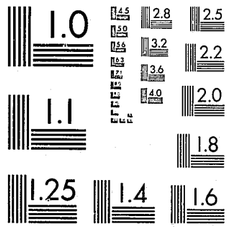

Produced for the
Office of the
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The Virginia Circuit Court Personnel System Study

Personnel Manager's Handbook

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Ernest H. Short
&Associates, Inc.

PERSONNEL MANAGER'S HANDBOOK

A Self-Directed Course on

Interpersonal Skills as a Supervisor

with an Introduction to Basic

Elements of Courts Personnel Administration

Developed for the Virginia Court System

by the

Virginia Circuit Court Personnel System Study

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE iv

I. BASIC ELEMENTS IN COURTS PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

A. The Need for a Separate Personnel System in the Courts 2
B. The Classification Plan 4
C. Compensation 7
D. Training The New Employee 10
F. Employee Evaluations 12
1. Overview 12
2. Methods of Evaluation 14
3. Employee Participation 18

II. SELF-DIRECTED COURSE ON INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AS A SUPERVISOR

A. Introduction 21
1. The "Conscious Competent" Model of Work Behavior 22
2. The Role of Communication 23
B. Fundamental Communication 25
1. Creating a Communicative Environment 26
a. Evaluative 29
b. Interpretive 30
c. Supportive 30
d. Probative 30
e. Understanding 31
2. Basic Listening Skills 32
a. Requesting Concreteness and Specificity 38
b. Naming Ideas, Topics, Concernes, Content, Problems and Themes 39
c. Checking Perceptions 39
d. Naming and Responding to Feelings 39
e. Paraphrasing 40
f. Summary Paraphrase 40
g. Describing Nonverbal Cues 40
h. Using a Global Summary 40

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Con't.)

i. Interpreting Nonverbal Cues 41
j. Negotiating for Meaning 41
3. When Listening is Difficult 41
4. Standup Counseling 51
C. Common Situations in Personnel Management 55
1. Interviewing 56
a. Role Preparation 56
b. Interview Process 58
c. Interviewing Skills 61
2. The Motivation Myth 63
a. An Alternative Perspective 64
b. What to Do 65
3. Handling Misunderstandings 69
4. Giving and Receiving Feedback 75
5. Confrontation 79
6. Handling Criticism 85
D. Extraordinary Situations in Personnel Management 91
1. Crisis Intervention 92
2. Stress and Coping 100
3. The Problem Employee 110
4. Bad News Interviews 117
E. Conclusion 125

LIST OF FIGURES

TABLE 1: The Conscious Competent 22

TABLE 2: Attributes of Acceptance 33

TABLE 3: Feelings/Response Categories for Stress Reduction in Interpersonal Interactions 106

PREFACE

Personnel management, whether it be in a business or government, involves the supervision of employees in all their functions and is therefore involved in a wider range of activities than any other management function. To be an effective personnel manager, one must be familiar with both sides of the personnel administration coin--the structural and the interpersonal. The former refers to elements of a personnel system, such as recruitment, compensation, retention, promotion, performance evaluation, and discipline of employees on an equitable basis. The latter refers to the fact that an effective personnel manager must be interpersonally skilled, able to interact successfully with personnel in numerous sensitive contexts. This dual knowledge requirement makes personnel management a multi-faceted field, exerting a direct influence on the effectiveness of any office operation.

This personnel management manual concentrates on the interpersonal side of personnel administration. The material is organized in two distinct sections--one briefly introducing four basic system structural elements, the other covering the interpersonal skills area at length. The short introductory section contains elemental information on personnel management in the court system, with reference to the state of Virginia and the nation as a whole. It provides the reader with a basic explanation of several major components in a court's personnel system. Thereafter, the manual is designed to assist the personnel manager in areas of particular sensitivity, addressing fundamental communication skills and other interpersonal skills in both common and extraordinary situations. This latter section is a "how to" guide which not only will aid the supervisor in responding to numerous personnel management challenges, but also will assist in preventing major personnel problems by enabling the manager to foresee the necessities and options implicit in various personnel situations.

SECTION I:

BASIC ELEMENTS IN COURTS
PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

A. THE NEED FOR A SEPARATE PERSONNEL SYSTEM IN THE COURTS

Historically, state court systems have depended upon the executive branch for personnel management support. Our country was founded upon the principle of three separate branches of government, yet in many respects, the judiciary's independence is compromised by administrative dependence on the executive branch. Recently, however, judicial administration and the overall management of the courts have emerged to a new position of prominence. The courts have begun to realize the need to exercise independently effective management principles in all facets of judicial operations. One of the most basic areas of need has been the power to control the qualifications and salaries of court personnel, thus enabling the court to control its most valuable administrative resource. The creation of a separate judicial personnel system, in addition to increasing judicial independence, is in essence a statement that the judiciary should be treated in the same fashion as the executive and legislative branches in its ability to select and retain qualified personnel.

There are many positions in the judiciary which are not comparable to those in the executive branch. There is, for example, nothing in the executive branch directly comparable to court clerks, court administrators, or bailiffs. Requiring that these judicial positions be comparable in qualifications or compensation to positions in the executive branch complicates the ability of the court to secure the kind of people needed for jobs that are unique to the judiciary.[1]

Funding processes in the court system are directly affected by the structure of its personnel system. Historically, the courts have been required to seek funding from the legislative branch,

and in some states, seek gubernatorial approval prior to legislative introduction. Since many court systems have had a "merged" personnel system with the executive branch, legislative intent in appropriating funds to the courts is in many cases frustrated. The interposition of executive branch employees who have the authority to make judgments on court personnel matters can be quite critical when one realizes that over 75 percent of all funds appropriated for courts are for salaries and wages.[2] Also, this condition inevitably results in the courts being treated, in administrative affairs, as departments of the executive branch.

To further establish judicial independence and control, the rules that govern the conduct of judicial employees should be tailored to judicial employees. In many instances, the judicial system employee holds a position of a sensitive nature, in which even the "appearance of impropriety" often will result in a genuine cause for concern. The rules and regulations governing the employees of the court system should be contained in written personnel rules, taking into account the distinctive character of the court system. They should be drafted and maintained by the judiciary for its own employees, thereby enhancing the overall management of the system.[3]

Uniform employee compensation is another area which benefits from the creation of a separate judicial personnel system. In Virginia, employees of the District Courts, prior to implementation of the District Court Personnel System, received compensation that varied greatly from locality to locality. The same situation has existed in the Circuit Courts, with personnel being viewed essentially as local employees. With the implementation of a District Courts personnel system, salary ranges were made more uniform with a more equitable method of reward and remuneration.

In the past decade, state court systems have begun to recognize the numerous advantages of a separate court personnel system. In more and more jurisdictions, the judicial branch is exercising greater authority and responsibility for personnel management, usually through the implementation of personnel rules and the creation of a system of merit employment for non-judicial personnel. The experience of these jurisdictions has shown that an independent personnel system improves administrative control.

B. THE CLASSIFICATION PLAN

In most personnel systems, whether in the private or the public sector, the basic foundation is the classification plan. Classification turns chaos into order and creates a formed, structured, rational approach to personnel management.[4] In addition to providing the information necessary to classify and pay employees in a clear, logical and even-handed manner, classification, and the work that goes into it, supply the information which is basic to examination and recruitment, placement, performance evaluation, training programs, and nearly everything else pertaining to modern personnel systems.[5]

To clearly understand the concept of classification, one must be familiar with its various components. A "classification" is, in its simplest form, a written description of the duties and responsibilities of a position or group of highly similar positions. A "position" is a set of duties and responsibilities which require the employment of one person (either full or part time), these duties and responsibilities having been assigned by competent authorities to the position. The classification of the position becomes the manner and format used to describe these duties and responsibilities.[6]

In most personnel systems, there will be numerous positions that are so similar in the nature of their duties and responsibilities, that they can and are placed under one classification. Classification specifications may enumerate fifteen different duties for positions in the class and further state that some positions would exercise all of the duties while others would exercise only a few. This qualification takes into account the variances that can occur from division to division within the system, or in the case of the court system, from district to district. Nevertheless, the duties of the position in a class when viewed as a whole, are similar enough to be placed under one classification. Thus, the group of positions that are placed under the one classification is called a "class". Aside from having similar duties, positions in a class have the same pay level, require the same education and experience, and use similar recruitment standards.

A "class series" is a group of classes that have highly similar duties yet ascending levels of responsibility. A good example of a class series is contained in the document entitled Personnel Administration in the Courts:

> "Court Clerks I, II, and III all work in the same general area requiring court clerical skills, but with varying amounts of responsibility. Court Clerk I may be an entry, or lower level classification, and may be assigned to areas such as filing, entry of various prepared documents into docket books, or to a general apprenticeship throughout a number of divisions within a court. Court Clerk II may be a classification used to connote the journeyman level of expertise in filing cases, issuing various documents, bonding, etc. Court Clerk III can be used for those positions which supervise a unit of other clerical employees within a court clerical setting and which are responsible to an administrative superior.[7]

As can be seen from the above illustration, the higher the classification, the more responsible the duties which are assigned to the position. Some systems reverse the numbering system, having the lower numbers indicate the greater responsibilities. This approach has the advantage of forestalling the urge to create more

and more classifications with higher responsibilities and pay, but it will also make the classification system less flexible and may actually inhibit the creation of a new class when one is in fact needed.

