most outrageous?** (Remember, chronological and emotional maturity ages do not always match.)

If it happens in front of a meeting, you have two situations facing you: first, the immediate behavior of the bad actor and also the impression your reaction has with the rest of the group.

You will have to address the bad behavior ASAP. If you try to ignore it, you may send the message that you are unwilling to deal with the situation. This makes you look weak, emboldens the bad actor, and entertains the audience.

Speak directly to them and ask them to stop the behavior. Do not, however, say, “Please stop being rude” because that may be too personal to them and force them to take it up a notch to save face. (Or start arguing they were not being rude.) *“John, please let people complete their statements before you jump in”* is a way to identify the specific behavior.

If they want to continue acting out, call a temporary break to the event (a meeting, for example) and ask to speak privately with the bad actor. You will want to separate him from his supporting audience and find out what the problem is. If he says there is no problem, then ask him to either stop the behavior or do not come back to the meeting.

If he does not come back, follow your organization’s procedures for documenting undesirable behavior and make sure he knows it will resurface in his next performance review. Failure to attach some penalty to the behavior becomes a reward for him if he realizes acting up gets him out of a meeting he did not want to attend in the first place.

If their behavior is not during a meeting, for example, but just in front of the department (they shout to their friends across the room), talk to them privately about the behavior and how you expect them to act differently. Do not scold them publically because, once again, they will have to ‘save face’ in front of their peers and the situation may escalate unnecessarily.

**Do they feel threatened by the new person in the department?** We do not mean physically, of course, but their sense of ‘status’. If they used to be (at least in their mind) the “favorite”, “the expert”, “the best dressed”, or any other superlative, maybe the new person has characteristics shared by the person acting out and feel they feel threatened somehow. (This is typical in families when the previous only child may have some resentment when the new baby comes home and they have to share the parents’ attention.)

Use their sense of status to your advantage by getting them to use their special knowledge or abilities acting as a mentor for the new person while assuring them the new person is not there to replace them.

Another technique that may work is to remind them that they cannot advance unless they have helped to develop someone to take over their current duties. (Warning: this only works if there actually is a chance the veteran can move into something better. Make sure you do not create long-term problems from false expectations just to get past a short-term problem.)

Carefully define the job expectations of the new person and the “mentor” so each knows what you expect from them and they do not trample on each other’s duties.

Formal recognition as a mentor affirms the special status of the senior (*not necessarily older - just more experienced in this job*) one while also stating publically the new one has a lot to learn. This is a good time for you, their supervisor, to consider shifting some of your duties to the mentor.

If you can, this makes the Mentor’s job a little different from what the new person is doing which also reduces the “status threat” because they are not doing the identical duties. (The existing employee may think; “I can only be threatened by you if we are doing the same things and I feel you are doing them better or may do them better.”)

Maybe they fear or resent the change because it would change their status. Maybe they were the departmental expert in the past but the new changes have given everybody a fresh start and no one is really an expert on the new material. (This is especially true with the introduction of technology and older employees.)

What has your experience taught you could be another reason for their difficult behavior?

Something that worked well for me may be useful for you here.

At the time, I was a department manager in a bank’s operations division. We were changing from a labor-intensive process to more automation using new technology that came easily to young employees but intimidated the older ones.

The older ones had a level of status because many years of work experience had enabled them to manually process the documents very quickly (relative to a non-tech environment) compared to the younger ones who did not have the years of experience.

As the new equipment came in and the younger ones began producing documents faster than the most skilled manual-producer could ever do, I saw fear and resistance beginning to build among the veterans. The days of their high production status were coming to a close quickly and the technology and younger employees would soon turn their whole production world upside down.

In a flash of insight (or dumb luck), I realized that we could not move forward with the new technology and culture while our more senior clerks were clinging tightly to the past. Also, without some kind of recognition of what they had accomplished (i.e., acknowledging, “they were somebody”), their resistance to change could poison the department.

So, what better solution was there than a party?

We had a “New Year’s Party” in July - only this was not a calendar new year but a *technological* new year. My assistant and I dreamed up some superlative awards – and unique - that we could give to every veteran to make sure each was uniquely recognized.



“Most Loan Documents processed while working shorthanded”, “Best mechanic on the sorter machine” (that was being replaced), etc. We gave them a gaudy sash to wear with their title on it (“Best Sorter Mechanic”) and a crown made with construction paper and lots of glitter.

Since we were trashing the old equipment anyway (we had long since amortized them), we offered three swings with a hammer for \$1.00. The money went to a charity they selected, we took a lot of pictures of people whacking away at the equipment amid a lot of laughter.

After all of that fun and whacking at equipment, I summarized what it was all about by saying an era was closing while acknowledging the high producers that helped us get through it. *We were closing one chapter of our history together and moving together into the next one.* The older staff had helped the younger ones learn the old way and become productive. And now it was time for the younger ones to return the favor by helping the veterans with the new technology. We posted the pictures on the walls, award winners hung their sashes by their desks, and we moved into our brave new world...TOGETHER.

We were able to do so easily because we took some time to acknowledge the value and contributions of the older ones and drew a formal close to the previous era. Since we formally acknowledged the "old days" were over, the production expectations of the veterans from that era were over, too. The older ones were satisfied that we properly appreciated them and then were able to accept the help of the younger ones.

Please remember that everyone AT ANY AGE needs to feel valued. As long as they think you are looking out for them, they will look out for you.

**Maybe they get some benefit from complaining or acting out.** If they complain about having too much work to do, here are some suggestions that may work.

**Ask yourself why you think they can do what you expect.** (Have they performed at the expected level before or have other employees met these expectations who had the *same talent and experience* as the complainer? If they do not have the same talent and experience, your comparing them to the previous employees may not be reasonable.)

If you are certain they do have the talent and experience to work at that level, ask them to explain why they are complaining. (There may be some legitimate reason that needs your

attention. If there is a reason, then deal with it so they can get back to work. If there is no reason, remind them that you expect them to meet your performance expectations. (We talk more about this later on page **Error! Reference source not found.**36.)

Maybe they are primarily good employees who complain because of something you have done unintentionally. For example, what do you usually do if they finish early and **others have not finished yet?** (If their “reward” for finishing early is you give them the work the slower people have not finished, you will soon have no one finishing early. Your reward is actually a punishment for your better employees.)

You must praise the ones who finish early, let them know you documented their file that they finished ahead of the others, and ask if they will help the slower ones. Then document the files of the slackers – *and make sure the hard workers know what you are doing* - indicating they needed help on this date to complete their assignment. This way they do not feel that the slackers are getting away with anything.

The other side of this is you are inadvertently rewarding poor performance. What do you usually do if they have not finished yet but others have? If you spread their unfinished work among others who have finished, you are rewarding them for working slowly.

(If they are behind, let them know you documented their file that they were behind and you asked a faster worker to help pick up their slack. This way, they realize they are not getting away with anything.)

Maybe they do not really understand what you want them to do but do not know how (or do not feel comfortable) asking for clarification.

**Understanding Performance** – Identifying performance expectations in a way that others can clearly understand them is not as easy as it sounds. I will use a passage from the children’s book, Alice in Wonderland, to explain:

One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. **“Which road do I take?”** she asked.

**“Where do you want to go?”** was his response.

**“I don’t know,”** Alice answered.

**“Then,”** said the cat, **“it doesn’t matter. When you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there.”** (Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass or the Adventures of Alice in Wonderland*)



The Cheshire cat's response is a model for much of the difficulty with defining performance in the workplace today as employees hear hard-to-define phrases like these:

*"Make it look very professional"* (How do you define 'professional'?)

*"I know you will do a great job!"* (Do we share the same understanding of what a 'great job' looks like?)

*"Go that extra mile!"* (Exactly how far is that?)

*"Make it a world-class effort!"* (I live in a small town. I've never seen 'world class' anything!)

*"Make sure they get their money's worth."* (How much more than they paid for it should I give them?)

*"I will need that report in a timely manner."* (When? In an hour? Twenty minutes? WHEN?)

The connection of these examples with Alice is that **if I am not sure what you are expecting, it becomes impossible for me to give it to you.**

**WHAT VAGUE DIRECTIONS DO YOU HEAR DAILY FROM YOUR BOSS?**

**HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU HAVE MET HIS/HER EXPECTATIONS?**

Conversely, lack of specificity devalues praise, too. If I said to you, *"Great job on that report! Keep it up,"* I would have given you a positive comment (which is always nice to hear) but if you wanted to know what I liked about it so you could be sure to repeat it in the next report you did for me, there is nothing to help you.

This would be more helpful. *"Nice job on the report. You got it in early, summarized the key points clearly, and that graph you included explained the trends clearly!"*

## ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

As I mentioned in the Introduction, there are a few background behavioral knowledge topics that will provide a solid foundation for dealing with difficult people. You will be able to deal more effectively with the various forms of difficult behavior if you understand them.

### UNDERSTANDING PERFORMANCE & PRODUCTIVITY

Nearly every article written about performance always includes the concept of SMART goals (From Paul J. Meyer's "*Attitude Is Everything*") According to this, goals should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**angible.

While that certainly encompasses the overall concept of performance and gives people another acronym to use even when they are not sure what it all means, it leaves out a critical component: *how do we measure subjective items or activities such as:*

- ✓ Team work
- ✓ Communications skills
- ✓ Customer service
- ✓ The best cake in a baking contest
- ✓ The best picture in a photography contest

In this course, we will not mention performance without associating it with productivity because productivity is why employers pay people for work. They do not pay for just doing things ("performance") but for doing things *with a destination in mind* – productivity.

This goes back to the Cheshire cat's comment to Alice on page 13: *when you do not know where you are going (predefined productive outcomes), any road will take you there.*

### THE VALUE OF SETTING MEASURABLE PERFORMANCE GOALS

There are at least four reasons why you should set *measurable* goals:

- ✓ **Knowing where you are going will help you plan to get there.**

How do you plan your vacations?

Start planning with the ultimate destination and work backward budgeting time and money necessary to make it happen (Time and money are measurables)

Just leave the house on the first day of vacation and see where you end up?

- ✓ **Measurable goals (milestones) along the way to your ultimate destination help you track your progress.**



Just as mileage signs along the interstate help you track your progress toward your goal, creating personal milestones help you track your progress.

✓ Planning helps you prevent problems

If you plan your vacation well enough, you will have enough money and time to get to where you want to go, spend time there enjoying your vacation, and afford to come back home afterward. (Or would you prefer to stay until your time and money runs out and see what happens next?)

✓ Measurable goals help you enjoy your life at work more

Having measurable goals helps you focus your efforts on their accomplishment and not have to *guess* whether you are doing what *you hope* will make your boss happy. When you know exactly what is expected, your stress level drops because you are confident you are doing the right things and you are not wasting your time.



**How does this lack of clarification affect you and your work?**

*It probably undermines your confidence and keeps you from going “all out” because you may have to undo some work.*

## THE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE GOALS

An effective goal requires at least these elements:

- ❖ **Realistic** (*in the mind of the person doing the work*) – The person must feel they have some chance of success or they will not bother trying.
- ❖ **Quantifiable** – It must tell the person **HOW MUCH** (Quantity), **HOW WELL** (Quality), and **BY WHEN** (Time). This knowledge helps them gauge their own progress toward the ultimate goal.
- ❖ **Job Related** – He/she must understand how his/her personal goals support the goals of the department, which support the goals of the division.
- ❖ **Doable** – They must involve his/her *doing something* that you and they can observe and measure. A goal that calls for “Understanding how work flows through the Items Processing Department in a bank” is useless.

It only becomes useful if he/she must **do something** that demonstrates his/her understanding such as **explains** the workflow or **identifies** a specific work area in the flow such as Account Balancing.



### PRACTICE EXERCISE

Devise a scaled reward system for the family’s two teenagers to “*be more helpful around the house.*” Just define specific tasks with quality, quantity, and time. Start with the “least-they-can-do-to-get-by” (minimal expectations) and build on that.

**Here is one example.** You may make up as many as you think appropriate. You can defend it because it is available to both, expected of both, and both know what the expectations are.

Activity = “Cleaning the floors”	Reward= \$x
1. Vacuum the carpets: all rooms and all floors where there is carpet so there is no lint, dust, dog hairs visible. <b>(This is the least they can do to get by.)</b>	1.00X
1. All of #1 and vacuum everywhere there are hardwood floors.	1.25X
3. All of #2 above, damp mop all bathroom tile floors, spray polish wood floors	1.50 X

Think about the battles you may have had with your Mom when you were a child and she said, “Clean up your room before you go outside.” How often did your version of “clean the room” match with hers?

This is the same with your employees: until you and they share the same understanding of the performance expectations, you will always be battling each other.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BUSY AND PRODUCTIVE

Do you think a person can be very busy but not very productive?

How could this happen? It is because task requirements are not always well defined. Sometimes people are just “busy” instead of productive because their supervisor did not define all three elements of productivity.

Your employees become productive when you focus a task with the three critical performance standards that define “how much” (**quantity**), “how well” (**quality**), and “by when” (**time**).



The light bulb in a lamp is physically the same as a laser beam. However, the laser has all of its energy narrowly focused upon a particular point that gives it incredible power.

How could you compare parts of your workday to the light bulb and the laser beam?

When do you feel more satisfied with your work: *when you are acting like a light bulb or a laser beam?*

Which condition ultimately makes your job more enjoyable and your work more productive?

How can you use the light bulb and laser beam example in a discussion with your employees?

Are these situations productive or busy? Read each situation and put a checkmark under the appropriate “Productive” or “Busy” column. Remember, we define “productive” as having all three elements of **how much (quantity)**, **how well (quality)**, and **by when (time)** present in a situation. (\*Answers are below.)

The Situation	Productive	Busy	If “busy,” what is missing?
Joe has been running the machine at top speed for the past 45 minutes.			
Marcia has processed 235 documents in the past hour.			
Mike has the injection mold producing bottles at a rate of 1,250/hour ( <b>quantity/time</b> ) and a reject rate of 1.05% ( <b>quality</b> )			
Terry completed 3 hours of night school classes this quarter.			

The answers for the previous practice exercise.

The situation	Productive	Busy	If “busy,” what is missing?
Joe has been running the machine at top speed for the past 45 minutes.		X	No quality or quantity measurements
Marcia has processed 235 documents in the past hour.		X	What is the quality?
Mike has the injection mold producing bottles at a rate of 1,250/hour ( <b>quantity/time</b> ) and a reject rate of 1.05% ( <b>quality</b> )	X		
Terry completed 3 hours of night school classes this quarter.	X*		*Completion with an “F” shows low quality but is not realistically productive. Quantity is “one” class or three hours (either one since they are interchangeable in a college setting) and time is “this quarter.”