Positions are referred to in personnel administration by their titles, of which there are generally two types--a "class title" and a "working title". The "working title" is generally more descriptive of the actual work performed by a particular position while the "class title" is the name given to all positions in a classification. For example, a Court Clerk III (classification title) may have the responsibility for supervising the activities of the criminal division in a court of general jurisdiction. The working title for this position would be something like "Criminal Division Supervisor".[8] A "job description" illustrates the actual duties of a position, while a "class description" contains specifications for a class into which many similar positions may be placed.

The method utilized to gather the data to draft a job description or assign a position to a job class is referred to as a "desk audit". The desk audit entails an oral interview with the person holding the position and subsequent discussion with the position's supervisor.

Keeping the previously discussed definitions in mind, a manager must understand the basic process employed in the development and application of a classification plan. This process includes four steps: 1) analyzing and recording the duties and other distinctive characteristics of the positions to be classified; 2) grouping the positions into classes based upon their similarities; 3) writing specifications for each class of positions that indicate its character, define its boundaries, and serve as a guide in allocating individual positions to the class and in recruiting new employees; and 4) allocating individual positions to the classes thus described. The first three of these

steps are used to create the plan while the fourth step is the initial phase in its implementation and administration. Even though these steps are critical to initiating the plan they are also activities which are used regularly in the day-to-day administration of position classification.

The classification plan will be effective only to the extent that it is understood and accepted by management and employees. Thus, it is important that all parties share in its continuing development and execution, with careful explanation being given to department heads and employees concerning the objectives and processes of classification. Administration is a continuous process and constant effort is required to keep even the best classification plan serviceable. Because of changes in personnel and the functions of the organization, no sooner is a classification plan adopted than revisions must be made. Public service itself is not static and the classification plan must reflect the change that takes place as the personnel system evolves in response to need.

C. COMPENSATION

Payment for personal services constitutes the largest single item in the operating budgets of state and local governments and is outweighed among federal expenditures only by defense costs, debt retirement, and veteran benefits. Furthermore, in no phase of personnel administration is the possibility for misunderstanding and conflict greater than in the area of compensation. This generalization applies equally to private and public employment.

In the public sector, the citizens are the ultimate employers and, as taxpayers, have come to insist on economy in the provision of public services. The public administrator finds himself or herself constantly confronted with conflicting pressures--from public employees desirous of increased compensation and

from taxpayers eager to see expenses reduced. Taxpayers want economy, but they also want public services. In fact, taxpayers should want a compensation program that will recruit and retain capable staff who can provide quality services. An overly generous compensation policy is costly and unnecessary while a low or inequitable policy produces low morale and decreased efficiency.[9] To harmonize the interests of all groups and to retain public confidence and support is a challenge to the ability of both legislators and administrators.[10]

The basic building block of a compensation plan is the salary plan of an employee. A salary plan is comprised of a series of ranges, or "grades". The number of grades in salary plans varies widely--the federal government uses 18 grades while the state of Colorado uses 82. In a structured personnel system, all member positions of a class are paid at the same grade. Within each grade are "steps", for example, one to ten, with each step representing a different salary level, increasing from lowest to highest. In other words, a grade represents a range of salaries while a step represents one specific salary. For example, all Court Clerk II's within a system would be paid at the same grade level, although they may not be in the same steps and therefore may not receive the same actual salary. An employee could, therefore, be referred to as a Court Clerk II at Step 1, a Court Clerk II at Step 2, and so on.

As with other public institutions, there are several considerations which must be taken into account when determining appropriate salary levels. This determination is made easier in the context of a structured compensation plan. In the development and maintenance of the compensation plan, and in the setting of salaries for individual positions, analysis of duties and responsibilities plays a large role. Especially important is that information which differentiates one classification from another.

These factors involve duties, responsibilities, level of experience, and education required. Two sets of integral factors--education and experience, duties and responsibilities--play a large part in determining which classification receives more compensation than another and how much more it receives.

As noted above, the several rates of pay that constitute one grade or level are usually referred to as a salary range. Normally, such a pay range consists of a minimum rate, one or more intermediate rates, and a maximum rate. The minimum is usually the starting rate for a new employee although there should be certain exceptions. An entry level rate (generally step 1 of a grade) may have a larger differential between it and the next higher step than the differential used between the other steps in the range. This occurs for two sound reasons: 1) the entry level, or training level, is of less use to the organization than the full-functioning higher level positions, 2) a larger differential will be an incentive to persons at the lowest step to move from the entry level to a higher level.[11]

Developing and maintaining a compensation plan requires constant updating. If this is not done, the plan will become useless in a very short period of time. The most effective way to update a plan is to use comparable salary survey data from outside sources. Comparisons can be made between the judicial and executive branch positions and between judicial systems and private sector employees. Valid comparisons between public and private employment are sometimes difficult, especially pertaining to courts, because of the unique character of many judicial system jobs. However, many classes (e.g. clerical, administrative, or data processing) may be compared with their counterparts in the general labor market. In this manner, the administrator can determine, for example, if court system file clerks are receiving comparable wages to other file clerks, if court system secretaries are receiving comparable wages to other secretaries, and so on.[12]

One should remember that parity with private sector employees is a very sensitive area. The balance must be precise. If the general level of pay in public employment is substantially lower than in private industry, the government will find it difficult to recruit qualified persons into the service. On the other hand, if the public pay scale is too high, the result may be a waste of public monies or a drain on the more efficient workers from industry. The latter results have become a popular criticism of government recently; judicial system administrators would do well to be aware of this viewpoint.

As with the classification plan, flexibility and adaptability are cardinal virtues of a modern, serviceable compensation system. Continuous adjustment should be the norm. The personnel system, through the diligence of its managers, must conduct regular reviews and surveys to maintain salary levels at equitable levels. Furthermore, judicial system managers should keep abreast of the numerous developments associated with this vital aspect of personnel administration.

D. TRAINING THE NEW EMPLOYEE

In many ways, the real challenge in personnel management begins after the selection process has been completed and the appointments of new employees have been made. The formidable task then facing the manager is to provide incentives that will motivate these new appointees to make a career of public service in the court system. Among other things, this requires the development of training programs to meet the needs of employees during various stages of their employment. The new recruit represents a valuable resource, an investment that will yield dividends only if careful attention is given to his or her development. The time and money spent on the search for high quality employees will be wasted if the in-service personnel program is non-existent or lacking.[13]

Orientation programs in public and private organizations are now very common. Too often in the past, new appointees were ushered to their desks, given some hasty instructions, and told to begin work. Today, however, public agencies are realizing that it is a wise investment to orient new employees. Most new employees of the courts, especially those in lower level positions, will enter the court environment with no prior court experience. Some court positions encompass duties similar in nature to ones in other government agencies, but even in these instances, proper orientation is highly beneficial.

The first step in orientation is to acquaint the new employee with his surroundings. This may be done either at formalized training sessions (in larger courts and jurisdictions) or at informal training sessions (in smaller courts where formal sessions are too costly).[14] Ideally, the orientation and initial training should convey:

- a knowledge of employer expectation for the particular job;
- a knowledge of specific functional responsibilities;
- a knowledge of the overall court system and the employee's place in it; and
- a knowledge of general personnel procedures and guidelines, often embodied in the form of a manual.[15]

A simple and most effective way to train new employees is by having them actually do the job under the guidance of an experienced person. This person may be the direct supervisor of the position, an employee who has just been promoted from the position, or possibly the clerk or court administrator. On-the-job training requires a certain amount of patience and available time to devote to the trainee. A haphazard or impatient trainer can cause early frustrations and feelings of helplessness in the new employees. When possible and warranted, the confidence of the novice should be reinforced to stimulate the desire to learn. Lack of communication, or poor communication, between the supervisor and employee is one of the most common causes for employee failure during the initial orientation.

In addition to learning the job assigned, the new employee must be given the opportunity to learn about the rights, privileges, and benefits to which he is entitled. In larger organizations, a separate orientation session can be held for this matter alone; however, smaller courts will probably accomplish this task by a private interview, supplemented by an employee policies manual.

After the probationary/training period has been successfully completed by the employee, the manager should continue to monitor employee progress. The fact that the probationary period has been completed successfully does not mean that the employee has completely mastered his job, nor that a complete understanding of the court environment has been obtained. The supervisor should continue to monitor progress with the understanding that rapid strides toward mastering a job are made during the early stages of employment and that expertise in completing assigned tasks is gained after the employee has been on the job for a longer period of time. The supervisor should continue to be available for any questions that may arise during this period.[17]

Again, the importance of an effective orientation and training program for new employees can not be overemphasized. If new employees are placed in their roles with no preparation and have no hope of picking up enough information to be successful on the job, the turnover rate will be abnormally high.[18] If this condition exists, much time will be wasted recruiting and interviewing prospective employees, thereby decreasing the efficiency of the entire organization.

F. EMPLOYEE EVALUATIONS

1. OVERVIEW

Every organization possesses the need to make judgments about the behavior and effectiveness of its staff. Assignment, advancement, reward, discipline, utilization, and motivation

all depend on such judgments, whether they are formalized and recorded or whether they are simply implicit in the decisions and actions of management. The challenge of employee evaluation is formidable. It is difficult to find ways to appraise and report performances that are meaningful and useful. Most managers and employees would probably agree that evaluation should (a) maintain or improve performance, not retard it; (b) support supervisory responsibility for the ultimate effectiveness of the work performed; and (c) assure reasonable equality and dignity in human relationships.[19] These are difficult goals to achieve and no matter how well the determinations concerning individual performance are made and accepted, making effective use of these judgments is also difficult.