Rewritten to show productivity

The Situation
Joe has been running the machine at top speed for the past 45 minutes (time), <b>producing 20 items (quantity) with no errors (quality)</b> .
Marcia has processed 235 documents (quantity) in the past hour (time) with 2 errors (quality). <b>Note:</b> Although this meets the criteria of quality, quantity, and time making it <i>productive</i> , that does not mean that 2 errors are acceptable. The organization’s standards determine what the number of acceptable errors will be.
Mike has the injection mold producing bottles at a rate of 1,250/hour (quantity/time) and a reject rate of 1.05% (quality)
Terry completed 3 (quantity) hours of night school classes this quarter (time) with a grade of ‘B’ (quality). <b>Note:</b> If she received an ‘F’, this still provides a quality measurement. However, if she does not receive credit for the class, it is realistically non-productive because she wasted her time and money.

## MEETING “FUZZY” PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

The evaluator (usually the manager) and those being evaluated (the employees) should agree on behavioral traits that represent the “fuzzy topics” - teamwork, pride in work, etc - upon which they will be evaluated. Then, as a group, define the traits further if necessary.

I realize it may be a radical concept for management to seek the input of "the managed" when defining these traits but take a moment to think about it. The most important part of the equation is *defining the traits we will consider* - teamwork, pride in work, etc. - not how we define them.

As long as we accomplish "teamwork", does it really matter how we define it as long as it's legal, ethical, doesn't violate any company policies, AND EVERYONE INVOLVED IS SATISFIED WITH IT?

This is an easy way to get the employees involved in the development of their own working conditions with very little risk.

Example: The supervisor tells an employee he needs to “*speed it up to meet the monthly quota.*”

**Question:** Will producing **more** alone satisfy the supervisor or are there additional requirements that are unspoken? (**He must also consider quality**)

Solution: Apply the QQT elements to define "speed it up" to the supervisor's satisfaction.

**Question:** How will the supervisor know the employee is producing more at the required level of quality and within the required period?

Solution: Make sure there is a process of frequent feedback available for the performer

**Question:** How will the employee know the he or she is producing more at the required level of quality and within the required period?

Why would this be important? (The employee cannot monitor his own progress without a feedback system. If he could, he can regulate his production higher without waiting for his boss to tell him.)

A supervisor tells an employee that he or she expects the employee to “take a little more pride in their work.”

What specifically would you expect the employee to do?

Listen for descriptive words like, more accuracy (quality), sufficient copies (quantity), on time (time), neat (quality), correct spelling (quality), etc.

## A SOURCE OF WORKPLACE STRESS

What value do you think there is in having measurable goals?

What are some sources of stress in your work life?

What are some measurable goals in your work life?

What are some sources of stress in your home life?

What are some measurable goals in your home life?



Think back to when you did reports for a teacher in school. When you *clearly knew the expectations*, you were able to work confidently even though you were under pressure to complete it. But, when you finally turned it in, you were relieved and could forget about it *because you knew you met the expectations*. This situation would be **work pressure**.

However, *when you were not sure of the expectations*, you constantly worried whether you were doing it correctly. When you finally turned it in, *the worry probably stayed because you were not sure whether it was correct*. This inability to have confidence in your performance or to get closure when you finished is an example of **work stress**.

Examples of <b>PRESSURE</b> in your work place (you know what the boss expects and how to do it, there is just a lot of it to do and can enjoy a big sigh of relief when it's over)	Examples of <b>STRESS</b> in your work place (you're not sure what the boss expects, so you're never sure if it is right, and you can't be relieved when you think it's over)

How can measurable goals using references to **quality, quantity, and time** reduce stress in your personal and work life?

What would goals like that do for your self-confidence?

Why?

What would that do for your work performance?

Why?

## THE CRITICAL TRIO FOR EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE GOALS



Just as there are three critical elements necessary for fire (fuel, heat, and air), there are three critical elements necessary for **productivity** (which is much different from just “being busy”): **QUALITY, QUANTITY, and TIME** - “how good,” “how many,” and “by when?” We will abbreviate them into QQT for convenience.

**Productivity** means people clearly understand how error-free it must be (quality), how many you require, and by when (time.)

### LET’S DEFINE AND MEASURE PERFORMANCE

We broadly consider there are two kinds of measurables in the workplace:

- “**Hard** (we don’t mean difficult) measurables are where we actual measure something tangible such as processed documents, lines of programming code, cookies, or chairs.
- “**Soft**” measurables, which are just as important but less tangible, can be topics like personal values, attitudes, customer service, teamwork, oral communications, or professionalism.

The elements of QUALITY, QUANTITY, and TIME are critical for hard and soft measurements and you can measure them with a little creativity. An example that satisfies nearly everyone that wants to create more definitions and rules than necessary centers around that favorite board game from childhood, Monopoly.

As kids in our neighborhood, we always agreed that we would pile any payments made for property or luxury taxes into the middle of the board. Then when someone was lucky enough to land on “Free Parking,” they collected all the money in the middle!

It was great! We all understood the ‘rules’ of this and agreed to follow them. There were never any fights about who deserved it. However, there is no provision for this in the ‘official’ rules of Monopoly that came with the game. It was just something that we adapted for our version of the game. As long as everyone understood it and was satisfied, it worked. **Since it was our game with our rules, we harmed no one!** You can be creative as long as everyone has an equal chance for success.



## DEFINING “HARD” PERFORMANCE MEASURABLES

Defining skills must always focus on the behaviors associated with the skills. We must define *what we expect them to do at difference performance levels* as part of the measurements.

Measurements, *to be effective*, must contain references to the critical trio:

- **Quality** of performance (How well they perform.)
- **Quantity** of performance (How many they must produce)
- **Time** of performance (The deadline when we must complete production)

We will abbreviate these three elements in this course as **QQT**.

For example, suppose we were defining the job functions of a filing clerk. Their job deals with accurately (“**accurately**” is a quality element) filing stacks (“**stacks**” is a quantity element) of documents by a specific deadline (“**deadline**” is a time element.)

In addition to describing the three elements (QQT) of effective measurements, we must also identify a performance range that allows the employee and supervisor to monitor the work progress and determine their appropriate compensation for the work performed. This is similar to the grading system used in schools where A, B, C, D, F provide measurements for academic productivity.

The elements of quality, quantity, and time give us great flexibility in determining the performance range. We can define the filing clerk’s duties in a variety of ways.

We will use a simple 1.0 – 5.0 scale to demonstrate this practice where 1.0 is “worst” and 5.0 is “best behavior.”



It is easy to develop a performance range if you will start in the middle - the “least they can do to get by” performance description. This is like the grade of “C” in school.

Then you can go up and down the scale easily to cover the range of performance that can occur.

You can manipulate the elements of quality, quantity, and time to place greater emphasis on which of the three is most important for a specific job.

Table #1 shows that greater scores (“better work”) are directly tied to increased filing of documents as long as there are no mistakes. The 2.0 score (like a “D” grade in school) can be either fewer documents with NO mistakes or even more than 30 documents with just one mistake. The time element remains the same.

This table shows that we will tolerate a small number of mistakes as long as productivity is up.

Table #1 - The essential element is no mistakes ( <u>quality</u> ), the variable is <u>quantity</u> , and the <u>time unit</u> remains a constant reference.	
5.0	File <u>&gt;30 documents</u> per hour with no mistakes
4.0	File <u>&gt;20 - 30 documents</u> per hour with no mistakes.
3.0	File at <u>least 20 documents</u> per hour with no mistakes.
2.0	File <u>&lt;20</u> but more than <u>15 documents</u> per hour with no mistakes or any amount with 1 mistake.
1.0	File <u>&lt; 15 documents</u> per hour with 1 mistake or any amount with 2 or more mistakes.

In Table 2 below, time is still a constant while emphasizing productivity while the quality standards are slightly less than Table 1.

Table #2 – Productivity is the greatest emphasis here. The 4.0 score shows we will allow some errors if the productivity is high.	
5.0	File <u>&gt;40 documents</u> per hour with no mistakes.
4.0	File <u>&gt;40 documents</u> per hour with <2 mistakes.
3.0	File <u>at least 30 documents</u> per hour with <=3 mistakes.
2.0	File <u>at least 30 documents</u> per hour with 3-4 mistakes or <30 with any mistakes.
1.0	File <u>&lt; 25 documents</u> per hour with any amount of mistakes.

Table #3 shows that productivity and quality is critical while time is variable.

Table #3 – Primary emphasis is on productivity and quality with time as the variable.	
5.0	File >40 documents with no mistakes in less than 1 hour.
4.0	File >40 documents with no mistakes within 60-75 minutes. .
3.0	File at least 30 documents with no mistakes in 75-90 minutes.
2.0	File at least 30 documents in 75-90 minutes with <3 mistakes
1.0	File < 30 documents or take longer than 90 minutes or make 3 or more mistakes.

Author’s Note: *In all honesty, I cannot imagine an acceptable situation where productivity is high while we get most of them right. (Maybe the way the US used to build cars.) The tables here are designed to demonstrate the theoretical manipulations possible with the elements of quality, quantity, and time.*

Some tasks do not allow much manipulation of the three elements because of the nature of the job.

Suppose government regulations required we process **all** the loan documents we received **accurately** within **72 hours**. We cannot control how many we receive: we must simply process them “all.”



Every document must be accurate because people’s money and property is involved and we have a “\$1,000 error-free guarantee” in our advertising that gives us a marketing edge and drives a lot of business our way.

We will divide the inbound work into equal piles for the clerks available. Since the government requires accurate processing within 72 hours, we can use that as our grade of “C.” We know we cannot process less than all that came in nor can we drop the quality level. Therefore, the only variable we can use as an incentive for employees is **time**.

**We can manipulate the time it takes to finish their share of the work as the incentive to finish early.** That also gives us a chance to have some early finishers available to help slower ones if needed (after we document the files of the early finishers –and they know we did - as a reward) so we do not break the departmental deadline to finish all the work that came in.

If they can finish their share of the work accurately sooner than 60 hours since it came in, we will give them the highest score of 5.0 (an “A” for their work). Then, as an example, we can make 60-65 hours as a 4.0 (a “B”) and 66-72 hours as the 3.0 (a “C”).

We’ll demonstrate on the next page how more technical skills could be developed into a performance range.

This is for an on call software-programming technician. (Used in a real bank operations division)

**On-call Responsiveness** (based on problems being resolved within the established time frames set by the On-Call Policy, barring any obstacles encountered due to problems dialing in; the availability of the database or other circumstances outside of the control of the person responding to the problem)

Note: Expectations should be evaluated based on the individual's job description and special considerations may need to be made for new employees or employees that are assigned applications that they do not support on a daily basis; such as groups that have combined on-call personnel for multiple applications or when an employee transfers to another application.

Able to resolve problems on your own and within the established time frame set by the *On-Call Policy*

5	<b>Consistently</b> (98 - 100%) able to resolve problems on your own and all problems resolved within the established time frames.
4	<b>Most of the time</b> (90% - 97%) able to resolve problems on your own; however some assistance is needed from other team members on difficult or complex problems. All problems are resolved within the established time frames.
3	<b>Occasionally</b> (80% - 89%) needs assistance to resolve problems that are unfamiliar; you are able to resolve most problems on your own; most all problems are resolved within the established time frames.
2	<b>Needs to improve;</b> assistance is needed from other team members to resolve problems which are not complex.
1	<b>Needs to develop;</b> assistance is needed from other team members to resolve most problems; problems are not resolved within the established time frames.

## SECTION REVIEW

Use a 1.0 (worst) to a 5.0 (best) scale to define a performance range for any task associated with one these of these technical functions. Be sure to include considerations of quality, quantity, and time.

- A technician at a fast oil-change business
- A customer service representative in a phone center
- An emergency medical technician
- A hair cutter in a barber/stylist shop
- A bank teller

## DEFINING AND MEASURING “SOFT” PERFORMANCE MEASURABLES

How can you put a measurement on these topics?



Quality Service

Team Work



Written Communication

Oral Communication



Topics like these that do not measure specific objectives (such as pressing pants without wrinkles within a certain time frame – page 23) can be easy to measure if you will do this:

Identify the **behavioral traits** that demonstrate the topic. For example, if you wanted to measure “PRIDE IN WORK,” you first identify **behavioral traits** that indicate they have pride in their work.

- There are no spelling errors.(a quality element)
- It is always on time or before. (a time element)
- She always uses the proper format for the report. (quality)
- There are no smudges or “white outs” on the form. (quality)
- Her data is always accurate. (quality)

Establish a scale with a range of values for use with each trait. This is a *Likert Scale*. It measures an *extent of agreement with a statement* and is considered valid in surveys.

1 = I never see this (in response to the statement such as, "They use the correct format for the given report.")

2 = I occasionally see this

3 = I always see this

NA = Does not apply (you must always include an option like this so people don't have to force an answer into one of the other categories because that will skew your statistical analysis.)

Then create a scale that converts the average of the trait scale to your performance assessment system.

Joan Smith's <i>Pride in Work</i> Evaluation	Scores
There are no spelling errors.	3
It is always on time or before.	2*
She always uses the proper format for the report	2*
There are no smudges or "white outs" on the form.	3
Her data is always accurate	2*
Average score for the observation period	12/5= <b>2.4</b>
* A wise leader will have documentation of the times when the employee did anything that would result in a less than perfect score because you can be guaranteed they will contest it.	

#### The XYZ Corporation's Employee Performance Scale

Performance scale ranges from 1.0 – 3.0:

< 2.0 requires probation

2.0 – 2.5 = Satisfactory performance with lowest merit increase

>2.5 – 2.8 = Above satisfactory performance with medium merit increase

>2.8 = Outstanding performance and maximum merit increase

This *Pride in Work* topic would be just one of several on the performance assessment. You can see how easy it would be to give an objective "hard" numerical score to a traditionally "soft" subject.

Also note how the score range narrows as the scores move closer to the top. From 2.0 to 2.5 is a .5 gap; then a .3 from 2.5 to 2.8; finally a .2 gap between 2.8 and 3.0 Getting a top score becomes more difficult and that is the logical way it should be.

**QUESTION:** Why would you want to include your department employees in developing a performance scale for use on the annual performance assessment? (If they help develop the scoring system that you will use on them, they are more inclined to trust it.)



What risks are there in doing this? (They may say, “That’s your job, boss. We do not want to!”)

The leader can counter this by saying, “Would you rather have some say in the way you are evaluated or just take a chance on what I come up with?”

They will usually want to participate if that is the alternative. Or they may want to use standards that are too low. It is up to the leader to make sure the expectations cause them to stretch their efforts.)

Define some “Teamwork” traits that you and your department could use on your organization’s annual performance assessment.

**“TEAM WORK”** traits that you want to see may be:

- Demonstrate willingness to help others when finished with own work without being asked.
- Demonstrate willingness to help others with less experience or confidence.
- Demonstrate willingness to give credit to others when praise is given.
- Demonstrate willingness to carry his/her fair share of the workload (and more at times if asked).
- “Positive outlook” because he/she always tries to say something, friendly or encouraging and never participates in gossip or negative comments about other employees

What traits would work in your work place?

An example of how to obtain employee scores on this survey is on the next page.



## EMPLOYEES RATING EACH OTHER: GOOD OR BAD IDEA?

Before going farther into the world of performance assessments, it should be obvious that I am a big fan of involving the employees in rating each other where possible and reasonable. Peer pressure is a powerful tool if used smartly and can be used here because, many times, employees are more concerned with what their peers think of them than their boss' opinion.



Mention that topic - employees rating each other - among a group of supervisors and managers and you will get many reasons for and against it. I believe that it is a good idea only when *the group doing the rating has the maturity to understand the benefits it offers.*

Here are some issues for consideration about the argument for those who have not attempted it before.

- Teamwork is important to the success of our group. (No one will argue that fact.)
- There are only two ways to evaluate individual performance contributions by members of the team: the *leader can do the evaluation* or the *fellow team members can.*
- The leader is not always present while the team is working. Frequently there are duties unique to leadership that requires him or her to be elsewhere such as attending meetings, working in the office planning, scheduling, budgeting, reporting, etc.
- There may be team members who work more diligently while the leader is present than they do when the leader is absent.
- Other team members frequently have to pick up that slack to meet the group's production goals.
- Since the leader was periodically absent and not able to observe performance at all times, there is a distinct possibility the slacker will get a performance rating that is higher than deserved when the leader does individual performance assessments on group members. This is unfair to those who had to pick up the slack to meet the group's goals.

- The group's members can solve this problem by doing anonymous assessments of each other if they choose to act objectively. The leader can use these for the individual's performance scores under the "teamwork" category.
- Some group members will object saying that assessments are the job of the leader. While that is true, it is also true that the frequently absent leader cannot evaluate individual performance within the group as often as other members can.
- The group can choose to score itself anonymously and be very accurate or insist the leader do the scoring and admit there may be undeserved scores. *They cannot have it both ways.*
- The possibility of groups of team members giving those they do not like lower scores (or friends higher scores) than they deserve can be defeated by using the Olympic judge technique of throwing out the highest and lowest scores. On the other hand, you can require specific examples be included for the highest or lowest scores to count.
- If a group is willing to self-score, work production will increase because the slackers can no longer "get away" with their games: they know it and the group members know it.

Consider bringing these issues up with your work group if you are considering allowing them to rate each other on issues like teamwork and possibly communications.

## A PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SAMPLE

This is a sample using a Likert scale. Send a survey with a cover memo like this to employees with whom your employee works on a daily basis.

*“John Smith is due for a performance assessment of his last 12 months of work. Part of our company’s annual Performance Assessment form requires an assessment of **TEAMWORK**. He needs your help in determining his effectiveness in this portion. Please rate him based on your experience with him during this past assessment period and send it to me by (date).*

*Your name will be helpful if I have questions about your response **BUT IT IS NOT REQUIRED**. If you will feel more comfortable returning it anonymously, you may do that.”*

Please rate these situations from a 1-10 using this rating.	
1 = I <u>never</u> see that trait    2-3 See it <u>rarely</u> 4-7 See it <u>about half the time</u> 8-9 See it <u>very often</u>	
10 = I <u>always</u> see that trait    X = I do not know well enough for an opinion.	
(Use your own definitions for “rarely”, “half the time”, and “very often”.)	
The trait we are looking for...	Your rating
<i>Willingness to help others when finished with own work without being asked.</i>	
Willingness to help others with less experience or confidence.	
Willingness to give credit to others when praise is given	
Willingness to carry his/her fair share of the workload (and more at times if asked).	
“Positive outlook” because he/she always tries to say something, friendly or encouraging and never participates in gossip or negative comments about other employees.	

When you get the replies, average the scores and assign a value according to the system you have developed **with your employees**. (Use the guidelines starting on page 27 as a refresher.)

An additional note: do not worry about how they define “rarely,” “half the time,” and “very often.” It is asking for their opinion which, by definition, is a subjective exercise.

The numerical score is more important than the actual definition. As long as they select as number between 4 and 7, for example, for “about half the time”, we really do not care how they define it!

Here is an exercise is developing behavioral traits for some typical soft topics.

List Five Traits That You Would Want to See Displayed for

**QUALITY SERVICE**

List Five Traits That You Would Want to See Displayed for

**WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

List Five Traits That You Would Want to See Displayed for

**ORAL COMMUNICATION**

## A handy **Performance Tool**

Here is an activity that will help you learn more about performance perception in your department.



### **YOUR PERCEPTION OF YOUR EMPLOYEE'S PERFORMANCE**

Put the names of three of your employees (your best, average, and poorest performers) into this table and rank each one “L” (low), “M” (medium), “H” (high) based on your perception of them in each category.

<i>Employees</i>	<b>Susan</b>	<b>Joe</b>	<b>Mike</b>
<i>Knows your MEASURABLE EXPECTATIONS of them</i>			
Knows what they expect of themselves in MEASURABLE TERMS			
Knows their work related strengths			
Knows their work related weaknesses			
Knows where and how to get help.			
Constantly measures their own performance against their own goals.			
Expects that rewards will follow achievement.			

### **YOUR EMPLOYEE'S VIEW OF HIMSELF / HERSELF**

Use the same table for them to rate themselves. Compare your score for each employee with their score of themselves and discuss any differences in scores.

Put them at ease by saying ***you are trying to see their world though their eyes*** and are trying to become a better leader for them.



**What is in it for you to do this?** (If the answer is not evident now, try doing it and see if the answer becomes evident.)

**How will you explain the differences in perceptions?**

## IT'S SHOWTIME

Another aspect of performance is **allowing the employee to work alone to master the skill**. You must also be willing to let them fail as part of the learning process.

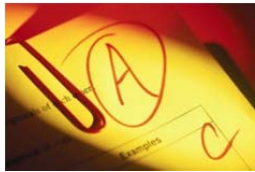


(NOTE: “Letting them fail,” means you still provide a safety net so they do not harm the organization, someone else, or themselves. Still, many people learn best from a trial-and-error approach.

If you do not believe this, what is the first thing most people do when they see a “Caution: Wet Paint” sign?) How conducive is your organization’s culture to letting employees fail ‘safely as a learning tool?’

## PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK LOOPS

**People must be to tell how they are doing without having to wait to be told** (especially from the boss.) There must be a feedback loop in the work process that allows the employee to self-monitor their progress. This is particularly true of your older employees.



Think back to when you were in school. Did you have to wait until the report cards came out before you knew how you did that semester or were there ways for you to keep track?

The grades you got back on tests, reports, and homework plus staying out of trouble and making sure you were not excessively late or absent created a “feedback loop” that let you know how you were doing without having to ask the teacher every day.

In addition, the teacher gave you the system for grading at the beginning of the school year. The system may include how many days you be could absent without hurting your grade; the progressive scoring range such as <math><65 = F; 65-70 = D; 71-80 = C; 81 - 90 = B; >90 = A</math>; a term paper weighted to count as three grades; the midterm test counts half of the final grade; etc.

With that feedback loop, you could track your own progress and had an answer every time your parents would ask, “*How are you doing in school?*” Your employees must have some feedback loops to tell them how they are doing without waiting until something breaks or blows up!

What kind of feedback loops to monitor performance does your department have?

## PERFORMANCE PROBLEM FLOWCHART

Here is a series of questions that will help you determine if the source of the employee's difficult behavior is based on performance issues. Use this series to make sure you have eliminated any possible reason why your employee does not perform to your satisfaction **BEFORE** you try to take disciplinary or corrective action with them.

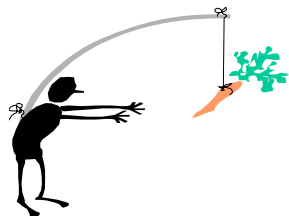
Step	Possible Problem	Ask this...
Before you begin trying to find the source of the problem, ask yourself, <b>"Is this issue worth pursuing?"</b>		
		How do you know if it is worth pursuing?"  (If it interferes with work, it is worth pursuing! If it is only a nuisance or aggravation, but does not interfere with work, it may be best to leave it alone because of stirring up more problems.)
If it is worth pursuing, go to STEP #1. If not, you are done! Remember, you can stop anytime the problem is <b>"sufficiently solved."</b> (This means it is not worth the time or effort to fix it better".)		
<b>Step #1</b>	Ask yourself, "Are my expectations clear?"	What do you ask your employee here?  <i>"I want to make sure I did a good job of explaining. Please tell me what you think I expect you to do".</i>
If that solves the performance problem, you are done. Otherwise, go to the next step.		
<b>Step #2</b>	Ask yourself, "Are the resources adequate?"	What do you ask your employee here?  <i>"Do you have everything you need to do what I expect?"</i>
If that solves the performance problem, you are done. Otherwise, go to the next step.		
<b>Step #3</b>	Ask yourself, "Do they get fast and frequent feedback on their performance?"	What do you ask your employee here?  <i>"How do you know how you are doing?"</i>
If that solves the performance problem, you are done. Otherwise, go to the next step.		
<b>Step #4</b>	Ask yourself, "Does the desired performance seem punishing?"  (Hint: What do you usually do if they finish early and <b>others have not finished yet?</b> )	What do you ask your employee (or yourself about the situation) here?  (If their "reward" for finishing early is you give them the work the slower people have not finished, you will soon have <u>no one</u> finishing early.  You must praise the ones who finish early, let them know you documented their file that they finished ahead of the others, and ask if they will help the slower ones.  This way they do not feel that the slackers are getting away with anything)



Step	Possible Problem	Ask this...
If that solves the performance problem, you are done. Otherwise, go to the next step.		
<b>Step #5</b>	Ask yourself, <i>“Is poor performance rewarded somehow?”</i>  (Hint: What do you usually do if <b>they have not finished yet</b> but others have?)	What do you ask your employee (or yourself about the situation) here?  (This is the opposite of above. If they are behind, let them know you documented their file that they were behind and you asked a faster worker to help pick up their slack. This way, they realize they are not getting away with anything.)
If that solves the performance problem, you are done. Otherwise, go to the next step.		
<b>Step #6</b>	Ask yourself, <i>“Is there any penalty for not doing it right?”</i>	What do you ask your employee (or yourself about the situation) here?  <i>“Is there any penalty for not doing it right?” (If there were no penalty, why would they stop doing it?)</i>
If that solves the performance problem, you are done. Otherwise, go to the next step.		
<b>Step #7</b>	Ask yourself, <i>“Is their non-performance a genuine skill deficiency?”</i>	What do you ask your employee (or yourself about the situation) here?  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Can they <u>not</u> do it at all?</i> (If this is the problem train them.)</li> <li>• <i>Can they not do it very well?</i> (If this is the problem give them a chance to practice.)</li> <li>• <i>Can they do it but just do not want to?</i> (If they can't give you a good reason for not doing it, give their job to someone who will do it.)</li> </ul>
If that solves the performance problem, you are done. Otherwise, go to the next step.		
<b>Step #8</b>	Ask yourself, <i>“Can the task be made easier?”</i>	What do you ask your employee here?  <i>“Can you think of any easier way you can do this?”</i>
If that solves the performance problem, you are done. Otherwise, go to the next step.		
<b>Step #9</b>	Ask yourself, <i>“Are there any other obstacles?”</i>	What do you ask your employee here?  <i>“Can you think of anything keeping you from doing this?”</i>
If that solves the performance problem, you are done. Otherwise, go to the next step.		
<b>Step #10</b>	Ask yourself, <i>“Does the person have the potential to change?”</i>	What do you ask your employee here?  <i>Do you have any plans to change your behavior?</i> (If they do, keep them, If not, terminate them.)

**Have you noticed that every step, except #10, is a factor controlled by management?**

**This means there is a 90% probability that an employee's performance problem is caused by something controlled by management!**

**MOTIVATION: WHAT GETS PEOPLE GOING?****Motivation:**

“To provide with an incentive; move to action; impel.”

--The American Heritage Dictionary, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

Essentially, motivation is the unspoken answer people hear when they ask themselves “**Why would I want to do that,**” or “**What’s in it for me?**”

If their internal answer gives them a good reason to act, they will. If not, they will not act.

The unspoken answers to internal questions are typically something like this:

Situation	Internal Question	Internal Answer and Action Choices (the motivation)
Seeing new clothes for sale at the mall	<i>“Why would I want to spend that much for a suit?”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Because it will make me look so good!” and <u>buy it</u></li> <li>• “I need the money for something else that I want more” and <u>not buy it</u>.</li> </ul>
Your boss asks for volunteers to work late	<i>“Why would I want to do that?”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Because I want to get off early next week to see my child’s game” and <u>volunteer</u></li> <li>• “I don’t like him/her – why should I help?” and <u>not volunteer</u>.</li> </ul>
You see a charity asking for donations	<i>“Why would I want to donate to that?”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Because it makes me feel good to help others” and <u>donate</u></li> <li>• “Nobody helped me when I needed it” and do <u>not donate</u>.</li> </ul>
You see a potential problem coming up at work that no one else sees.	<i>“Why would I want to tell the boss about this?”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Because I like my boss and this is a good place to work” and <u>tell someone</u></li> <li>• “If my boss and this company doesn’t care about me, why should I care about them?” and <u>stay quiet</u>.</li> </ul>
What have you seen recently?	What would be the question?	What are the choices of actions?

## HOW DOES ASKING THESE QUESTIONS HELP A LEADER?

It is because a leader should have an answer for the employee's internal question of "Why would I want to do that" **BEFORE** they ask someone to do something.



Before we go much farther and explain why you should have an answer for them asking themselves "Why would I want to do that", you must consider something else first.