The American Bar Association's Commission on Standards of Judicial Administration recommends the establishment of uniform procedures for making periodic evaluation of employee performance and decisions concerning retention, and promotion.[20] In courts, this area assumes particular significance because of the large number of jobs that cannot be easily measured and because in many jobs the quality of performance is of greater importance than the quantity of work completed. Accordingly, both quantity and quality of performance should be key elements in performance evaluation.[21]

Employee performance should evaluate the characteristics, qualifications, traits, capacities, proficiencies and abilities of an individual as demonstrated by that individual on the job.[22] Care should be taken to appraise the employee's performance, not simply the manager's personal feelings regarding the employee's personal traits and characteristics. The evaluation should concentrate on achieving results, including encouraging continued high quality performance, as well as pointing out areas for change and improvement.

2. METHODS OF EVALUATION

Today in industry and government, there are countless numbers of evaluation techniques in use. Many have been tried, tested, and discarded as being rather crude and imperfect means for estimating and recording the facts and effects of individual work performance. The following explanations are probably the most widely accepted techniques and are referred to in the publication Personnel Administration in the Courts, by Harry Lawson, H.R. Ackerman, and Don Fuller.[23]

Performance Checklist. The checklist consists of a series of scaled statements, phrases, or objectives characteristic of job performance to be checked by the supervisor. The rater checks items describing or which apply to a subordinate's performance. A performance rating is found by assigning a value, based on the job, to each item and averaging the scale values of all items.

The checklist is a person-oriented evaluation procedure and should contain factors that are objectively observable. Results from various tests indicate that the checklist reduces the errors of personal bias. Items to be checked can be closely related to or descriptive of actual job elements. The form also can aid in counseling and motivating an employee. Statements, phrases, and objectives to be checked should indicate typical performance or behavior observed of the employee. Descriptive statements are usually brief and may invite ambiguity, as the rater provides his own interpretation of the items checked. The form is relatively short and requires little time to complete. Best results are achieved when supervisors fully understand the system.

Graphic Rating Scale. The graphic rating scale contains a list of traits followed by a series of numerical or descriptive values to be used to designate the degree to which an employee possesses and displays a trait. The traits listed are explained by brief descriptions under each category. The rater is given a fairly broad score range within which to determine the performance of the employees. An over-all score is determined by adding up the scores given to specific factors. Often space is allotted for brief, written appraisals of a subordinate's work performance.

The graphic rating scale is the most widely used rating method due to its simplicity in design and facility of administration. The rating scale serves to differentiate

employees on a series of given traits. It can be used in a small or large organization to rank or compare individuals in order of merit by giving an over-all summary rating or score. The specific rating of a particular trait assists a supervisor in counseling an employee who needs development in certain areas of performance. The form may be used as an aid in designating employees who deserve pay increases, promotions, or employees who are in need of counseling or training.

The dysfunctional aspects of this type rating concern:

1) Using terms that are sufficiently vague and ambiguous as to make it difficult to distinguish between satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance; and

2) limiting the supervisor's rating to those traits and characteristics on the scale which may or may not be significant to the jobs being rated.

Narrative Form Rating. The narrative form of appraisal involves a written, subjective measure of job performance. The supervisor gears the rating to the particular job of the person being rated. Thus, the use of the same criteria by all supervisors is not required, and appraisal, due to its unstructured form, has an additional use in that it reveals a great deal about the values of the rater and his perception of what is and is not important to the jobs under his supervision.

The questionnaire type of narrative rating permits the rater to appraise the over-all performance of the subordinate being evaluated. The form requires a subjective measure of evaluation and provides for an individual assessment. The rater is usually able to participate in the definition of the factors used in the evaluation. The form is most useful in small offices where the number of employees allows sufficient time to complete individual subjective appraisals. The completed form can serve as a counseling tool to motivate the employee for improved performance toward organizational goals. The questionnaire type of narrative rating does not require position description.

Forced Distribution. This system uses a ranking technique by which job performances are rated according to a "grading on the curve" to secure a technical, normal frequency distribution of individual performances. The rating results in ranking employees by class rather than assigning a set of values to an individual's performance. A five-point job performance scale is established, ranking from top 10 (outstanding) to low 10 (unsatisfactory), thus creating a bell-shaped frequency distribution. Five areas of specific work habits are usually rated. There can be space given for a short narrative answer as to significantly good or bad performance at the end of the form.

This method eliminates the errors of leniency and central tendency and facilitates inter-group comparisons. To secure normal distribution of scores, it must be explained to supervisors that a low score area does not necessarily indicate an ineffective employee. It should be used with caution in particular groups. Not all work groups reflect a normal distribution of individual performance. It cannot describe the absolute level of an employee's performance. This method has been most effective in small groups of under fifteen employees in a job class. It ranks order of merit, but not the area of difference in ability between ranks; it gives a graphic picture of a particular employee's performance in relation to fellow workers. An over-all rating of ability is made instead of a rating on a series of separate factors. This method of evaluation is relatively easy to administer.

Forced Choice. The forced choice system of rating uses a series of statements relevant to job proficiency or personal qualifications. The statements used fall into two categories: the most characteristic and the least characteristic of the person.

This system is thought by some to be the most advanced method to evaluate the job performance of individual workers. The method "forces" the rater to discriminate on the basis of concrete aspects of job behavior. The technique yields a numerical index by which persons in different occupations can be compared on factors found to be a significant part of job performance. The rater is unaware of the relative worth or value of the alternative statements, thus the subjective elements are minimized. The method is designed to produce a standardized, objective index of job performance. The underlying principle of this method holds that people are more apt to agree on description than evaluation, and the fact that the employee evaluated often agrees with the selected statements points out its usefulness for self-evaluation, counseling, and motivation. The job performance measured can be positively correlated with the review of other variables such as job satisfaction. The technique requires considerable time and expense to construct. The system is most useful in a large organization.

Critical-Incident. The critical-incident technique of rating is a systematic and immediate recording of actual instances of significantly good or significantly poor performance. A list of "credits" and "debits" is maintained for each employee by the proper supervisor. A job description is used for each position rated as a tool for training supervisors to know what performance is expected of an employee. The emphasis should be on what is accomplished instead of how it is accomplished.

It has been found that the recorded incidents can be useful in predicting successful job performance. Using this technique, supervisors can anticipate job needs, improve job performance, improve results of work, increase the motivation of an employee, and establish a means of counseling. The facts gathered will provide the employee with an understanding of the requirements of the job at hand and help in developing potential for more responsible levels. It is a thorough procedure to insure that concrete events relevant to job performance are the basis of an evaluation.

This method requires supervisors actually to observe the work of employees and to select important performance events for evaluation. The system gives added meaning to evaluation content, in that actual circumstances are recorded in specific terms; it evaluates results, not persons. It requires a great deal of the supervisor's time and effort to maintain a continuing performance record.

Management-by-Objectives. This newer method of performance evaluation focuses on specific goals and results of performance rather than personal qualities and traits. It is an alternative to traditional forms of performance evaluation. This system is designed to evaluate results of job performance by four steps: 1) establishing organizational goals; 2) establishing unit objectives; 3) securing individual commitment; and 4) reviewing actual job performance.

The system requires that each job be directed towards the objectives of the total organization. Evaluation of performance is measured by the contribution of each individual to the success of the whole.

The design of the system and the philosophy of management by-objectives involves the total organization and all its members in a common purpose. This method of evaluation holds an individual accountable for certain actions and their completion thus setting a task guide to demonstrate how an individual's contribution fits into the over-all effort.

The system offers an opportunity for the supervisor and subordinate to work together towards achievement of objectives. The evaluation form is designed to insure a means of accomplishing the individual work tasks necessary to goal fulfillment. It instills in the employee the idea that his abilities, skills, and knowledge will be as much a part of his or her work as the way it is done.

The implementation of this method has positive effects in that employees learn to identify with the organization, improving their on the job attitude and morale. This method is best facilitated when a clear explanation of the system is given. The initial effort of filling out the form must be sustained to insure positive participation and growth. This system does not have accompanying semantic problems. It is useful, as it does not require the supervisor to make ratings that he or she does not have the ability to make. Organizations can easily change the form to fit their special needs.

3. EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION

Regardless of the type of evaluation actually used, employee participation is necessary to produce an accurate, fair evaluation. Evaluation methods benefit from the full understanding, participation, and acceptance of the employees being appraised. In fact, progressive thinking on the subject concludes that supervisor and employee should share in the evaluation process from start to finish.

A participative approach begins with the setting of work standards, that is, the goals or norms by which success is to be judged. Where numerous workers are engaged in comparable tasks, this can be accomplished by a group effort led by the supervisor in which a serious attempt is made to arrive at a group consensus on standards of quality and quantity. A similar process can be followed in smaller offices with one-of-a-kind workers on an individual basis. Experience has demonstrated that standards of performance which employees have helped to develop are the most durable, valid, and operable.[24]

[1]Utah, Legislative Council, Unified Court Advisory Committee, Utah Courts Tomorrow; Reports and Recommendations. (Salt Lake City: Utah Legislative Council, 1972) p. 43-44 as cited in Personnel Administration in the Courts, Lawson, Ackerman, Fuller, February 1978.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Lawson, Harry; Ackerman, H.R. and Fuller, Don; Personnel Administration in the Courts, Washington, D.C.: The American University Criminal Courts Technical Assistance Project (1978) p. 35.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Id. p. 36

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Stahl, Glenn, Public Personnel Administration New York: Harper & Row (1971) p. 79.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Supra note 4 p. 72

[12]Supra note 4

[13]Nigro, Felis, Modern Public Administration, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1970) p. 292.

[14]Supra note 4 p. 72

[15]Jobin, Robert, Trial Court Management Series--Personnel Management, (National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, 1979) p. 33

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Supra note 9

[20]American Bar Association, Commission on Standards of Judicial Administration, Standards Relating to Court Organization (Chicago: American Bar Association, 1974) p. 92.

[21]Supra note 4

[22]Supra note 4

[23]Supra note 4

[24]Supra note 9

SECTION II:

SELF-DIRECTED COURSE ON INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AS A SUPERVISOR

A. INTRODUCTION

The remainder of this manual presents a set of lessons on interpersonal skills in personnel management. Taken together, these lessons constitute a course of study and practice for improving the manager or supervisor's capability to interact successfully with personnel. The lessons are organized in three groups. The first set pertains to the all important defining feature of personnel interaction--communication. The second group covers several interaction situations commonly encountered by managers and supervisors. The final set of lessons speaks to those interaction circumstances which present themselves less frequently, but still require skilled interpersonal responses.

How to Use This Material. Because this material essentially is a self-directed course in interpersonal skills, the reader may approach its use in a variety of ways. Read front to back, the lessons provide an excellent exposure to the field of interpersonal communications. Alternatively, the lessons may be used as reference material with particular sections absorbed as the reader sees fit, perhaps in preparation for dealing with one of the many challenges encountered by managers and addressed in this material. As a reference tool, the lessons can be re-read periodically, providing a reminder and reinforcement of the principles on which successful interaction with personnel is practiced.

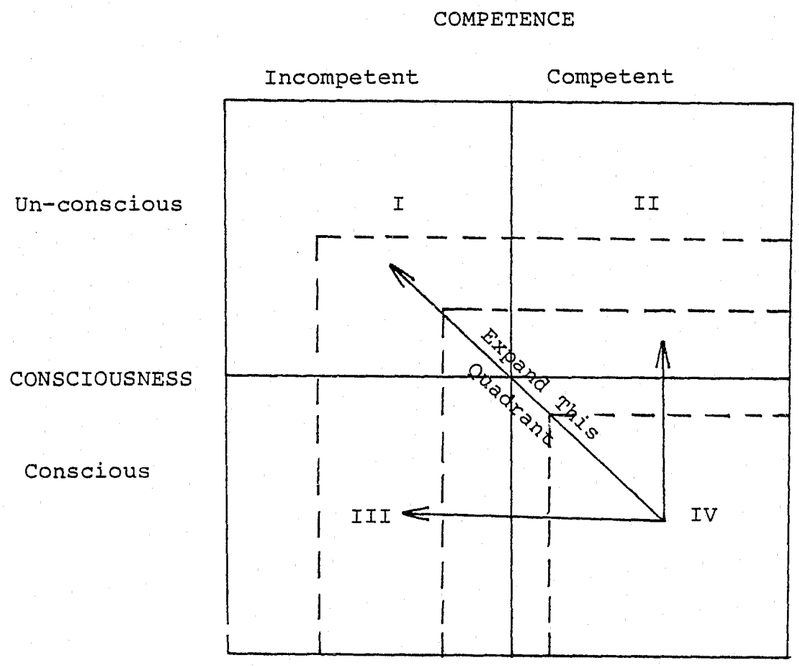
As a precursor to the lesson materials, the balance of this introduction comments on two subjects. The first describes how managers and supervisors ideally strive to become "conscious competents" in their job performance. Secondly, the role of communication is introduced because of its obvious centrality in any endeavor at improving interpersonal skills.

1. THE "CONSCIOUS COMPETENT" MODEL OF WORK BEHAVIOR

All personnel managers and supervisors strive to become "conscious competents". Table 1 outlines a matrix of consciousness vs. competence to explain graphically the conscious/competent model.

Table 1

The Conscious Competent



Located in quadrant I is the unconscious incompetent, the person in a professional position who has poor skills and doesn't know it. These individuals are difficult to supervise and even harder to train because of their general lack of awareness and tendency toward defensiveness.

In quadrant II is the unconscious competent, the professional who usually performs well (competently) but who doesn't know why. This type of person does not make conscious choices and decisions. They frequently explain success on the basis of intuition and common sense. While often a distinct asset in any organization, this person remains difficult to supervise and train due to resistance to the exploration of options. These people are overimpressed with the notion of "If it feels right, it must be right." They are typically not good at thinking about behavior and feel threatened by the idea of deliberate choice, confusing the useful concept of choice with a negative interpretation of commonplace manipulation.

In quadrant III is the conscious incompetent, the person who knows perfectly well that he lacks skill. Every honest individual has incompetencies. Being aware of incompetence is an advantage, since it enables one to drop his defenses and consciously strive at becoming competent. The conscious incompetent is usually more responsive to management and supervision than those in quadrants I and II. Plainly put, the conscious incompetent is trainable.

In quadrant IV is the conscious competent, the true professional who has skill and knows when and where to apply it. The conscious competent chooses what to do from among many options, recognizing that different situations demand the application of different combinations of skills. The realistic pressure this person feels is to expand the territory of this quadrant so that it consumes more and more of the total area, reducing unconsciousness and reducing incompetence.

2. THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION

The interpersonal work of the supervisor and manager centers on a continual series of communication events, usually

verbal in nature. Successful managers/supervisors are those who conduct effective verbal transactions with employees. While obviously there is much more to being a supervisor than simply relating to employees, face-to-face communication skill plays a pre-eminent role, often deceptively so. At a conscious level, many professionals who supervise and manage fail to appreciate fully why it is that people-to-people transactions define, describe and determine the vast bulk of their work. Even more importantly, many professionals do not understand that their level of skill in communication is directly related to their overall performance record.

These communication fundamentals are especially hard for the newer supervisor to see, the one who has recently been promoted from a "content" oriented position to one of management, which is far more "process" oriented.

Some supervisors falsely believe that by being experts in the content of their work, they will somehow overcome whatever deficiencies in communication they might have. Unfortunately, such a belief ultimately creates many problems. No amount of ability in one area of one's work ever makes up for a deficit in another, a fact which is particularly true in supervisorial/managerial work, which, by definition, demands high levels of "people skills".

The major premise of this personnel management manual is that supervisors and managers need consciously accessible skills in communication to be interpersonally effective at even minimal levels. These skills are known and can be rather simply outlined. That is what the remainder of this manual accomplishes--a basic explanation of communication and related behavioral skills. Translating these concepts into observable behavior is a formidable, though do-able subsequent step. Your accomplishments are the beginning of recognizably better personnel management skills. Good luck.

B. FUNDAMENTAL COMMUNICATION

Improving interpersonal skills as a manager or supervisor starts with an appreciation of its basic element: communication. In preparation for the application of improved interpersonal skills in both common and extraordinary personnel management situations, this section addresses four fundamental lessons in the skill and practice of communication:

- Creating a Communicative Environment
- Basic Listening Skills
- When Listening is Difficult
- Stand-up Counseling

1. CREATING A COMMUNICATIVE ENVIRONMENT

On the manager or supervisor rests the clear responsibility in interaction with employees to create an environment conducive to successful communication. That burden should be conscious. That is, the supervisor literally ought to be saying to herself or himself: "It's up to me to behave in such a way to make this interaction a success." Or, "What can I do right now to affect a positive atmosphere to insure a successful conversation?"

The word "success" occurred frequently above. It is assumed that the reader desires a positive, successful and effective interaction with every employee contact. The reasons or purposes for any interaction can be realized only in what we call "successful" encounters. Success does not mean, however, that the conversation is necessarily fun or entertaining. Quite the contrary. At times a successful and effective interaction is difficult, emotionally draining and even might mark the end of a relationship or a visit. There are times, in other words, when "success" indicates an end to a relationship.

The supervisor/manager must assume that he or she is the more capable of the interactants--the more skillful, the one expected to show skill. This is a complicated notion and it suggests that attimes a communicative environment fails to materialize because no one takes the right action, that action which fully utilizes their communicative skills. Put another way, people unfortunately wait for the other person to "do something", for example, to smooth down a tense situation. Frequently, no one does and communication breaks down. The interaction is a failure, not a success. The supervisor/manager must realize that he or she NEVER can afford the

luxury of waiting for the employee to act "responsibly" first. Creating a communicative interpersonal environment is YOUR responsibility <u>all of the time</u>, and justifiably so. YOU are the more capable person. You simply must assume that in almost every interaction in which you are engaged, you are the person most able to make that encounter a success.

Effective communicators accomplish the objective of creating a communicative environment in three basic ways: 1) they pay careful attention to their own inner state, monitoring what's going on inside themselves with brutal honesty; 2) they utilize a broad array of response skills, with emphasis on understanding; and 3) they are capable of consistently high levels of acceptance.

<u>What To Do: Self-Awareness</u>

<u>Observe</u> your feelings toward others without embarrassment, shame, shock or fear. One of your employees may be speaking with you and you may find yourself thinking that this person is a fool. Allow yourself (to yourself) to observe your own feeling clearly. You certainly might not want to convey your feeling, but you do want to honestly admit to yourself that it exists. Most mental health experts agree that people in authority are better off if they permit themselves <u>at least</u> the privilege of observing their own true feelings. It usually results in more energy being available to you for being constructive, helpful and calm. You don't use up valuable energy hiding truths about yourself from yourself.

Detect fear-driven communication patterns in yourself and in others. You may find with a particular person you are supervising that your communication falls into predictable patterns because you fear his/her fragility or the explosion potential. As a result, you find yourself pussyfooting around, never really saying what you mean, and never really meaning what you say. Look for, find, and talk with yourself about these particular kinds of fear-driven communication patterns.