There can be as many reasons why people are motivated to act (or not act) as there are people. Some of the more common reasons include:

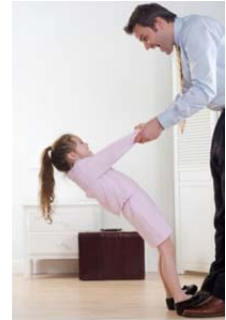
- I *materially* gain from it (money or property)
- I *emotionally* gain from it (it makes me feel good)
- I *spiritually* gain from it (it heartens my soul)
- I *psychologically* gain from it (enhances my reputation or self-image)

## WHAT ADDITIONAL REASONS CAN YOU ADD?

Now before you ask someone to do something, take a moment to consider if there were a way that doing what you want will help him or her achieve any of the gains listed above. In other words, ask yourself this, “How can I present this need of mine to them in such a way that it will help them achieve something they want?” or “How can I make it easy for them to want to do this?”

Parents may say to a child, “The sooner you get your room cleaned up (what the parent wants), the sooner you can go out to play with your friends (what the child wants).”

While it is true the parents can still order the child to clean up their room, it may not have the speed and quality that the parent desires.



**We are now getting into the mental game that can have career ramifications depending on how well you understand the concept of motivation.** This is a crucial part of this course – please review it as often as necessary to make sure it sticks.

Getting back to the need for someone to work late, ask yourself these questions: *Why do I need someone to work late?*

1. An unexpected event happened and we have to make up for it. This could be an opportunity for you to demonstrate you are a good leader as you help the company recover.
2. It is poor planning on your part. If so, what will you do differently the next time so this does not happen again? This could be a danger for you because an important part of a leader’s job is PLANNING and SCHEDULING.
3. We always work late at this time because of workflows (like end-of-month processing.) This is not a risk to you but maybe a chance to eliminate the periodic need to do this which could make you look good.
4. How long will they have to stay?
  - a. They stay until it is finished which may motivate them to work quickly.
  - b. They must stay a specific amount of time. This may allow Parkinson’s Law<sup>2</sup> to appear, (“**Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion.**”)
5. What is the quality of results I need?

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<sup>2</sup> C. Northcote Parkinson first articulated it in an article published in *The Economist* in 1955, later reprinted together with other essays in the book *Parkinson’s Law: The Pursuit of Progress*, (London, John Murray, 1958) based on extensive experience in the British Civil Service. The scientific observations, which contributed to the law’s development, included noting that as Britain’s overseas empire declined in importance, the number of employees at the Colonial Office increased.

- a. “Good enough to get by” means their frame of mind should be at least **neutral** instead of **vengeful** that can lead to sabotage, a poor work product, or seeding dissention among the employees. They would probably say, “I HAVE TO work late” when talking to coworkers.
- b. “Very good” means their frame of mind should be positive and would probably say, “I GET TO work late” or simply, “I AM WORKING late.”

Getting back to their internal question, “*Why would I want to do that,*” you now have to think about how to present the situation (the need to work late) to them that can do the most for your career (your motivation) or at least not harm your career (also a motivator):

### **The work can be completed by anyone in the workforce.**

If so, this gives you a broader potential audience for selection or volunteering. How will you determine who does the work?

If you consider asking for volunteers, ask yourself first, “**Why would anyone want to do it?**”

- Can you trade them for some time off later? If so, you can say, “Who wants to trade working late tonight for 2 hours in exchange for 2 hours off later?” **(Note: This is “comp” – compensation – time. Be sure to check with your supervisor or HR department first to make sure your policies allow this.)**
- Is there something prestigious about doing that work that would appeal to someone? (“Only a specialist can do this.”)
- Does someone have a personal interest in the completion of the work? Is it part of a project he or she had initiated?
- If you are going to have a lottery (everyone’s name in a basket and someone pulls a name), does that indicate you cannot make a decision?
- If you are going to select someone, will he or she perceive it as retaliation for something in the past or as discrimination? Then what will you do?
- Do you have a rotation sequence that means everyone, in turn, must work late?
- If you select someone who does not want to do it and you say, “OK,” and look for another one, what will stop the next one from saying they do not want to do it?
- If you have to insist that someone stays late and he or she really does not want to, how may their attitude affect the quality of their work?

### **The work can only be done by a select few.**

How will you select them fairly and without it looking like favoritism or revenge?

## THE SOURCE OF MOTIVATION

Take a moment to look back to the opening statement for this section on page 3847, “Essentially, motivation is the unspoken answer people hear when they ask themselves “**Why would I want to do that,**” or “**What’s in it for me?**”

What is the source of that “...unspoken answer people hear ...?”

It is their internal voice responding to their needs based on their experiences. The things that motivate you may not be the things that motivate me. Therefore, it only makes sense that the more I consider the situation *from your perspective*, the better the chance I have that you will respond in the manner I want.



Suppose you really love ice cream and would do nearly anything for it. (Your motivator is “it makes me feel good!”)

You want someone to do something for you and you offer ice cream as an incentive. However, what if they do not like ice cream as much as you do? What is their motivation?

The point here is that we all have our internal motivators and a smart leader will learn enough about us through talking, listening, and observing to provide us with the chance to achieve those motivators *when he or she wants us to do something for them.* .

## CAN YOU MOTIVATE SOMEONE WITH THREATS?

**No.** They still make the internal decision whether to act in the way you want them to. They may decide that protecting their income is more important than telling off the boss if he says they **HAVE TO WORK LATE.**

The boss did not motivate them to work by saying, “If you don’t show up, you’ll be fired,” he just forced them to make a decision. (What would they say if they had just won the lottery and did not need the job?)

## **THE BIG MOTIVATIONAL PICTURE**

Sometimes it is easier to get answers by asking more questions. Here are a few you can ask.

### **WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK FOR YOUR EMPLOYER AS OPPOSED TO SOMEWHERE ELSE?**

(If you are not able to detail why you work for your employer instead of doing the same job for someone else, you may not be the best example of a leader for your employer and employees.

The best leaders know why they work for their employers and their example shows it. How can the inability to explain your own motivations affect your ability to influence others?)

### **WHY WOULD YOUR EMPLOYEES WANT TO WORK FOR YOUR EMPLOYER AS OPPOSED TO SOMEWHERE ELSE?**

(The better you understand the world from your employees perspective, the better you will be able to lead them.)

### **WHY WOULD YOUR EMPLOYEES WANT TO WORK FOR YOU AS OPPOSED TO SOMEONE ELSE?**

(You first must know your strengths and weaknesses before you try to lead others. This way, you can work on improving your strengths and minimizing your weaknesses.)

### **WHY SHOULD YOU BE ASKING THESE QUESTIONS?**

The more you ask yourself these questions about yourself and your employees, the more you will begin to OBSERVE and UNDERSTAND the world around you, not just look at it. The more you observe it, you more you begin to think of things from perspectives outside of your own.

**“MANY SURVEYS HAVE SHOWN THAT MOST EMPLOYEES DO NOT STAY WITH (OR LEAVE) THEIR EMPLOYERS, THEY STAY WITH (OR LEAVE) THEIR SUPERVISORS.”**

**DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE? WHY DO YOU THINK SO?**

The more you do this, the greater the potential for realizing that the best way for you to get what you want is by helping your employees get what they want!

Have you ever heard someone describe a boss who is an absolute dictator and you thought to yourself, “*You could not pay me enough to work for someone like that!*”

On the other hand, maybe heard someone describe a boss who was an angel and you thought to yourself, “*I would give anything to get to work for someone like that!*”



ASK YOURSELF, “What incentive do I have to work for my employer?”

(If you are not sure why you work for your employer instead of doing the same job for someone else, you may not be the best example of a leader for your employer and employees. The best leaders know why they work for their leaders and their example shows it.)

**What incentive does each of your employees have to work for your employer?** (The better you understand the world from your employees perspective, the better you will be able to lead them.)

**What incentive does each of your employees have to work for you?** (You must know your strengths and weaknesses first before you try to lead others. This way, you can work on improving your strengths and minimizing your weaknesses.)

**Why should you be asking those questions to your employees?**



Let's go a little farther into understanding the view point of our employees.

Complete these two sentences:

“LIFE WOULD BE GREAT IF MY EMPLOYEES WOULD ONLY (do what).....”



“WHEN THE BEST BOSS I EVER HAD DID THIS (specify), IT HAD THIS IMPACT ON ME AND MY WORK (specify)”

WHEN THE BOSS DID THIS....	THIS IMPACT ON ME AND MY WORK....

Here are samples of possible replies to this question.

When the Boss did this...	It had this impact on me and my work...
Defined the project's expectations and then left me alone to complete it	<p>Made me search for answers and a range of solutions that led to unexpected and welcomed outcomes.</p> <p>The impact on me was to gain confidence in myself and be willing to take some risks.</p>
Micromanaged my work	It killed my motivation, enthusiasm, and led me to just want to do the least I could to get by because there was no opportunity to use the unique skills I believe I have.

If you had your employees discuss this exercise with you, they would end up telling you how to get the most out of them. From the example above, *if you want me to explore the options and really get into it, then tell me the expected outcomes and leave me alone.*

What relationship do you see between how you want your employees to act and the impact on you and your work by the best boss you ever had? *(This should help you realize that the way*

*the best boss you ever had treated you had a great impact on your motivation and work product.)*

**Why do we ask this question at this point in the course?** (To help you realize that your behavior as a leader has a major influence on your employees' actions)

**What can YOU start doing differently RIGHT NOW that can help you get what you want from your employees' behavior?**

How does his statement apply to your relationship with your employees?

(You cannot expect them to change their behavior without you changing the way you act toward them first!)

**THINK ABOUT THIS:** When you were in school, did you know the *least you could do to get by* and not get in trouble at home? How did you discover this?



WHO DETERMINED WHETHER YOU DID THE LEAST YOU COULD DO TO GET BY OR THE MOST YOU COULD DO ON AN ASSIGNMENT?

Why is this question important to you?



The “authority figure” such as parents, teachers, or bosses can only influence the width of this work performance range.

The employee controls where they work within it.

## THE COMPONENTS OF MOTIVATION

These are five basic components of human motivation:

1. **Tell me what you expect of me** in measurable terms (quality, quantity, time or Q,Q,T) that reduce the risk of my confusion.

What kind of measurable terms does your boss use for you or you use with your employees?



2. **Give me a chance to perform** (and learn from my mistakes, too.)

Do you feel like it is safe for you to make mistakes as part of your learning process in your present job or is it too risky?

3. **Let me know how I am doing as I go along**... (Remember the report cards you got in school every report period? You did not have to wait until the end of the year to learn if you had passed or failed the grade.)

How do you know RIGHT NOW how well you are doing in your job? How confident are you that your boss will agree with you?



4. **Give me help and guidance when I need it.**

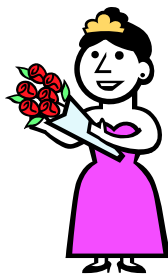
How easy is it for you to get help and guidance in your work? Does your boss make it easy for you to ask or does he/she make you feel incompetent for not knowing?



5. **Reward me** with pay or praise when I succeed.

We're not saying you should be praised or rewarded every time you do what you're paid to do but, when you go above-and-beyond normal expectations, what happens then? Is it anything that would encourage you to keep going above-and-beyond?





Think about the movie, MY FAIR LADY\*. What was the story about? If you are not familiar with it, here are two sources:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My\\_Fair\\_Lady](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Fair_Lady)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3DBFiJisc4>

(\*A speech teacher that taught, coached, and encouraged a common “flower girl” in Victorian London to act like and pass for a member of nobility.)

How could the premise of that story apply to your department? (The talent you are looking for may be hidden in your department awaiting discovery, teaching, and encouragement by you.)

Think of two of your current employees: your top performer and your lowest performer.

Fill in this table below *as honestly as you can* about what may be their impression of you.

Use a rating scale from 1= Lowest to 5=Highest

Component of Motivation	How would your TOP PERFORMER RATE YOU?	How would your LOWEST PERFORMER RATE YOU?
My supervisor tell me what he/she expects of me in measurable ( <b>Q,Q,T</b> see page 47) terms.		
My supervisor gives me a chance to perform.		
My supervisor lets me know how I am doing.		
My supervisor gives me help and guidance		
My supervisor rewards me with pay or praise when I succeed.		

Is there a difference in their scores?

What could these differences in scores tell you about your relationship with them? (Maybe you treat the higher performer better without realizing it. Then, since you treat them like a high performer, they tend to ACT LIKE ONE. That is the premise of the movie.)

What could the difference in scores tell you about opportunities for motivation?

How could your work load be eased with two high performers instead of only one?

## WHAT WOULD MOTIVATE YOUR EMPLOYEES?

“WHEN YOUR EMPLOYEES GET WHAT THEY WANT, YOU’LL GET WHAT YOU WANT!”

---Zig Ziglar Motivational speaker

Ask your employees what you could give them - *within the realistic limitations you have* - that would have the most value for them. Tell them to keep in mind that you cannot hand out spot bonuses, private parking spaces, etc.

(You may be surprised at what they tell you! I have added some things that I heard from my employees when I asked this same question.)



What do your employees want in a work situation?	Does it cost money?
(A single parent may say- “I’d like to be able to take off an afternoon next week to watch my 4 <sup>th</sup> grade daughter’s dancing in the school play.”)	If the work schedule would allow you to grant this, you could gain a thankful employee at <u>no cost</u> to you.
(Give me a chance to take a leadership role in a departmental initiative to gain some valuable experience.)	You may discover some hidden talent at <u>no cost</u> that can take some of your workload.

### WHAT IS KEEPING YOU FROM GIVING THEM THE FREE ITEMS TODAY?

**Think about this:** if you give them what they want, then they’ll continue to work hard so you will be willing to do it again sometime.

They are simply telling you what their unique motivational buttons are and how to get the most out of them. What can be easier for a leader than this?

## COUNSELING OR COACHING: WHEN AND HOW?

Whether you are coaching or counseling your employees, it is essential that you remain focused on their behaviors, not their attitudes.

For the purposes of this course, we will say **counseling** means they are doing something incorrectly or something they shouldn't be doing and you are taking steps to correct it.

“Correcting it” is a two-step process.

- First, you must get them to acknowledge what they are doing isn't what they should be doing. (If they don't think it's incorrect, they are likely to continue doing it after you have finished talking to them.)
- Second, you must be sure they do know what is expected. (Simply stopping them doing the wrong things doesn't mean they automatically start doing the right things.)