De-Sensitize your fears. Little-by-little, taking those fear-driven communication situations which are only slightly fearful at first, try new strategies, attempt alternate methods and reward yourself (to yourself) for the attempts and the successes. De-sensitization means training yourself NOT to be fearful in those formerly fear-arousing situations by slowly, step-by-step, doing the opposite of what you had been doing, until the fear is no longer aroused by that situation.

Share (talk about) your positions and feelings with others without fear or anger. Learn how by practicing to say what you want to say without the accompaniment of fear or anger. Leave threats or worries out of your tone and out of the content of your remarks. You can be firm and uncompromising, if you need to be, without being angry. You can tell someone "no" without being hostile or even unfriendly.

Confront and suspend judgments you make about others. The tendency to be evaluative and judgmental is the one characteristic of supervisors and managers which has the highest potential to undermine all other attempts to create a communicative environment.

Switch sensory channels at will. This means you must develop the abilities to consciously tune in to nonverbal cues, tone of voice, words, gestures, spatial distances, moods in others

and a whole host of channels through which messages of importance reach you. Your ability to switch your reception ability to another channel will give you flexibility in response. That is, if you can tune in to an employee's angry feelings and respond to these feelings, you may at that moment create the most effective environment for successful communication.

All of the above suggest one major, over-all accomplishment when focusing on yourself to assure that you have taken responsibility to create a communicative environment: you must have self-awareness. You can observe yourself; you know what communicative patterns you have and you can be in control of anger and fear.

What to Do: Response Style

About 80 percent of all messages sent between individuals fall nicely into five response categories. Keep in mind that these categories are in themselves neither good nor bad. It is their overuse, underuse, or the failure to use the appropriate response which interferes with successful interaction between individuals. The response categories are as follows:

a. Evaluative. An evaluative response results from a natural tendency to judge, approve, or disapprove of a message received. Sending out too many evaluations can limit one's effectiveness. Since everyone, including those we supervise, have feelings of self-worth, challenging or threatening those feelings (constantly) can set the tone for ineffective communication. Examples of evaluative responses: "That's not correct..." "I'm sure you're wrong about that." "My, what a good idea; you always have such wonderful suggestions..."

b. Interpretive. An interpretive response may sound as though you think you know how the other person feels, and if you carry it out with skill, honesty and empathy, it might lead to insight into the problem under consideration. Interpretive responses are not stated as facts, but rather as ideas they may or may not be correct. When done clumsily, which is frequent, the respondent can easily become defensive (who do you think you are anyway?) or argumentative (no, that doesn't make sense at all) or, worse, lose respect for you since you will seem to be "doing therapy" inappropriately. Well done interpretations should involve accurate understanding, the right timing and should be concise (not wordy). Examples of interpretive responses: "You may have thought you had done everything required by the law because you paid the initial filing fee." "Maybe you missed seeing the directions printed on the back of this form." "You might feel depressed and angry because the judge was so quick to criticize you."

c. Supportive. A supportive response may be a source of reassurance to a person. Care must be taken not to make the other person feel as if you are making light of a problem which he or she considers to be serious. Supportiveness can be misinterpreted as patronizing. Support overdone, or done too frequently, can lead the other to believe that you don't know what else to do (which might be correct). Such a perception, correct or not, will diminish drastically your effectiveness. Examples of supportive responses: "That shouldn't worry you; a lot of people have that problem." "Everything will turn out OK if you just have patience." "Oh, come on, smile. The next time you talk to him, everything will be fine."

d. Probative. A probative response is an attempt to get a clear understanding before you respond and may be helpful

in reaching what the other person really means. Used to excess, the other may get a feeling of the "third degree", of being "grilled." A general rule to keep in mind is: don't ask a question unless you are willing to integrate the answer into a subsequent response. Don't just ask questions because you think that is what a helping person is supposed to do. That's nonsense. Ask questions sparingly, very sparingly. There are plenty of other ways to get information without asking questions. You may never have enough information, but after all you are not a detective. You are in a conversation with someone you supervise. If your helping format is to ask a barrage of questions, you can be sure that you will be avoided the next time that individual has a problem. Why? You won't be seen as receptive or responsive. You will be seen as inquisitive. Examples of probative responses: "What other government offices have you called?" "Why do you feel that he won't listen to you?" "How have you tried solving this on your own?" Especially detrimental, if used to excess, is the question, "why?" Try not to use it. It is a clear give-away of an excessively probative style--and one that clearly does not lead to the establishment of a communicative environment.

e. Understanding. An understanding response has the most potential for building confidence in employer-employee interactions. It is the one response style of the five mentioned here most likely to communicate that you have an accurate understanding of what the other person has said to you. While the other four responses are virtually automatic in you and everyone else, this one takes conscious practice and is what much of the rest of this manual is all about. The overuse of this response method has pitfalls too--a conversation with someone who only demonstrates "understanding" can be like talking to a mirror. One does get weary of hearing one's own words

repeated, rephrased over and over again. An understanding response is defined as rephrasing in different words what the person is saying without changing either the meaning or the feeling tone. Examples of understanding responses: "You feel disgusted that after so many tries, you have failed to establish a good relationship with the judge." "The main thing I've heard you say is that you've come to the end of your rope and don't know what to do." "You're torn about what, if anything, can be done to rectify the mess you think you have caused."

What to Do: Acceptance

Table 2 outlines in brief form for your careful study and reflection the seven attributes which, when taken together, define exactly what acceptance is and what it is not. It is especially important to make note of what acceptance is not. Phony acceptance will damage important relationships faster than anything else.

In like fashion, Table 2 outlines in brief form how acceptance is shown, both verbally and nonverbally. You may very well want to add to or delete information from these two tables on the basis of your own professional experience.

2. BASIC LISTENING SKILLS

The hard work of actively listening to someone else demands skills that need to be kept "in shape" by conscious practice, much as a performing musician or athlete must be ready for a performance, a match, or event. What makes listening an especially noteworthy set of skills is that you, the supervisor, need them constantly. There is rarely a time out when it comes to listening. Listening events happen without warning and probably on a continual basis from the time you arrive at work until you leave for home.

TABLE 2

ATTRIBUTES OF ACCEPTANCE

WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT IS NOT
GENUINE INTEREST	
Supervisor is concerned about meaning of each item of discussion to employee's welfare and work. Supervisor constantly tries to clarify his own understanding of employee and to communicate that understanding during the interview. Supervisor recognizes and takes pleasure in employee achievements, expresses confidence in employee's ability to handle certain tasks or situations, and honestly appreciates employee's efforts.	Evasiveness Distorted interpretations Disregard of appropriateness of employee's way of functioning Unrealistic appraisal of employee's capacity Insensitivity to employee's conception of his abilities
EMPATHY	
Employee feels trust in supervisor and therefore is able to ventilate (express) his feelings. Supervisor is able to participate in employee's expression of feelings; he assures employee of naturalness of anger as well as of joy. Supervisor is able to see events through eyes of client.	Feeling uncomfortable with employee's outburst Fear of not being able to control employee's emotional expressions Oversolicitude Sympathy (too much emotional involvement by interviewer)
HUMAN EQUALITY (ALL PEOPLE CREATE EGOS THAT ARE EQUALLY WORTHY)	
Employee is a co-worker on a common problem. Employee's opinions and feelings are worthy of consideration. Supervisor conveys feeling of quiet friendliness as well as of strong desire to help.	Supervisor's advice as primary direction for change Extreme cordiality and effusiveness
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION THROUGH UNDERSTANDING	
Supervisor's comments are on the same wavelength of that of employees. Supervisor follows employee's line of thought. Supervisor attempts to anticipate events the way in which employee anticipates them. Supervisor communicates this understanding according to employee's way of thinking while still maintaining a professional overview of client's problem.	Supervisor attends to his own line of thought because he knows the score Supervisor anticipates events according to his management outlook Tries to fit employee's behavior into a statistical pattern

TABLE 2 Cont'd.

WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT IS NOT
RESPECT	
Employee's self-experience is *real* to him. No experience should be considered more or less worthy of positive regard.	Agreement Approval Neutrality Cold detachment Idle and/or avid curiosity
Supervisor maintains attitude of warm goodwill (calmness and understanding) regardless of what employee talks about, even if it is not socially acceptable or to the supervisor's personal liking. (Respect or liking is expressed in spite of employee unlikable characteristics.)	Thinking or feeling the way employee does or having same values Assessment of employee values
Employee is valued because of his aliveness ("He is") and his being ("He thinks and feels"). Employee is a person with dignity, not an object to be pulled apart for study.	
Supervisor believes that there is validity in the distinctive values of dissimilar ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. (Each person has the right to feel, think, and value differently.)	
EMPLOYEE DIRECTED	
Employee is encouraged to make choices and to determine directions providing he does not infringe on policy and rights of others.	Changing employee in interviewer's image Disregard of limitations of external reality
Supervisor encourages employee to be his own major source of self-evaluation while affirming employee's worth and potential to become a fully functioning individual who is open to experience and feedback.	Employee submission to controlling interviewer
NONCRITICAL KINDNESS	
Because of assurance of reasonable confidentiality, employee feels safe in discussing any topic he chooses. He feels free to relate experiences that he may be ashamed of or that frighten him as well as those of which he is proud and satisfied.	Avoidance of discussion of alternative behaviors for employee's consideration Judgmental Blaming person Releasing employee from responsibility for his acts Allotting all responsibility to employee for his acts Condemnation/punishment Hostility Rejection
Employee feels accepted by supervisor while still feeling critical of himself.	
Supervisor expresses continuing willingness to help no matter whether he approves or disapproves of employee's behavior.	

TABLE 2 cont'd.

SHOWING ACCEPTANCE

NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR	VERBAL BEHAVIOR
FACIAL EXPRESSION Relaxed, not frowning	**VERBAL FOLLOWING BEHAVIOR** Appropriate choice of words and statements that follow employee's comments as well as nonverbal clues. Avoids excessive interviewer talk time Feedback to employee of an undistorted communication of what employee said
EYE CONTACT Visual interaction not forced Looks at employee but does not stare intensely and makes varied use of eye contact	**FREE EMPLOYEE VERBAL EXPRESSION ENCOURAGED** No interruptions; reinforces employee's verbal expressions by nonverbal signs such as smiles, nods, and body posture
BODY POSTURE Comfortable posture, relaxed movements, and "towardness" posture conveyed by slightly leaning forward or sitting forward on chair.	**LANGUAGE USED ACCORDING TO EMPLOYEE'S LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING** Words used to aid understanding not to impress; use of special words (colloquialisms) of employee's only if they are understood by supervisor
GESTURES Loose and natural arm, hand, leg, and foot movements	**CONGRUENCE BETWEEN VERBAL AND NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR** What is said fits nonverbal expressions, supervisor looks like he means what he says
DISTANCE Comfortable distance face to face	

Understanding the complex activity of listening is best approached by dividing it up into its component parts, those which, when combined back together again, function harmoniously together as a whole, as an integrated set. One benefit from taking this component approach is that your weaknesses and strengths can easily be identified. Deliberate work can improve weaker components, while a simple maintenance program can be focused on the ones already well established. In this way improvement tasks never become overwhelming. One shouldn't set out to become a "better listener" as a matter of willpower; it is a mistake to approach that goal from a New Year's Resolution perspective. One might purposefully practise responding more and more accurately to feeling expression (one of the components) a strengthening activity which can show results with only a few hours' work. Becoming a better listener requires regular practice of listening skills.

In active listening the listener has definite responsibilities. The listener does not simply and passively absorb the words which are spoken. He is definitely not silent. The listener actively works at grasping the facts and feelings in what is said, and tries, by his listening and selective responding, to help the other work out problems, understand his own utterances better, and become clearer and clearer about what is under discussion. Active listening does not suggest a long or arduous conversation. Rather it is a way of approaching conversations--a way which insures success.

A major benefit of active listening is that it is an important way to bring about changes in others. Sensitive listening is a most effective agent for change--changes in attitudes, changes in maturity levels. When a supervisor or manager uses active listening with employees, the employees can be

more open to their experiences, less defensive, and will come to believe that their contributions to the organization are worthwhile.

What to Do: "Get Inside" The Speaker

Active listening requires that the listener "get inside" the speaker. The listener understands, from the point of view of the speaker, just what the speaker is communicating. Understanding what another is saying requires that you, the listener, follow-closely. You do not lead. To be an effective listener you will have to sharpen your ability to discriminate clearly between those times in conversation when you are a follower or a leader. Basic listening is following. Beyond that, the listener must convey to the speaker that the listener is seeing things from his point of view. (Conveying that understanding does not mean agreeing with the point of view.) There are three global activities required, descriptions of which follow. At the end of this section is a complete description of each listening component which goes into each area.

Listen for total meaning. Most messages have a content portion and a feeling (or attitude) portion. Both are important, and both taken together give the message its meaning. It is the total meaning which you are attempting to understand.

Respond to feelings. While the content may be obvious, at times the feelings (or attitudes) are not. Many times, also, the feeling tone is the important part of the message. Most listeners need to improve their response to feelings. In order to catch the full flavor of the message the listener must make special efforts to respond particularly and accurately to the feelings.

Note all cues. Most communication is nonverbal. The non-verbal elements to messages give it richness, feeling, and meaning. In other words, the qualitative elements of the message are conveyed in ways other than words. Truly sensitive listening requires that we become aware of speech rate, volume, tone, pitch, changes in facial expressions, gestures, posture, distances and a whole host of non-verbal cues. The responsive listener finds a way to build into his responses information derived from the non-verbal elements.

Active listening is not an easy skill to acquire. In fact, it is not a skill in its own right. It is a set of very carefully integrated component skills. Becoming expert at these basic listening skills takes work and deliberate practice. Perhaps more importantly, it requires you to acquire the basic attitude of wanting to listen effectively. Moreover, it requires of the listener a very deliberate demonstration of this attitude. Ten particular component elements in listening are outlined below.

a. Requesting Concreteness and Specificity

Showing interest in accurate detail, examples and illustrations. Moving from the general and ambiguous to the particular and clearcut. The goal is clarity, concreteness. Example: "For instance?" "Can you give me an example?" "How did the action directly affect you?" Is not to be used in a manipulative fashion to cross-examine or to interrogate in order to make YOUR point or to show up the other's faulty memory. Used to ground the conversation in reality.

b. Naming Ideas, Topics, Concerns, Content, Problems and Themes

Saying out loud the main point (the main idea, topic, theme or issue) under discussion. In function, this action is similar to an editor's underlining a topic sentence in a written paragraph. As such, it serves as a steering effort, requiring a sense of timing and complete accuracy so that the discussion is actually guided in the appropriate direction. It can be thought of as the title of a spoken chapter. "Let's see, the major concern you have is..."

c. Checking Perceptions

Taking a brief time out from the flow of talk to focus momentarily on impressions received of speaker's inner state. Interrupting the speaker to clarify part of what are vague feelings or ideas. Characterized by a brief give-and-take to certify the accuracy of the perception before too much time and too many words have passed. Major benefit is to avoid accuracy errors which might be costly later in the conversation. After checking, the conversants return to the mainstream of talk.

d. Naming and Responding to Feelings

Listener conveys an accurate understanding of the emotional component of speaker's comments. Requires a large "feeling word" vocabulary. Goal is to help speaker understand himself at a deeper level, not only in what was said or implied, but what was poorly formulated or only hinted at. High skill level establishes trust and rapport. The major ingredient is empathy, helping others clarify their feelings and emotions. One of the most difficult of all the component skills.

e. Paraphrasing

Re-phrasing the speaker's comments into a shorter, more concise version in the listener's own freshly chosen words. Often the paraphrased comment is more efficiently or eloquently stated. The goal is to reiterate the core, or essence, of the message, usually its main content. The listener can effectively indicate how well he is receiving the message as intended. It is especially useful when the messages sent are complex and long.

f. Summary Paraphrase

Attending to and reflecting back to the speaker the essence of a large section of just-concluded conversation, reviewing point-by-point the main content, ideas and/or concerns. Very helpful in tying together, highlighting concisely and in bridging the talk over toward problem solving. Requires concentrated attention to main themes throughout the conversation.

g. Describing Nonverbal Cues

One of the most difficult skills to learn due to social custom prohibiting direct reference to nonverbal. The listener notices and draws verbal attention to nonverbal cues, including gestures, facial expression, body motion, and voice qualities. Verbal response is descriptive in form. "You smiled when you mentioned your friend." This response is useful in uncovering contradictions, in surfacing mixed feelings and deception.

h. Using a Global Summary

An integrating response which connects together and names many diverse and complex, positive and negative elements

of emotion, salient main points, problems or themes to give an overall and concise picture. Useful in creating forward movement when progress is blocked or difficult. Of great assistance to help another take action or design action to be taken. Also useful in closing a unit of productive conversation with a clear statement of the important mixtures of the transaction. Can assist in beginning a conversation which was stopped or interrupted at an earlier point--as review, and as a way of getting back to work quickly.

i. Interpreting Nonverbal Cues

The listener notices, attends to and takes mental note of nonverbal cues. Verbal response is interpretive or evaluative in form. "You look worried." This skill is one of the most powerful responses to elicit feelings and to pierce to the "core of the matter" quickly.

j. Negotiating for Meaning

A give-and-take, back-and-forth unit of conversation to reach increasingly closer levels of agreement between conversants about the deeper, personal meaning in the messages. A direct, mutual effort to personalize conversations and discussion. Benefit: conversants develop ability to say what they mean.

3. WHEN LISTENING IS DIFFICULT

While it is true that listening may well constitute 80% of the day of a supervisor, it is not true that all listening situations are equal in ease or difficulty. Listening encounters vary because of the content of the conversation, your own physical condition, the interpersonal skills of the participants, and many other factors. In this section, these varying situations are listed along with some suggestions for what to do about them.

Difficult Listening Circumstances

Distractions. Listening is frequently difficult when the listening environment and/or situation is not conducive because of noise, distractions, lack of privacy, temperatures too hot or too cold, or uncontrolled interruptions.

What to Do: Take Action

Do not put up with an unacceptable listening environment. Move physically. Rearrange furniture. Discuss privacy and confidentiality problems with the person with whom you are talking. Reschedule the talk. Insist on no interruptions. Set a time-table for uninterrupted time. You do not have to answer the telephone just because it is ringing. Briefly, it is up to you, the professional, to act, to take action, to avoid passively accepting an unacceptable listening environment. Reduce the distractions so that you increase the chances for a calm conversation. If your job involves listening you have a perfect right to insist on the right environment.

Unusual Content. Listening can be difficult when the material to which you are listening is unusual, disgusting, or arousing, such as that involving great emotion, talks of disaster and catastrophe including death. There is the special case of unusual content when YOU are the topic of the conversation, especially when the speaker is criticizing you, blaming you or accusing you of something.