**Coaching** occurs when they are doing the right things (either intentionally or accidentally) and you want to coach them into extending it farther.

### COUNSELING BASICS

Here are some easy steps to follow. As your skill and experience grows, you'll be able to come up with unique variations of your own. I'm intentionally making this more clinical than it would be in actuality but only to emphasize the performance aspect of it.

Remember, we pay them for performance and must decide whether their actions are a legitimate performance problem – *does it impact work* – or is it just an irritation to me? (Look back at the text box on page 6.)

First, you must ask yourself, “*Am I sure they know what the ‘right thing to do’ really is?*”

That simple question is the basis for the performance problem flowchart back on page 36. If you'll look at that flowchart, you'll see that the causes for nearly all the reasons employees don't perform as expected has roots in something controlled by management. (Nine out of ten reasons – 90% - are based on management-controlled reasons. I.e., did they get clear directions, have we trained them sufficiently, have we given them adequate resources, etc.)



If you're sure they really do know what the right thing is and you have clearly defined it in performance terms of QQT (see page 17), then this simple script will work:

**YOU:** (Raise this question only if you are sure the employee or Joe, standing next to him, is not performing to expectations you have defined through **quality, quantity, and time**. If they are performing at expected performance levels while talking, *even though it irritates you that they are talking*, you may be better off ignoring it without raising the issue. Remember, as long as they are doing what YOU PAY THEM TO DO, why look for things to stir up emotions?)



So, assuming productivity is negatively impacted, you calmly ask the employee, **“What are we paying you (or Joe) to do?”**

That simple question will grab their attention IMMEDIATELY because:

Instead of asking “What are you doing” as they may have expected, you are calmly asking them a question that they probably haven’t heard phrased that way before and they’re momentarily confused (and at a slight disadvantage)

It forces them instantly to:

1. Assess what they *have been doing*
2. Mentally compare it to what they *know they should be doing*
3. And then decide whether it’s in their best interests to keep on doing it.

**EMPLOYEE:** *“I’m (or Joe) supposed to produce 20 widgets per hour with no mistakes.”*

**YOU:** Still speaking calmly *“And what are you doing?”*

**EMPLOYEE:** *“I’m talking to Joe while producing widgets.”*

**There are at least three different situations here:**

1. The employee’s talking to Joe is impacting his (the employee’s) productivity negatively. This means he is producing less than 20/hour with no errors, or he is producing 20/hour but making some mistakes, or a combination of both.
2. The employee’s productivity is meeting his performance requirements (even though he’s talking to Joe) but Joe’s productivity has diminished because the employee is distracting him by talking.
3. Even though they are talking – and it irritates you immensely – they both are still meeting performance expectations. (Even though this is mentioned at the top of the page, it is worth repeating to make sure the point registers.)

If the talking is impacting performance negatively, you must address it.

The reason I’m pointing out these two possible situations (numbers 1 and 2) is because the employee may be a “wise guy” looking to gain status among his peers by talking, maintaining

his productivity, and knowing that he's irritating you. "*Lighten up, boss, I can work and talk, too*" may be his planned script.

You'll be ready to avoid his trap if you can tell by a glance that his behavior is negatively impacting Joe, not him, and must stop.

**YOU:** (You can tailor this answer easily to either situation above.) "*How does what you are doing (or what Joe is doing) compare to what you (or Joe) are being paid to do?*"

**EMPLOYEE:** (Since you made sure neither was performing to expectations before you raised the question of "what are we paying you to do?", they may try to dance around the correct answer but will eventually get to it.) "**We're supposed to produce 20 widgets per hour with no mistakes.**"

**YOU:** "*That's correct. And how many have you produced?*"

**EMPLOYEE:** He quickly counts what he has produced and says, "**I've produced 18.**"

**YOU:** (With as little emotion as possible...) "*What's your plan to get back to meeting expectations?*"

Some important elements to consider here:

- You have confirmed to your satisfaction that he does know the expectations
- He has admitted he *does know* what they are and can't "play dumb" and deny it
- He (not you) is responsible for his performance. You, as supervisor, are *responsible for defining the expectations* of that performance. This also reinforces the ownership of the problem. You're saying, in effect, is "This is your problem. What are you going to do about it?"

**EMPLOYEE:** He has only two choices here that he must make. (It's not you coercing him into making a choice he doesn't really want.)

1. "**I'll start meeting the expectations**" (or stop talking to Joe so he can meet expectations) and your problem is solved.
2. "**I can't or won't start meeting expectations.**" It's very unlikely that he'll use those words but the outcome is the same. For some reason, he is saying he won't be working to the expectations for which he is paid.

**YOU:** "**So, are you planning to give your job back to us?**" This is a very simple yet powerful concept because you're saying, in effect, "*Your behavior during the interviews when we hired you indicated you wanted the job. Now, your behavior is indicating that you DO NOT WANT THE JOB. Which is it? It's your choice!*"



If you stay calm, the impact of that question, “*are you giving your job back to us*”, removes the emotional potential of “being fired” because for many, getting fired means the “mean, evil, money chasing employer” took away the job of the unfortunate employee-victim for no good reason.

But, if you stay calm and make it clear that *their performance is telling you how they want to be treated*, then it creates a very powerful situation that lessens the emotional drain on you and puts the responsibility squarely on their shoulders.

Then, depending on their answer (number one or two just above), you can say, “*Good, I’m glad you want to start meeting expectations and keep your job with us*” or, “*Since you want to give your job back, let’s go down to the Human Resources Department (or wherever is appropriate in your organization) and begin processing you out.*”

If problems with 20% of your employees take 80% of your time, how can you spend any time with your “top performers”, the people you depend on for your success?

If you find yourself in this situation, (20% of the employees getting 80% of your attention), you must:

- Make sure every part of the employee’s job expectations involves measurements and the employees know what they are
- Strengthen your counseling skills
- Make it clear that staying employed here is their choice!
- They will either meet your objective requirements (detailed in measurements) and stay or will not meet them and give their job back so you can offer it to someone who wants it.
- Be willing to enforce your own rules!
- Be willing to risk being “not popular” with the employees who are causing you the most problems. (Question: Why would you expect to be popular with the employees who are causing you problems? If they liked you, they would not cause you problems!)

## COACHING BASICS

Looking back to page 50, coaching occurs when employees are doing something right – intentionally or accidentally - and you want to coach them into extending it farther. It is more effective from a coaching standpoint to focus your employee’s attention on the things they are doing right instead of reminding them of what they are doing wrong.

Your coaching starts with CATCHING YOUR EMPLOYEES DOING WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO. THEN **REWARDING** OR **REINFORCING** IT immediately!



You may have to look hard, with some employees, to find something positive to reinforce. They are like a campfire that is nearly out. All that remains is a small glowing ember.

You have to gently fan the ember to nurture it back into a flicker of flame and then on to a roaring fire. Some people are the same way!

Think about your employees. Some do the right things all the time and you hope they continue. Others do mostly right things and you wish they would do those right things more often.

(Note: I am not saying they do wrong things when they aren’t doing the right things you want them to do. If that were the case, you would be counseling, not coaching. You simply wish they would do a little more than the “least they can do to keep their jobs”: i.e., just getting by.

Suppose you would like them to show a little more initiative sometimes instead of just waiting for you to tell them what to do. So when they do show a little initiative, you “catch them doing it” and do some coaching as we’ll describe next. That’s what I mean by waiting to catch them doing something right.)

List below two of your employees and their behaviors you want to see continued or started. (The same employee may be in both situations.)

Employee	I want them to continue doing this...	I want them to start doing this...

Getting people to STOP doing the wrong thing does not mean they will automatically START doing the right thing! They will only stop doing wrong things so you do not punish them.

If you want them to do the right things, you must make sure they know what right things are and then praise them.

**“YOU GET WHAT YOU REINFORCE.”**

## GETTING EMPLOYEES TO START DOING RIGHT THINGS

Many times employees do know the things they should do right but they may not always be aware they know. Or, for some reason, they haven't felt sufficient motivation to act on that knowledge. (Remember the WIIFM aspect of motivation – page 38.)

Here's an easy way to get them thinking about those right things and – you hope – doing them so you can use the PACER model we describe in the next few pages to reinforce and continue them.

Try getting them to see the world through your eyes by leading them along a path saying something like this:

*“Do you think it's reasonable that people who show some 'ownership' of their jobs – like doing what needs to be done without having to be told or looking for opportunities to improve the way we do things – should be paid better and have greater opportunities for advancement than someone who doesn't?”*

(This is almost an unfair question – how can they possibly say “No, it isn't reasonable.”)

Then ask, “Would you like a chance to be paid better and have greater opportunities for advancement?”

If they say “NO, I'm happy where I am”, just accept it. Although it is VERY rare for someone not to want to improve themselves, it is possible. As long as they are meeting your minimum expectations, just leave them alone. They're telling you they are happy where they are, you shouldn't expect any more from them, and don't waste time trying to develop them into something more.

But, if they are like 99.5% of the people working for you that want to improve their situation, they will say, *“Sure, I'd like that chance.”*

When they say that, get them to look at their job and their work through your eyes by asking, “OK, if you were a supervisor of someone doing your job (make sure they link this hypothetical question to the reality of their job), what would you expect to see them do (see them do means a behavior – not just an improved attitude) that would tell you they want to be paid better and have greater opportunities for advancement?”



Listen carefully to the list of behaviors they identify as proof that someone doing their job would want to be paid better and have a chance for advancement.

If you agree with them, say something like, *“That's right! That would show they are taking ownership of their job!”*

If you do not agree with one of their behaviors, say something like, *“How does doing that mean they're showing some ownership?”*

Always ask them to explain what you don't understand instead of saying, "No, that's wrong" because as soon as you're judgmental, they may shut down and not talk anymore. In case they are not good at articulating their thoughts, asking them to explain will give them another chance to get their idea across. Remember, the more you can get them to identify as positive traits of their job without your prompting, the greater of a chance they'll take ownership of it.

### GETTING EMPLOYEES TO CONTINUE DOING THE RIGHT THINGS

When coaching employees toward desired performance, it is important to take a moment to think about the message we are conveying with our words.

Think of the Little League baseball coach shouting to his pitcher, "Be sure to cover home plate on a passed ball so the runner on 3<sup>rd</sup> doesn't score!"

What message do you think he is unintentionally sending between his words? (I expect you to throw a wild pitch, so cover home plate in an attempt to lessen the damage I am expecting you to cause!)



What do you think is the inevitable outcome of his "coaching" of the pitcher this way? (There is a high probability there will be a wild pitch because the child will be so focused on the thing he is not supposed to do that he may very well end up doing it!)

What should he be saying? (Hint - What does he really want the pitcher to do?) ("Hit the catcher's glove! Throw it across the plate!")

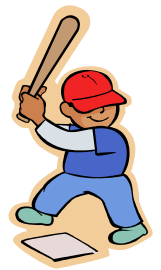
So, assuming you are clear on what you want your employee to keep doing, there is a simple, yet very powerful, method an effective leader can use **in less than 30 seconds** to help employees focus on what they are doing right. Also, increase the likelihood they will keep doing it! Just remember the word P-A-C-E-R (**Performance – Ask – Check – Else – Reinforce) to take you through the steps easily.**

Here is an example of how it works.

Imagine you are a Little League parent (instead of the coach sending a mixed message to the pitcher) and your player gets a base hit. After the game or as soon as you can, you run up and congratulate him. Your conversation – after learning this technique – will go like this: (This will take about 30 seconds!)

**Parent:** "Great hit, son! That ball really took off! How did you hit it so well?"  
(This calls his attention to the performance you want repeated and asks how he did it. His explaining it to you reinforces the desired action in his mind..)

**Player:** "Well, I held the bat like you taught me, stayed relaxed, and watched the ball. When I thought it was close enough; I turned my hips into the



ball, whipped my hands around, followed through and the ball took off!” (You ask what he did and check to make sure it is correct. If he says, ‘I just closed my eyes and stuck the bat out there’, have him repeat what he should have done!)

**Parent:** “What did it feel like when you hit it? Was it exciting hearing everyone screaming?” (These questions help him relive the moment and create a desire to do it again.)

**Player:** “It was great! This is the best baseball day I’ve ever had!” (This is more reinforcement of the moment.)

**Parent:** “It sure is! Is there anything else we can do to make sure you keep getting great hits like that?” (Asking ‘what else’ gives them a chance to offer any ideas they may have. Remember, you do not have to act on them if they are unreasonable.)

**Player:** “I can keep doing what I’ve been doing. And, we could start going down to the batting cage!”

**Parent:** “OK! You keep swinging correctly and we will go to the batting cage some more, too! Son, you are doing great! We are very proud of you! Keep it up!” (This is the ‘reinforce’ by praising him.)

Suppose he said, “Well, you could buy me a new bat” but that new bat costs \$175. You can simply say, “That probably would help but we can’t do that right now. Are there any other things you think we can do to make sure you keep getting hits?” Just because he (or the employee in a work setting) comes up with an idea does not mean you have to act on it. You can still retain the discretion of whether or not to do it.

Here are some other considerations when using the **P-A-C-E-R** model. We will continue with the Little League example to explain.

***“HOW DID YOU HIT IT SO WELL?”***

Be sure you do not say this with a tone of *disbelief* – as if you never expected him to succeed. Be *amazed* at how successful he was and how he made it look so easy: Never act surprised!

*“What did it feel like when you hit it? Was it exciting hearing everyone screaming?”*

This helps him recall the feel and sounds of success. The more you involve all of his senses in the recall, the greater the impression on him.

**Especially involve his emotions.** The more he recalls his emotions to imprint further the *feeling* of achievement, ***“How proud did you feel? Was it exciting?”*** “the easier you make it to

relive the moment. This means the greater the stimulus to keep practicing properly. (This works for adults as well as Little Leaguers!)

1. **P** Draw his/her attention to the desired performance you want. **“You’ve finished your work early AGAIN! That is great!”**
2. **A** Get him/her thinking about what he did by asking how he did it. **Please tell me how do you achieve that EVERY DAY!”**
3. **C** Listen carefully to his/her description to check whether it was an intentional act or random chance. If random, review with them what they need to do to make it happen consistently.)
4. **E** Give him/her a chance to continue doing the right thing by asking what else you can provide to make sure it keeps happening. **“Is there anything I can do to help you keep finishing early?” (If their suggestion is reasonable, consider doing it. If not reasonable, you are not obligated to do it.)**
5. **R** Reinforce the moment and wrap it up with an encouraging phrase. **“You have certainly**

### COACHING 3 LEVELS OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Although this course is about supervising difficult people, this seems like a good time to add something else: coaching three specific levels of performance. Think about your employees and their typical, long-term performance levels. We say ‘long-term’ because this is not about a one time spurt in performance or a rare drop: it’s about the majority of what you see from them.