What to Do:

Though difficult,the most important act after recognizing what is happening to your own emotions, is to force yourself to turn off your own "internal chatter". Stop talking to yourself while the other person is talking to you. Halt all

those little editorial remarks, especially those of judgment, that you make to yourself while the other is talking. In other words, you must disengage yourself emotionally. In emotion's place, install your most professionally accessible listening skills. Increase the frequency of your paraphrasing. Focus on the ideas being presented. Discern if the topic is being discussed just to test you. Don't be tested. Do not permit yourself to be manipulated by the content of the conversation. Follow the guidelines for handling criticism presented later in this manual. Engage the other in talk about what is happening to both of you during this conversation (i.e. here-and-now feelings of the moment.) To summarize, first listen to your internal messages; second, turn off your internal chatter; third, disengage your emotions by distancing yourself or even ignoring the affect (feelings) generated by the topic under discussion.

Unusual Communication Style. Listening can be extremely taxing when the style and method of communication in the other person is bizarre or unusual. This situation may develop with the excessive use of slang, the use of rapidly produced unintelligible speech, or if the speaker talks in a tongue or style you find difficult to understand. It may also be that the speaker is simply uneducated or unskillful. Ease of oral expression is not something that comes confidently to everyone. Out-of-region accents on one hand and excessive use of highly localized vocabulary on the other may cause difficulty for the listener.

What to Do:

Conscious high level use of basic communication skills is expected on your part. During this kind of difficult listening situation you must not become frustrated, critical, or defeated. Check perceptions frequently. It is still your responsibility to work for the success of this conversation, though you do not "own" the problem creating the difficulty. Become "other-centered" to the point that all your

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What to Do:

Conscious high level use of basic communication skills is expected on your part. During this kind of difficult listening situation you must not become frustrated, critical, or defeated. Check perceptions frequently. It is still your responsibility to work for the success of this conversation, though you do not "own" the problem creating the difficulty. Become "other-centered" to the point that all your

efforts are genuinely going into understanding what is being said to you. Stop telling yourself how hard it is and simply get on with the truly hard work of listening in this situation. You may, from time to time, have to insist on standard levels of English which are more universally accepted in the professional world. Do so if you believe that such an assertion will in fact result in change. Do not do so if it is outside the capability of the person with whom you are speaking.

Your Preoccupations. Listening is very frequently made difficult due to your own state of mind. You might be tired, disinterested, or distracted from a whole host of important matters. You might find yourself to be pre-occupied with problems of a personal or of an office nature. You may be listening to all your own internal chatter that won't be quiet because you have so many things to do and not enough time.

What to Do:

First, own your own problem. Be sure that you do not blame the one with whom you are talking for the situation which in fact you have created. It usually is not appropriate to use the other as your counselor (to help you with your problem of preoccupation) in a moment such as this. Force yourself to "get up" for the listening job you simply have to do. Listening in the face of your own distractions is exactly what you get paid to do and do well. You may have to remind yourself of your role and your responsibilities. If your preoccupations create difficult listening situations for you frequently, you may well wish to seriously examine the pattern--how it occurs and what its features are. It might be that you have problems which need working on, perhaps with your supervisor, so that you can approach your listening responsibilities with a clearer head, a cleaner agenda, and fewer mental distractions.

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Your Judgments. Listening can be made more difficult than it is in the first place when your own feelings, attitudes, and judgments interfere with the task of paying attention. Examples are: how you feel about the person who is talking to you; what your position is on the topic under discussion; how you have prejudged the situation as a result of prior conversations. You may find that you have a ready-made, pre-rehearsed set of responses because of your judgments.

What to Do:

Avoid, at all costs, being trapped by your own feelings and judgments about the person and the topic. Admit to yourself that you are closed-minded about this topic, that you have already made up your mind, that you are prejudiced toward or about this person, if you are. You may want to talk out your problem of prejudgment with someone else, confidentially and/or professionally. Clearly, you do not want to gossip about person "X" to a confidant. Clearly you do not want to promote a climate of "behind-the-back" discussions about the topic or the person with others whose business it isn't. These are not the topics for coffee room conversations. In case you cannot handle the conversation because of your pre-drawn conclusions, it is best to decline to engage in the conversation at all: this spares your demonstrating for all to see your own inabilities to separate the issues carefully. Refer the person to someone else in this case. It is perfectly human to have judgments and feelings about topics and people. When these feelings interfere substantially with your ability to listen well, you should admit it and step aside.

Outside Forces I. Listening can be extremely difficult when actual or perceived demands are felt by you from outside forces which determine your behavior. You may perceive as a result of the particular conversation in which you are engaged

that the other person's behavior must be altered. In this case, you feel an outside force, a pressure requiring a certain outcome. This pressure, real or imagined, can interfere with what might be a more important first task of listening. In other words, you may feel the need to produce the result so strongly that you cannot hear what is being said to you. This phenomenon occurs especially frequently in conversations in which one person is trying to "change the mind" of the other. The goal so overpowers the sense of the transaction that virtually nothing at all is accomplished. Keep in mind that some of the forces which operate on the supervisor who is in a listening mode are very real indeed. You may have one chance and only one chance to interact with someone to alter their perspective. On top of that requirement you may also be required to hear very carefully their side of the story.

What to Do:

In the event that this happens to you, your first step is to examine what the forces are which are acting on you from the outside. Which are real? Which are unreal? Is it necessary in this particular conversation to change someone's mind, to alter his behavior, to have something tangible result? Is the pressure for this consequence a force from the outside, a part of your job responsibility, a perception of yours about what "ought to" happen? The second step you must take is to separate your functions. That is, listening is one activity that requires 100% of your attention. Changing someone's attitude or behavior is quite another matter. It may be difficult or impossible for you to wear "both hats" at the same time. Very few professionals in supervisorial/managerial positions can effectively listen while at the same time teach or outline new behavior. Become conscious of when you are doing which and you will avoid most pitfalls.

Outside Forces II. Listening can be rendered impossible when actual or perceived demands on you by the other person force a strain on you to have some consequence result from the conversation or interaction. In this case, the very person with whom you are talking may be pressuring you for a decision, a favor, a judgment, an evaluation, or some sort of approval. These forces, whether real or not, intervene forcefully with the listening process. You may find yourself so pre-occupied with trying to figure out how you are going to handle what you think is being demanded that your ability to listen diminishes.

What to Do:

As in many other difficult listening situations, nothing works better than effective skill. In this particular case, you are well advised to use the most basic skills available to you: paraphrasing, perception checking, naming topics, and naming feelings. It pays dividends to summarize frequently--to check, in other words, where you are in the conversation with the other at points along the way. Discuss the intent of the conversation with the other. This helps to make known to both parties what those forces or goals are which are impinging on the situation. It may turn out that it is more important to make the decision than to listen carefully. At the least you must be a conscious partner with the other in determining just which forces are acting on the conversation. It is not uncommon for the effective communicator to ask in this situation, "Just what do you want and need from me on this matter?"

Irreconcilable Roles and Functions. Listening is frequently plainly impossible when the listener finds herself or himself functioning in multiple roles with the other. For instance, as supervisor you might also be a friend and confidant of the person you supervise. Your role as supervisor may bring with it certain types of expectations or strains which may affect

your ability to see and hear accurately what is being said to you. At one point you may be a co-worker struggling jointly with the other to solve a problem. Moments later you are a supervisor evaluating the performance of this person. A few minutes later you are enjoying a cup of coffee with this person, your friend. Many times the roles do not overlap. Often the roles are irreconcilable. A surefire conflict will inevitably develop within you when this happens, followed by drastically reduced effectiveness as a listener.

What to Do:

Clarify with yourself and with the person with whom you are conversing as to just what your overlapping roles and responsibilities are with this person. Where did these come from? What is the history of the relationship? Which role(s) are you in now and which are expected? While this sounds like a difficult conversation to have (and it may be) the outcome certainly makes the effort worthwhile. It is entirely possible for you and the other to surface those unconscious roles which tend to color uncontrollably your relationship and the effectiveness of your conversations with each other. You can be sure that consciousness in these matters of roles and functions is definitely preferred by all parties to unconsciousness.

Evaluations of You. Listening can be complicated when the other person (the one to whom you are listening) has made evaluations about you that are either in your awareness or not. The other person may be in love with you, may hate you, may think you are incompetent, or may think that you are the best thing since sliced bread. Their evaluation of you does affect you, whether you are conscious of it or not. It tends to distract or detract from your ability to focus on the conversation at hand.

What to Do:

If you sense that some judgment or evaluation of you has been made by the other, bring it up in conversation. Talk about it. You will be better off knowing about it than not knowing about it. Ask how they see you. Ask for feedback. Determine what role they see you in and what role they like you to be in. Discuss how both of you believe what effects derive from the other's evaluation of you. In other words, work at making conscious what was unconscious. State what had been unstated. Then, investigate your own internal reaction (to and for yourself) as to what you personally believe about how the other person has evaluated you and what effect you believe it has on your relationship and your ability to listen.

Deception. Listening can become a nightmare when other persons (or you, for that matter) either intentionally or unintentionally communicate inaccuracies; deceit, deliberate errors, inventions, or mixed or partial messages. The other person may be lying to you. The other may not know that the information given is incorrect. You may be receiving a partial picture deliberately conveyed so that your sympathies are with the one with whom you are talking. The falsifications may be cleverly managed or clumsily obvious. No matter. Your listening job has been incalculably complicated.

What to Do:

Frankly, there is no easy answer. There are many considerations to sort through when you are deciding whether or not to confront someone about (or discuss with someone) some assumed deceit. If you are the deceitful one, you may need to talk this problem out with yourself and possibly someone else to figure out why you are engaging in deception. There may be

good reasons. Not everyone in any organization is privy to all information. At times supervisors and managers must omit details or falsify for reasons they believe to be defendable for the good of the overall organization. Whatever the reason, if you are the deceiver, it is a good idea to know consciously why you are doing it.