Mentally place each of your employees into one of three categories: the Star, Average, or Falling in performance. Then use this chart as a reference on how you may be able to help your stars stay high and coach your lower performers into higher performance levels.

<b>STARS</b> ←	<b>AVERAGE</b> (REMEMBER, THIS GROUP CAN MOVE EITHER WAY DEPENDING ON <u>YOUR</u> LEADERSHIP!)	→ <b>FALLING</b>
Get them involved with as much planning and decision making as possible	Build their confidence by increasing responsibilities.	We deal with this performance level in the next section: “Getting Employees to Start Doing Right Things”
Delegate extensively AND DON’T MICRO-MANAGE!	Give frequent and accurate performance feedback.	
Encourage them to teach others when possible.	Encourage them to ask others they look up to (your stars) for help when they need it.	
Help them develop themselves with presentation, speaking, and writing courses.	Teach them how to set small goals initially and gradually make the goals bigger or more aggressive.	
Let them fill in for you while you are out. (Individually or share your tasks among them.)	Catch them doing something right and praise it.	
Challenge them with goals “above and beyond” normal expectations.	WHAT ELSE?	
<i>Celebrate their successes with them.</i>		
Frequently tell them how proud you are of their development.		
Spend time with them asking for their thoughts on departmental challenges.		
Promote them (if they are seeking promotion). Do not hang on to them just because they make your life easy!		

## A QUICK REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

Look back at the table on page 54 where you identified some behaviors of your employees and use these tips for coaching:

**Continue doing this** - Use the **PACER** model for employees that you want to continue doing specific behaviors.

**Start doing this** – Use the process we described just before this section of getting the employee to identify what traits they think would demonstrate that someone wants to be paid better and have a chance of career advancement.

**Coaching Three Levels of Employee Performance** – Look back at the table on page 59

Another technique that is a simple teaching, then coaching, method is called **TRIPLICATION**. Suppose I want to teach you how to set up a printing machine, to run a batch of bank statements, or how to hit a golf ball.

We would go through the steps three times (the “triplication”) in a specific sequence:

1. **I do – I say** (I perform the tasks in sequence while (I am) explaining what I’m doing.) This first step allows them to see the whole action – the “big picture.”
2. **I do – you say** (I perform the tasks in sequence while you explain what I’m doing.) This allows them to think about what you’re doing, what comes next, and reinforce it in their mind as they hear themselves say it.
3. **You do – you say** (You perform the tasks in sequence while (you are) explaining to me what you are doing.) Now they are matching the physical movements with the narrative (creating ‘muscle memories’) and the new patterns are being implanted.

Please realize that it may take many repetitions of each step until they feel comfortable on their own but, rest assured, this three step method is the fastest way for them to learn.

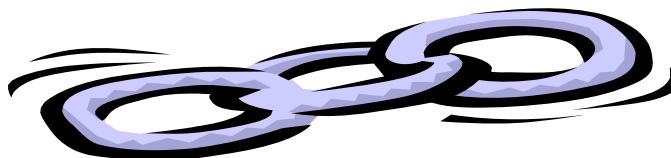


## SUPERVISORY LEGAL CONCEPTS

As a supervisor, there are some legal concepts of which you should be aware. The existence of “LEGAL LINKS” in the workplace is very important.



**Your Employer**

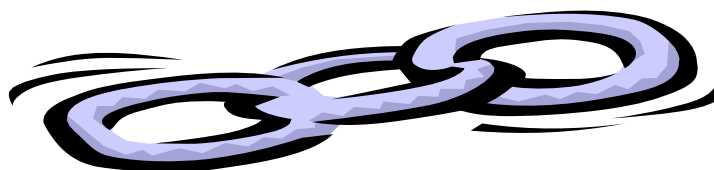


**You as a manager  
or supervisor**

There is a “LEGAL LINK” between you and your employer making it responsible for your actions in the workplace.



**You as a manager  
or supervisor**



There is also a “LEGAL LINK” between YOU and your employees making YOU responsible for their actions in the workplace.



**Your employees**

The organization that employs you is legally responsible for your behavior while you are “at work.” If you do something illegal during work hours (when you’re considered “at work”) but not necessarily at the workplace, the organization could be sued for your actions REGARDLESS IF ANY OFFICIAL IN THE ORGANIZATION ACTUALLY KNEW YOU WERE DOING IT!

The lawsuit will probably say, “The organization’s management knew or should have known you were doing that illegal act which demonstrates their failure to supervise you or to train you not to act that way.”

That situation can become very expensive to the organization (and possible you) very quickly! The lawsuit would ask for (AND PROBABLY GET) a lot of money from the organization because the organization has “deeper pockets” (more money) than you do!

The people bringing the lawsuit would have to sue you first as an agent of the employer, and then go after them for employing you.

**What are some examples in your job that can mean “at work but not necessarily in the workplace”?**

- You could be running a work-related errand while driving a company vehicle and cause an accident. Or going in your own car on company business.
- You could be traveling to a company meeting and get into an altercation at an airport.
- You could be attending a meeting at a client’s office and have problems.

**Why should you be aware of this issue?**

You are not necessarily shielded by your employer if they can prove that they trained you to act differently than you did when you got into trouble. That is why a policeman can be sued as an individual but the Police Department may not be if they can prove they trained him or her to behave properly.

The secure [testing services](http://www.outsourcetrainingonline/testing-services.html) on our website, [www.outsourcetrainingonline/testing-services.html](http://www.outsourcetrainingonline/testing-services.html), can provide the secure testing and records retention that can help to deflect (no guarantee of prevention) legal action away from you.

**What relationship is there between this course and the concept that your employer could be held liable (and pay BIG \$\$\$\$) for your illegal actions if someone could prove your employer “failed to train you to act differently”?**

If they could not show proof they trained you to act appropriately, and that you passed a test to measure your understanding of the content, they could be held liable for your actions.

However, if they COULD SHOW THAT PROOF, that could diminish their risk and allow them to claim you acted illegally even though they taught you not to!

**What about between your employer and the employees who work for you?**

Essentially the same as above

**What about between you and your employees?** Essentially the same as above

The “Legal Links” concept we described on page 61 is one of two critical legal concepts that you, as a supervisor, should understand.

The other critical concept is “**VICARIOUS LIABILITY**”: *a form of strict, secondary liability that arises under the common law doctrine of agency – respondeat superior – the responsibility of the superior for the acts of their subordinate, or, in a broader sense, the responsibility of any third party that had the “right, ability or duty to control” the activities of a violator*<sup>1</sup>

This means that your employer is ultimately responsible for the activities of all its employees while **you, via the linking concept above, are responsible for the actions of your employees.**

## DOCUMENTATION FUNDAMENTALS



Do you know the **ORP-person**? That is the Ordinary, Reasonable, and Prudent person who did not witness the event in question but may sit in judgment of your actions at an administrative hearing or as a member of a jury)

Be sure to chisel this into your memory just as it is chiseled into this block of stone!

**“IF IT ISN’T DOCUMENTED,  
IT DIDN’T HAPPEN”**



### QUESTION:

What determines whether an employee’s behavior requires your intervention? (*The most universally applicable answer is, “If it impacts work!”*)

What impression could these sentences give the **ORP-person** about the writer and why could they give that impression?

- “*She just doesn’t take pride in her work!*”
- “*His attitude toward customers is rude and very unprofessional.*”
- “*She is so loud and arrogant that no one wants to work with her!*”

(The ORP-person may think you have a grudge against them or there is something personal going on. You must always focus on observable, descriptive behavior and not opinions unless asked specifically for an opinion.)

Rewrite them so they do not give the impression you described above. (Hint: How can you write them to focus on objective behavior and not your value system?)

- **“She just doesn’t take pride in her work!”**

Her lack of accuracy (**quality reference**) and tardiness in submitting the report (**time reference**) are performance problems. I do not think she takes pride in her work. (If you are compelled to refer to her ‘pride’, then precede it with behavioral references such as typos, smudges on the paper, etc. so the ORP-person will know you have valid reasons for saying so.)

- **“His attitude toward customers is rude and very unprofessional.”**

He keeps interrupting them, does not allow them to finish questions, and calls them “stupid” to their face. (**All specific behavioral references**) His behavior is rude and unprofessional to customers!

- **“She is so loud and arrogant that no one wants to work with her!”**

You can hear her talking several cubicles away. She is always correcting people and usually she is wrong! I have had a request from every one of her co-workers at different times for a transfer to another part of our department away from her. **All specific behavioral references**

## THE DIFFICULT BEHAVIOR TYPES

Finally, we have come to the difficult behaviors that we identified on page 5. Each will be listed as a separate heading with discussion and reference to appropriate sections back in the text.

### THE BULLY

There are two types of bullies that we will cover here:

Verbal bullies who try to dominate conversations by talking over others, being manipulative, using sexual innuendo, being demanding or rude, crude, obnoxious, critical, demeaning, belligerent, hostile, swearing, name calling, verbal threats, raised voice, yelling, shouting, screaming, etc.

Intimidating bullies who try to intimidate others by their behavior such as pushing, shoving, “accidentally” bumping into the victim in the workplace, in line at the copier or cafeteria, spilling a drink onto the victim’s desk or work, or making outright threats like “you’ll be sorry”: being intentionally intimidating.



### VERBAL BULLIES

Bullies have a compelling need to be right or superior, and can be abusive and intimidating while trying to affirm themselves. They may have some feeling of inferiority and need to act superior to reaffirm their status – at least in their eyes.

*What you can do* -- You must determine if the bully’s behavior is negatively impacting the “victim’s” work performance. You can do this via direct observation or discussion with the ‘victim.’

If it is, take the bully aside, identify the bullying behaviors that you do not want to see anymore (page 7) and define your expectations for improvement. We suggest you not use the word - *bully* - but just focus on the behaviors that you want to stop because they may think you’re giving them a label they don’t deserve and they’ll play victim to you. The conversation will change quickly from a counseling session into the bully being defensive and pushing back against the label.

Then document your conversation (page 63) including your expectations of changed performance, and ask him or her to initial it as acknowledgment of the conversation -not a confession of bad behavior.

If he or she does not want to initial it, that’s OK because you can still add a note to the bottom, *“Fred declined to initial the document.”*

**Author's note:** From experience, I learned to defeat this reluctance to sign by drawing a line across the document just below the last statement and putting a big "X" across the remainder of the open page below and say, "If we both sign on this line above the crossed-out portion below, it prevents anyone from adding something to this after we sign it."

Suddenly, in the mind of the bully, there's a hint of a conspiracy that a mysterious "someone" may want to add something below their signature to make them look even worse. So they're glad to sign as a way of protecting them from the conspirators out to get them.

(I know it sounds silly but in the minds of some bad actors that we have in the workplace, they already feel the world is against them and this just allows you to channel that paranoia into something useful for you.)

## NOT JUST "HARMLESS FUN"

The intimidating bully may think that his behavior is just "having some harmless fun." However, it is rarely fun for the victim.

Obviously, this is a very serious situation that you handle at two levels: defining expectations while documenting the conversation and looking a little deeper into an understanding of civil behavior that you must have for potential harassment issues. We will discuss more about that now.

## UNDERSTANDING HARASSMENT

Harassment is described as to disturb persistently; torment, as with troubles or cares; bother continually; pester; persecute.<sup>ii</sup>

Whether your employee calls it "playing" or "just kidding around", and asks why you're making "such a big deal" out of it, you must make it clear they cannot do or say anything that makes someone so uncomfortable that it affects his or her work negatively.

This means that they **CANNOT (we do not mean "SHOULD NOT")** use offensive language; engage in any offensive behavior such as tell offensive jokes; make gestures, sounds, or show pictures that may offend someone at work.

Likewise, they **CANNOT (we do not mean "SHOULD NOT")** engage in any behavior that may be considered harassment relating to an employee's race, religion, color, national origin, age, disability; citizenship status or other factor protected by law.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**Author's note: This harassment section is designed to inform students about general concepts.**

**THIS IS NOT LEGAL ADVICE.**

**Consult your HR Department for additional help before taking any action against any employee.**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The “big deal” with harassment comes from the fact that all employees are entitled to make a living by doing the best job they can for their employer. If they have trouble concentrating on their job because co-workers say or do things that makes them uncomfortable, those coworkers **are putting their victim’s ability to do their job at risk.**

If someone were putting your job at risk, would you laugh? What would you do about it?

## HARASSMENT AS INTIMIDATION

However, supervisors need to know that any type of intimidating behavior (i.e., degrading, yelling at, publicly disciplining, sarcastic comments, divulging confidences, etc.) could be construed as hostile.



A supervisor who behaves in an intimidating manner may not be specifically singling out a particular employee; it may just be his or her “management style.” The risk here is that an employee may take it to mean, “You don’t like me” which could lead to feelings of intimidation and then a “hostile environment.” An intimidating, hostile management style is inappropriate because it not only could be construed as illegal, but it is ineffective as well.

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is a unique form of bullying that can be most damaging to your supervisory career if you allow it to continue without taking action. It almost always takes the form of “you are guilty until you can prove you are innocent.”

Again, whether the bully calls it “playing” or “just kidding around”, **you must tell them they CANNOT (we do not mean “SHOULD NOT”)** say or do anything that would create a “hostile environment.” If the victim feels the bully is creating a hostile environment by intimidating them in any way, their work performance may suffer, and you can become liable vicariously (page 63) for legal action if you fail to act on it.

“SEXUAL HARASSMENT” generally must include a feeling that the comments made were UNWELCOME and UNINVITED. If the bully says something that the victim thinks is a genuine compliment such as, “*That sure is a bright and cheerful outfit for spring!*” the ‘victim’ could reply, “*Thank you*” without any problems.

However, if the bully makes the ‘victim’ feel uncomfortable by making UNINVITED or UNWELCOMED comments about how it accents their figure or anything else they think is inappropriate, then it approaches sexual harassment. If that happens, tell him or her IMMEDIATELY, “*Please don’t say that. It is not appropriate in the workplace*”.

**If the bully apologizes and drops the issue, let them go on about their work.** (However, tell the victim privately that if it does bother them but they do not say anything, it *may be* more



difficult to lodge a complaint later because the bully could always say, “If I thought it bothered you, I would have stopped.”)

The concept of “sexual harassment” includes:

- A male harassing a female
- A female harassing a male
- A female harassing another female
- A male harassing another male.

## RETALIATION

If you must counsel a bully to stop harassing an employee, **focus on the behavior you want them to stop**. Avoid calling it "harassment" because the conversation will quickly become an argument about the definition of harassment instead of correcting the behavior.

Also make sure you also warn them against any kind of retaliation against their victim. This is especially true if the victim brought it to your attention. Finally, add your warning against retaliation to the documentation of your counseling session with them.

## KEEPING SECRETS AND YOUR OBLIGATION TO ACT

It is very important that you understand this...



If an employee brings information to you about an illegal activity such as:

- Discrimination
- Harassment of any kind
- Retaliation
- Theft
- Forging signatures of time cards
- Or anything contrary to the rules, regulations, and policies of your organization

**You have an obligation to act on it!!**



Suppose an employee tells you in confidence about someone selling drugs at work. They ask you to leave their name out of it.

Would you contact your manager and/or Human Resources about this?

Why or why not?

Would you insist on keeping the employee's name out of it?

Why or why not?

Suppose the investigators say they must know who told you so they can complete their investigation. Would you tell?

Why or why not?

**What should you tell an employee BEFORE they divulge confidential information to you?**

(You must tell them something like this: ***"If what you tell me involves illegal activity, I have an obligation to report it. Otherwise, I become part of a cover-up."*** Talk to your manager or the HR Department for the way your organization wants you to phrase it.)

Which of these is your greater obligation?

- Keeping confidentiality with an employee or
- Your duty to report illegal activity

Think about what we said earlier about NEGLIGENCE and the concept that YOU *"knew or should have known."* Suppose an employee tells you about a coworker who is making them uncomfortable with comments about a swimwear catalog that they have been showing in the cafeteria.

Then they finish the story saying, *"I guess it's not really such a big deal now that I hear myself tell it. Can we just forget about it? I will handle it. Sorry I wasted your time."*

They leave your office and, since they said, *"It's not a big deal, I'll handle it,"* you do forget about it and go back to your work. About three months later a lawsuit arrives. It is filed by the

employee that came to talk with you and charges sexual harassment against the coworker. You are called to testify in court.

- What questions do you think the employee's attorney would ask you? (They would ask if you had heard about this from the employee.)
- How would you answer? ("Yes, I did but after she told me, she said not to worry about it because she realized it was not such a big deal.")
- What do you think the jury would think about your capabilities as a manager? (That you were not smart enough to realize it still had happened and by not reporting it, you allowed it to continue.)
- What do you think the jury would think about your employer? (They failed to train their management staff.)
- How do the concepts of NEGLIGENCE and your DUTY TO ACT apply in this situation? (This is clearly a failure to act by the manager. The employee saying, "Never mind" does not relieve the duty to act.)
- If you were in the jury, who all (if anyone) would you find guilty?



## EXAMPLES OF HARASSMENT COURT DECISIONS

A legal secretary charged a partner in the law firm sexually harassed her during the short time she worked there. At trial, the evidence showed that several people in the firm knew of separate instances of harassment by this partner, but no single person knew of all the instances.

The firm's failure to conduct a thorough, centralized investigation resulted in a jury verdict of over \$7 million. This was later reduced to slightly more than \$3 million, **with approximately \$250,000 paid by the partner personally.** Weeb v. Baker & McKenzie, 1994

A female employee charged that she reported her supervisor's unwanted sexual harassment to others in the company, but her complaints were ignored (**the company could not offer proof that it acted on her complaints. Remember we said the view here is presumed guilty unless documentation shows otherwise.**)

The jury awarded her \$35,000 for her emotional distress and \$50 million in punitive damages (later reduced to \$350,000). Kirzeyv. Wal-Mart Stores Inc., 1995

An employer avoided a sexual harassment lawsuit because when they (management) heard about the harassment, **they immediately implemented a no-harassment policy, and the harassment ceased.** Webb v. Cardiothoracic Surgery Associates, 1998

## THE COMPLAINER

Complainers, like bullies, typically come in one of two types: the *chronic pessimist* or they *feel paralyzed*.

Their nature is to see a glass as always half-empty. They are not interested in how things could be but in just complaining about things as they are. They are a **chronic pessimist**.

Or they **feel paralyzed** and don't act because:

- they don't have the imagination to see what could be
- they don't have the confidence to try something
- they have never found any rewards in attempting something

## THE CHRONIC PESSIMIST

They will come into your office in the morning or catch you at the coffee pot and start their negative litany about everything they have encountered since the last time they saw you.

The best way to bring it to an end is to acknowledge their view ("*you're right – that probably could have been done better*") and then challenge them to improve it if the situation would allow ("*if it were your decision, how would you do it differently?*")



**Author's note:** As a proud resident of the South, we have two sayings that are perfect for a situation like this and I only provide them as a humorous break in a serious subject. I do not actually mean you should use them.

The first phrase to use after they complain is, "*I heard that!*" (*emphasis on 'that'*) which they can take to mean you agree (although you have not said so) or are sympathetic.

The other one to use after a complaint is, "*There you go.*" Again, they may take it to mean you agree or sympathetic. And, once again, you have actually contributed nothing to the conversation but have given the impression you did while avoiding the confrontational alternative of asking, "why are you always complaining" or being seen as rude by not saying anything.

They may have been pointing out problems as a way to get a chance to show off (this is extremely unlikely but possible) and they may surprise you with a solution. Or, on the other hand, the probability is they have no solution – they just enjoy complaining or second-guessing someone else – and you are getting tired of it.

Call them on their behavior saying something like, “How much more work do you think you could accomplish if you put as much effort into it as you focusing on things over which you have no control?” (I guarantee THAT IS A SHOW STOPPER question! Also, you did not label them as a complainer, you identified their behavior.)

Or, if you are not comfortable with that, tell them something like, “*Look. My day is starting nicely – please don’t try to add some dark clouds to it.*” Regardless of what you say, you should call them on it pointing out that complaining about something OVER AND OVER without any attempt (or ability) to change it is a waste of time and you don’t want them wasting your time, their time, or any other employee’s.

## FEEL PARALYZED

They **feel paralyzed** and do not act because:

They do not have the imagination to see what could be. Some people are very “imagination challenged” and cannot envision what could be. This is more an innate skill (or lack) than anything that can be taught. However, once someone lays out the plan for them, they may be able to execute it easily.

Think of some of the design shows that are all over the TV. Some people have to call a designer to help them renovate a room in their house or landscape their yard because they simply do not have the creative ‘genes’ to envision what could be. But if the designer can lay out a plan with all components clearly labeled, the “imagination challenged” one can follow it and gain a sense of satisfaction with the result.

In your situation, maybe there is a creative person in your department with whom you could pair this one on a project. You’ll be giving the creative one some recognition of their special skills, helping the complainer gain a sense of accomplishment, and maybe giving yourself a break from listening to their complaints!

- **They do not have the confidence to try something.** Try looking back at the coaching section on page 55. You may have to catch them doing something right and building on it so they gain confidence.
- **They have never found any rewards in attempting something.** This is an opportunity to practice your motivational skills (page 38) and help them discover “what’s in it for them” to try something.

## THE SNIPER



The Sniper strikes from their hidden spots through rude comments, biting sarcasm, a heavy sigh when you make a point in a discussion, or a well-timed roll of the eyes, as they attack you or someone else.

This is like the wise guys who sat in the back of the high school classroom and shot comments out at classmates and the teacher. Their behavior will change when the teacher changes the Sniper's seat to the front of the room, where they do not have the "cover" of distance from the teacher.

The best way to deal with them is to expose them by calling them out and getting them to define their intentions and challenge their relevancy. If you force them to defend their actions, then you are taking all the fun out of being the sniper.

- "What did you intend when you said that?"
- "How does that comment advance our discussion?" This is about relevancy.
- "When you say that was just a joke, where's the funny part?"

You may also have to rely on some counseling techniques (page 50) to get them to change their behaviors.

## THE CRUDE JOKESTER

This character is a variation of the Bully whose specialty is using crude jokes to show off or intimidate others. You can deal effectively with him using these topics we have already covered:



The [Bully](#)

[Counseling to change behavior](#)

Put special emphasis on creating a hostile environment 67 (And maybe even, "Are you trying to give your job back to me?")

Review the dangers for you of doing nothing [here](#)

## THE GOSSIP



Very little good ever comes from starting, continuing, or sharing gossip in the workplace. At the least, employees are wasting time when they could be productive (remember the question , “What are we paying you to do”) and at the worst, it can alienate some, create tension and friction, impact productivity and cause you more headaches than you can imagine.

The best way to deal with a gossip is using your counseling skills as described [here](#).

## THE KNOW-IT-ALL

These types are looking for attention by knowing just enough about a topic to sound credible but not knowing it thoroughly enough to be an actual expert.

The best way to get them to stop acting like they-know-it-all is to ask them to do these:

- Clarify their points (“*Excuse me – did you mean to say X or Y*”),
- Expand on them to relate to something you are talking about in this meeting (“*So how does that example apply to what we have here?*”)
- Provide details - Since the Know-It-All speaks in broad generalizations you will want to question the use of universal words like “everybody” with “Who specifically?”, “always” with “When specifically?”, and “significant” with “Significant in what way, specifically?”



Give them a break, if possible, by resisting the temptation to embarrass them. Make them an ally by giving them a way out and again minimizing the chance of putting them on the defensive.

Consider them to be a non-malicious version of the **Sniper** who tries to tear down others to build him up. The **Know-It-All** tries to build himself up but not at the cost of someone else.

## THE INDECISIVE

For some reason, most indecisive types do not act because they fear making a mistake or being wrong. If you are sure they are capable of doing the expected task (review [this chart](#) to make sure it is not something else keeping them from acting) but simply fear being wrong, try this.

Lead them into a discussing the possible outcomes of their actions like this:

*“If you take responsibility for making a decision, what are the two possible outcomes?”*

Their answer should be either success or failure.

Now explore the failure side a little more by asking, *“If it failed, what’s the WORST that could happen?”*

Let them answer and then ask, *“Would you be fired?”*

Their response is something like *“Probably not.”*

You again, *“So if you aren’t going to get fired by making the wrong decision, what then?”*

*“Maybe I try to correct the mistake.”*

The point here is that many people fail to think past the first worst outcome (“I FAILED!”), freeze at that point, and go no farther. But if you lead them into an analysis of the next worst-case scenario, *“what then”*, and the next worst case followed by *“what then”*, you can help them realize there really is no great job-threatening risk of failure while inaction can cause major career development obstacles.

It make take several iterations of “then what” before they realize there is almost always an opportunity for redemption when we make mistakes.



## THE EMOTIONALLY FRAGILE



First, let me assure you this section will not be an amateur attempt at psychoanalysis: that is certainly well outside of my expertise. We will not deal with any potential mental health issues.

Having stated that, being “emotionally fragile” may be another way to say someone is [indecisive](#), [feeling paralyzed](#), or greatly lacking self-confidence in their abilities to perform to expectations.

If you think these descriptions may also apply to the “emotionally fragile” employee, we DO have some ideas for you.



First, follow the links to previously discussed material for “indecisive” and “feeling paralyzed.”

If you feel the problem is a lack of self-confidence, it make take a major effort of [coaching](#) on your part to help them achieve some initial success and then become more familiar with it as their self-confidence grows. Try mixing in some [motivational](#) techniques and you should have them becoming more confident and valuable in the department.

## THE UNRELIABLE

These people may have very little experience with penalties for failure to meet agreed-upon expectations. Look back at Step #6 - analyzing performance problems on page 37.



The simple solution here may be to define your expectations clearly using elements of quality, quantity, and time using the discussion that starts [here](#).

If you are satisfied, they can do the task and that they clearly understand the [QQT](#) of it, and if they fail to produce as desired, ask them if they are trying to give their job back. (Look back at the counseling section [here](#).)

In essence, you are saying, “*If we can’t count on you to meet expectations, why should we keep you around?*” This is another version of TOUGH LOVE.

## THE SLACKER



This character is also known as the *Minimalist* – doing the least they can do to get by – or the *Clock Watcher*.

This one is probably the most irritating of the bunch because with him or her, there is not any negative behavior that you want them to stop – they’re just doing enough of the desired behavior to rise about minimal.

With them, work expands to fill the time available. They are the last one to arrive (just on time); they will take every minute of breaks, every minute of lunch, and leave exactly on time.

It is very easy for a supervisor to get so frustrated at their behavior that you ignore the good things other employees may be doing.



You have two choices here that can help you keep control of the situation without letting them get under your skin:

1. Make sure they understand if they are going to do the least they can do to get by, they can expect the least available when it comes to a pay raise. *“It’s nothing personal; we’re just paying for performance. If you do the least acceptable to maintain employment, then you’re showing us you expect the least increase in salary.”* (Make sure they understand your reaction is driven solely by their performance – do not let your emotions get into it.)
2. Try increasing their work expectations since they have shown you they can meet your minimal expectations. If they complain about the increased workload, say, *“We want to give you a chance to earn more by doing more. If you’d rather keep earning what you are by keeping the same work expectations, just let me know.”*

Be sure to document and get their initials (or indicate they refused to initial) that they said they would rather keep meeting minimal expectations. This comes in very handy as supporting documentation when you get the opportunity to terminate them legitimately.

## THE “BROWN NOSER”

The Urban Dictionary defines them as; *“A person who acts favorably to his or her peers to gain stasis or fancy that will eventually be used to their advantage. Examples are a raise, promotion, or acceptance in a group. Usually they will do anything to gain the approval of their person of choice. These people can also be described as losers because they can’t work for what they want; instead they play dirty and butter-up the boss/teacher/peer into getting what they want.”*



A wise supervisory will quickly identify these characters as parasites and take these two steps, at least:

1. Do not let this person gain any special advantage regardless of how tempting it may be for you to have someone at your beck-and-call who never complains and never questions you. The other employees have already seen through them and it will diminish your stature in their eyes if they think you are not smart enough to see it, too.
2. Explain to this person that their behavior is very transparent and they are only harming their professional development and future in that department if they continue to act that way. Their peers will not like or trust them and you certainly do not need a “yes man” working for you. Maybe you can help them see that behavior like that in the work place may have very different outcomes than they experienced with it in their youth.

## THE PHONY



The Phony is not necessarily a stand-alone type but rather a variation of one we have already discussed. What I mean is that “phony” means NOT REAL.

So if he/she comes across as a Know-it-All but you discover that knowledge is not real (or very deep), then he is also a Phony. If you think he is a Bully initially but soon discover it is just inadequacies about some job knowledge, then he is also a Phony.

Regardless of the topic about which he is a Phony, the best way to deal with it is to expose that phoniness to him privately (so you do not make a public enemy) and help him see that behavior is hurting his professional development. Even though it may be obvious to you that it can cause him problems, it may not be so evident to him.

## CAN'T SAY “NO”

When employees have a hard time saying “NO” to helping coworkers, doing extra work, staying late, etc., it can seem like a blessing for a supervisor because things keep getting done.



It would be wise, however, for a supervisor to watch this person and those asking for their help very carefully because some performance problems may be developing. Let us take a look at both sides of this situation: the victim who cannot say “NO” and the exploiters who keep asking for help.

Why does the victim do this? Are they so proficient in their own work that they have time to help others and still accomplish their jobs? (If so, are their work goals set too low that they have extra time to help others or do their work outcomes suffer because they stopped to help others?)

Is it just their nature to be ‘servants’ helping others in times of need? If so, that is a wonderful trait to have AS LONG AS IT DOES NOT NEGATIVELY IMPACT THEIR PRODUCTIVITY or allowing those they help to get a free ride.

Also, ask yourself, “Why do the exploiters need help? Is their work load too much or is something else going on?” This is a good time to refer back to the [performance problem flow chart](#) to determine if they have actual performance problems. or have they learned they can work slower, ask the victim for help, and still get done on time?

It would be useful if you explain to the victim privately that while you think it’s a very generous and team-spirited thing to help others, they should suggest to those asking for help to talk with the supervisor in case their workload isn’t realistic. The supervisor can make adjustments as needed if their claims are legitimate.

This also gives you an opportunity to make them aware the others may be exploiting their kind and generous nature and their kindness is simply enabling that behavior.

## THE VOLCANO

The Volcano suddenly erupts and those standing around him stop working to watch what happens next. Then you have to take time to get them aside, try to calm them down, and deal with the issues at hand – plus get the onlookers back to work.



Dealing with this type is most commonly an exercise in the three stages of conflict management.

### 1. STAGE ONE – IRRITATING DAILY EVENTS

YOU MUST LISTEN FOR THESE CLUES:

- Comments are focused on “non-human” topics (machinery, weather, traffic (the mass of vehicles, not individual people), the “system [computers, the organizational culture, procedures]” etc.)
- Words are in the present tense (“This copier is out of paper”.)
- More focus on a solution than the problem (“This copier is out of paper: where is the supply so I can refill it?”)



WAYS TO HANDLE STAGE ONE CONFLICT

- **Initiate a response that examines the situation.** (*“It looks like the copier is out of paper. Do you know where the stock of it is?”*)
- **Ask if the reaction is proportional to the situation.** (Is anyone carrying “baggage” from previous situations? How would you know? Hint: What tense are they using to describe their position? *“You know, all it needs is new paper. Why not save the drama for the big issues and just put in some new paper?”*)
- **Identify points of agreement, work from these points first, and then identify the points of disagreement.** (*“I agree with you that it seems like no one else restocks the copier but you. Maybe we should assign people to check it on different days. Would you like to make up a schedule for my review.”*)

## STAGE TWO – REQUIRES WINNERS & LOSERS



You must LISTEN FOR these clues:

Words are in the past tense (“*This copier never has paper in it! It’s always empty!*”)

Comments are focused on “human” topics (machinery maintenance person, weather man, traffic – a particular driver, the “system [computers service people, the organizational culture - a particular person within it, procedures – a particular person who doesn’t follow them]” etc. “*I hate people who can’t even restock a copier run they run it out of paper!*”)



More focus on who caused the problem – or allowed it to happen - than a solution (“*The copier on this floor needs paper. Who is supposed to keep it full?*”)

### Important considerations for Stage Two:

- Coping strategies DO NOT WORK because **people are the problem** and the conflicts do not go away.
- Self-interest is very important. “CYA” (‘Cover Your Assets’) is a survival strategy. People take sides, take notes, and keep score. Alliances and cliques may form. An “us” vs. “them” mentality develops.
- Discussion of issues and answers are futile because **participants and the problem have become entangled too closely**. (This is similar to a heated political discussion.)
- Participants deal in terms that are more general. You will hear about the phantom “them” and comments as “**everyone** thinks...”, “**always**...” and “**never**” increase in frequency. Each side is reluctant to provide facts without asking, “How will you use this information?” **TRUST IS VERY LOW!**



WAYS TO HANDLE STAGE TWO CONFLICT

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION WHICH INCLUDES:

- a) Make the setting informal
- b) Establish neutral turf
- c) Have an agenda so there is focus on an outcome

A generic agenda would be one in which both sides agree to take some of the responsibility for reducing the conflict. An easy way to do this is to get each side to “trade” something.

(Note: Never say, “**GIVE UP**” or “**CONCEDE**” something because that implies someone is losing!)

“Sam, maybe we can work a way to resolve this. Would you be willing to **trade** proof-reading of your work before you give it to Sue if she will stop making comments about your work quality?”

This way, neither side thinks the other won something and you, the leader, still get the peace and harmony you want.

- **Be hard on facts, soft on people.** Take time to get every detail. Clarify generalizations. Who, by name, are “they”? Are you sure that “always” or “never” is accurate?
- **Do not let the participants sit across from each other.** Arrange to get them sitting beside each other across from you. (Sitting across from each other so they make eye contact can start it all again.)
- **Do the work as a team sharing in the responsibility of finding an alternative everyone can live with.** Stress the necessity of equal responsibility in finding resolution. *Why should you not carry this load for the participants?* (Because then it becomes your solution for them and they have nothing invested in making it work.)
- **Focus on points of agreement to find a middle ground.** Do not suggest that each side “concedes” something because that implies “giving in”.



“Do you agree that this bickering is becoming an aggravation for the two of you? If so, maybe we can work a way to resolve this. Sam, would you be willing to trade proof-reading of your work before you give it to Sue if she will stop making comments about your work quality?”

Take as much time as necessary to reach agreement without forcing concessions or issues.

Avoid voting to resolve issues because that leads to a “win – lose” result. (The only way to avoid having hurt feelings by voting is if you are assured of a unanimous decision before you begin!)

### STAGE THREE – ELIMINATING THE ENEMY

#### Characteristics of Stage 3

The motivation is to “get rid” of the opponent, not just win. Being right and punishing wrong become consuming goals.



- The competing parties identify “insiders” and “outsiders.”
- “You are either with me or against me!”
- Leaders emerge from the group to act as representatives.
- You equate your position as doing “*what’s good for the organization!* [“*I have to fire you for the good of the organization.*”.]
- Specific causes of the problem get lost in the emotion. Many newly recruited team members may not know the origins of the conflict.
- **TRUST IS NON-EXISTANT!!**

#### WAYS TO HANDLE STAGE THREE CONFLICT

An outside intervention agent or team (a neutral person or department) is required as a mediator so neither side feels this third party favors the other.

- Details are critical to a thorough understanding of the situation by the mediator.
- You must allow sufficient time to get a true picture of both sides of the case.
- The mediator can ask each side to present their case (without comment from the other) and identify the results they would like to achieve in this process.
- The mediator puts the responsibility on the two teams to find areas of common agreement or trade in search for an agreement.
- Not every participant on both teams may be at Stage 3. Try to break off members at lower stages and redirect their energies away from this situation.

**WARNING**

Successful resolution at this level frequently means that something or someone must go! Do not be surprised if that is the “price” for a team to grant concessions.

**CONFLICT ASSESSMENT CHECKLISTS**

<b>Stage One Conflict</b>		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Are the individuals willing to meet and discuss facts?			
Is there a sense of optimism?			
Is there a cooperative spirit?			
Does a “live and let live” attitude typify the atmosphere?			
Can participants discuss issues without involving personalities?			
Can the participants remain in the present tense?			
Is the language specific?			
Do solutions dominate the efforts?			
What else?			
<b>Stage Two Conflict</b>		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Is there a competitive attitude?			
Is there an emphasis on winners and losers?			
Is it hard to talk about problems without including people?			
Is the language in generalities?			
Can you identify these statements in their conversations:	“They...”		
	“Everyone is...”		
	“You always (or never)...”		
	“He always (or never)...”		
Is there a cautious nature when issues are discussed?			
Can you detect a “CYA” attitude among participants?			
Does either party make an effort to “look good” or play a political game?			
<b>Stage Three Conflict</b>		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Are attempts being made to get rid of others?			
Is there an intention to hurt someone?			
Have obvious leaders or spokespersons emerged?			
Is there a choosing of sides?			
Has corporate good become identified with a set of special interests?			
Is there a sense of ‘holy mission’ on the part of certain participants?			
Is there a sense that things will never stop?			
Has there been a loss of middle ground allowing only “right or wrong”, “either / or”, or “totally black and white” options?			
WHAT ELSE?			



## PERSONAL CAUSES FOR EMPLOYEE CONFLICT

(These are excellent topics for discussion within a department if there seems to be some conflict and the leader wants to stimulate some discussion about it.)

### DIFFERENCES IN VALUES

What are some reasons why employees within a department may have different values?

(There could be differences in age, backgrounds, economic conditions, education, and work ethics. Remember, different does not mean better or worse!)



### ASSUMPTIONS



“I thought you were going to finish that project for me! Now I've missed the deadline!”

(What assumptions have you made recently that did or could have led to problems?)

### COMPETING FOR SCARCE RESOURCES

“Fred and I are both competing for the promotion. I wonder how we'll get along after one of us doesn't get it!”

(People compete for scarce resources such as time with the boss, access to a copier or printer, parking spots, or anything of perceived value.)





THE INABILITY TO HANDLE CHANGE



"I'm not doing the work on that new machine! I've done just fine doing it by hand for the past 20 years!"

(What conflicts have you ever had when someone –or you – has been resistant to change?)

Think about this situation. Historically, before the 1970s, the Swiss were the center of the world



trade for watches. They made the finest watches with their artistry of miniature gears, balance wheels, and all of the associated machinery that made a watch work. They owned hundreds of patents on the mechanisms and believed they were invincible.

Moreover, when one of their imaginative designers came up with a design that used the vibrations of a quartz crystal to move the watch hands instead of the fine springs they had always used, they laughed and never even filed the patent because, in their minds, that is not how watches are "supposed to work."

Later that year, a representative from Texas Instruments saw that new design at a trade show and discovered that the inventor did not protect it with a patent. The rest is history as more than 98% of the world's timepieces are now "quartz" watches. (Your watch is probably quartz and is a descendent of that Texas Instruments trade show discovery.)

The point of that story is, *"Do not ever assume it cannot happen to you because it can."* Do not wear blinders to the changing world and be sure to keep asking yourself, *"If I applied for my job today, would they still hire me?"* That question becomes more important as time passes between when you were in your glory days of the past and the reality of today.

## THE BASIC STEPS TO MINIMIZE CONFLICT

Generally there will be conflict surrounding the supervision of difficult people. If this is part of the situation with which you are faced, here are some basic - yet effective - methods of minimizing the potential for conflict.

- **Both parties must agree there is conflict present to some extent.** You will need both to acknowledge its presence before you can get them working toward a solution.
- **They must be willing to focus on *facts and behaviors*, not *opinions and feelings*.** The events that happened, the words that were said (not the meaning behind them), the behaviors that were seen (not the meaning behind them), et.
- **They must be willing to *identify and share their real needs and objectives*.** This condition or situation leads me to that behavior. Make sure you are not judgmental when asking them to identify their needs. You can only make progress toward a solution when someone feels comfortable discussing their needs without fear of being judged on their merit.
- **They must begin the discussion with a *search for commonalities* instead of *focusing on differences*.** Use the commonality as the foundation for the discussion ahead.
- **They must agree that being *different in beliefs* does not mean being right, wrong, better, or worse.**
- **They must be willing to look for alternate or unconventional solutions that will meet the needs of both parties.**
- **They must keep any commitments they made as part of the agreement process.**

## STRATEGIES TO HANDLE FOUR DIFFERENT CONFLICT STYLES

### THE “COMPETITOR “STYLE

“I win and you lose!”

Usually the winner is the one with the greatest power (the boss). “Do it this way because I’m the boss!”



ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Some immediate action is taken	Employees never learn to make decisions – always wait for the boss.
Problems can be handled quickly – especially in an emergency.	Problems receive little attention absent an emergency unless the boss is standing over the employees.
No <b>overt</b> arguments	Employees grumble to each other and may sabotage work or equipment.
Things get done!	Employees withhold information from boss and celebrate when things go wrong.

### THE “ACCOMODATOR “STYLE

“You win and I lose!”

A person is more concerned about preserving the relationship than trying to clarify and resolve issues.



ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<b>Apparent</b> good will and harmony	Increased <b>internal</b> resentment by the one who accommodates because his/her needs are not being met.
Little <b>outward</b> conflict	
May be effective when an issue is more important to one than the other	May create an unintentional expectation in the other assuming you will always accommodate.
	Conflict is not actually resolved and may worsen.

## THE “AVOIDER “STYLE

**“I don’t want to talk about it!”**

A person fears damage to the relationship or facing unpleasant consequences if they confront the issue.



ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
May initially feel more comfortable to both sides	Low situational satisfaction on the part of the people involved.
You can avoid personal involvement.	No opportunity to <u>learn</u> how to handle conflicts
Reduces loud and disruptive fights	Necessary decisions are not made in a timely fashion.
At times, it may be wise to avoid a confrontation (highly charged emotions, drugs, alcohol, etc.)	The conflict usually gets worse and may explode at an inappropriate time and place.

## THE “COLLABORATOR “STYLE

**“We work together to attack *the problem, not each other!*”**

Identifies what each needs and wants. Then focus on each side getting essential needs and willing to give up wants for sake of agreement.



ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Real, not just apparent, good will and harmony	Time consuming to identify individual needs and wants
Little <b>outward</b> or <b>inward</b> conflict remains.	Requires trust between each participant or a 3 <sup>rd</sup> party that each trusts.
Both sides retain self-respect and strengthen their relationship.	Neither has the satisfaction of a “complete victory”
Solution is likely to last longer and require less “maintenance”.	Must be willing to face some level of conflict while keeping eyes on the ultimate goal of a mutually acceptable outcome

<sup>i</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vicarious\\_liability](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vicarious_liability)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/harassment>