There are times when you know better than the other what is good for them to know and hear or not to know and hear. But you must be conscious and deliberate about it. In the case of deceit coming from the other person, the issue is no less complex. What is your role and responsibility with this person? Do you really want to and do you really need to know the truth? Is it your responsibility and your privilege to know? Since you must assume that you are the more skillful communicator of the two, do you have the important skills needed in confronting deception so that the conversation does not deteriorate into a crazy kind of demeaning battle between you and the other? You must be able to anticipate the consequences to confronting the other's deception and have the skills to handle the consequences. It is entirely irresponsible and unprofessional to engage in a confrontation with someone whom you supervise if you do not have the skills to bring about a success in the confrontation.

Skill. Listening can be frustrating and difficult if you lack skills. Listening will not succeed if you can't wait to get your speech made. Listening will obviously suffer beyond repair if you simply wait your turn to talk. If you find yourself in a situation as a manager or supervisor in which you are the less skillful of the participants in an interaction in which you must be the listener, that indeed can be a difficult listening situation for you.

What to Do:

Go back to basics. Let nothing go by but what you haven't consciously had it register in your head. Develop the ability to rephrase what was said to you in your own words. Show a willingness to learn from the person with whom you speak. Reduce your internal chatter which is probably self-deprecating anyway. Decide that what is said to you is monumentally important and you cannot forget one portion of it. In other words, your attitude of wanting to listen will assist you in making up for a lack of listening skill. Display this attitude genuinely. Use every situation, the one you are in at the very moment, to practice improving your listening skills. Use that situation to become a better listener, practicing the basic skills, the primary components, and the fundamental building blocks of good listening.

4. STANDUP COUNSELING

The title of this subsection is deliberately chosen. The work of the supervisor/manager happens in doorways, sitting on the edges of tables, standing in the corridor, or at the coffee machine. That's as it should be. Standup, or informal, counseling is a real-life fact, which the effective supervisor has recognized. Unplanned, brief meetings with employees at odd spots in the work setting can and must turn into profitable experiences for all parties. If they do, small problems can be prevented from escalating into major ones.

Formalized, come-into-my-office-and-sit-down problem-solving conversations definitely have their place, but frequently such talks are inappropriate, unnecessary, too long, and, strangely enough, ineffective. Three good minutes standing in the hallway with an effective manager are vastly preferred by most employees to twenty lousy minutes uncomfortably spent in an office with a bumbling, overly talkative manager.

Two levels of skill are needed. First, the supervisor must answer what might be called the "appropriateness" question; that is, "Is this the right time and place to be having this particular talk with this employee?" Clearly, the answer is a judgment call, requiring the manager to act or not within just a moment's time. Though the answer most typically given should be "yes", the supervisor must be flexible. "No, how about in 10 minutes?" or, "Sure, but I'm on my way somewhere now; would 2:30 this afternoon be ok?" It is crucial for the supervisor to think clear through the timing issue and not ever be caught mindlessly responding to requests or demands on his time. The essential question is: Is this the appropriate time or not?

Secondly, there is the matter of the application of skill. The fact that the conversation is only to be two minutes long is precisely the reason that the particular skills brought to this conversation must be of the highest quality. With an attitude of unhurried efficiency, these short conversations require flawless listening with undivided attention and very selective responding. The supervisor does not have the luxury of time to re-do portions of the conversation which might have been vague or missed. Instead, a top performance is demanded the very first time through. It is here, in the unexpected, deceptively social, brief conversations with employees where the supervisor's ability to apply known communication skills effectively meets one true test of competence.

What to Do

Determine: Is help really desired? An explicit request may not mean real readiness. Some people who genuinely want help are reluctant to ask for it. Ambivalence--a mixed seeking and rejecting--is usual.

Determine: What kind of help is sought? Does the employee seek support for his side of a problem? Someone who will listen and accept his? A sounding board for thoughts? Expert knowledge? Escape from responsibility for his own decisions?

Determine: What is the real problem? It may be other than the apparent or first-mentioned problem. If an employee has difficulty in reaching a solution to a problem, it often indicates that one has been asking the wrong question or solving the wrong problem. Answers to wrong problems, no matter how clever, won't really help. A better diagnosis may make more effective answers almost obvious.

Determine: Where does the problem hurt? Counseling begins best at the point of felt need--this may or may not prove to be the basic problem. Listen to the complaint and show that you understand it.

Separate: Are your experiences similar to his? Few individuals enjoy hearing how well someone else has solved the problem which baffles them. It's probably best not to reveal to someone how you solved a particular problem which sounds similar to theirs.

Pay Attention: Resist the temptation to talk. Instead, put all of your energies into paying strict attention to what is being said to you, the nonverbal cues coming your way, and the meaning of the message. The supervisor or manager most likely to get results, most likely to be helpful and most likely to be seen as helpful by employees is the one who masters the art of paying attention. Attention can be a healer, can be a problem solver, and can be reinforcing.

Listen deeply: Stretch your mind and focus on the other person with all the intensity and awareness that you can muster.

Restrain your ego: If you want to pay strict attention to another person, you must put aside your temptation, normal as it is, to be self-centered. You may have to train your ego to take a back seat, restrain your tendency to verbalize.

Practice patience: Especially in conversations that are spontaneous, very brief (two minutes), and other-centered, paying close attention is not a matter of offering snap judgments. More often, it's a matter of waiting, listening, and standing by (literally) until the person you're paying attention to works out something.

Show concern: There is no use wasting your time and that of the one who thinks you're paying attention unless you honestly want to help, unless you actually care, and unless you are willing to donate the time, brief as it might be.

Summarize: At the point in the conversation when you want to conclude it, summarize what the other has said. The summary response is especially handy for ending a conversation. Performing this skill requires concentrated attention on the main themes throughout the conversation. Highlight the main points; keep your word production to a bare minimum; do not end your comments with a question; use declarative sentences; and drop your voice at the conclusion. Such a summary will demonstrate that you heard what was said and gives both parties a convenient way to stop talking.

C. COMMON SITUATIONS IN PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

On a daily basis, managers and supervisors find themselves in a variety of contexts in which communicative interaction with personnel is predominant. The role of the manager is manifest in an ongoing series of interactions, many of which contribute to defining personnel management activity and style. This portion of the handbook looks at several of these interaction situations:

- Interviewing
- The Motivation Myth
- Handling Misunderstandings
- Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Confrontation
- Handling Criticism

1. INTERVIEWING

Studies of interviewer behavior have revealed that some interviewers, especially novice interviewers, tend to make many communication errors. Most commonly, interviewers cut off interaction with interviewees by asking closed-ended questions or by making long, awkward speeches. The objective of "getting the interviewee to talk" is frequently not reached. Most problems are traced to the fact that often interviewers do not know what to do, have failed to prepare for their role and did not have an adequate "beginning" or "bridging" verbal repertoire to rely on during transitions, awkward moments, and silences.

What to Do

a. Role Preparation

Decide what your role is. Is it your job to collect information? To make a decision? To confront? To solve problems? To pontificate? To hire? To screen candidates? You will automatically become a better interviewer the moment you are perfectly clear on the purpose of the interview. This activity of clarification must be accomplished prior to the start of the interview.

Determine exactly what sequence of steps is involved. What happens after the interview? Do you report to someone? About what? Your impressions? Your decision? Does written information pass on from you to some next reviewer? What activities are required of you subsequent to the completion of your work with the interviewee? Will you be required to or will you be making promises to anyone to follow-up your work with the interviewee?

Plan for appropriate interview time. Do you tend to overcrowd your schedule and feel hurried during interviews? Do you allow time after an interview to record your impressions, data, or concerns before the information gets "cold"? Do you plan too much time for interviews so that they tend to meander and become overly social? Is starting difficult for you so that you have to rush to finish? Only experience will teach the inexperienced interviewer how much time he or she needs, but since time is your most precious asset; you must remain in control of it.

Structure the content ahead of time. What are the three of four main blocks of information you need? If the session is an employment interview, you will need to cover some rather basic areas including prior employment, training, education, salary history, pattern of moves and their reasons, progression into increasingly more complex work; and career goals. You may also need to discover information about the candidate's interpersonal realtionships on the job, communication skills and deficiencies, history of illness and absenteeism, feelings toward authority, and attitudes about learning new skills and work production. It is a very good idea for the employment interviewer to have a set of important points to cover written down (for your eyes only) in plain sight for easy reference.

Avoid prejudgment. Is your mind already made up? You may have had access to a file or you may have a prior relationship with the interviewee. Suppress the tendency (especially in a decision-to-be-made interview) to merely verify or discredit an already arrived-at judgment.

b. Interview Process

Start promptly. It is up to you to begin--perhaps after brief social niceties, if you like. Start by stating your view of the purpose of the interview. End your short beginning with an irresistable "lead", one which the interviewer will find easy to respond to. "Tell me about the series of events which led up to your applying for this job."

Recognize free information. Free information is available in almost every interviewee response. Pay strict attention to all comments, for they all yield extra information. The interviewee who tells you about the "sequence of events" above will indirectly be revealing her or his ability to recount accurately chronological events. As a result, you obtain free information about how well-organized this person's mind is, and how his thought patterns flow. You will also learn what he thinks isimportant by virtue of what is emphasized. You can return to the "free information" later whenever you choose with a simple, "A while ago, you mencioned that Bob Jones repeatedly urged you to apply for this position. Please talk more about how other important people in your life influence your decisions."

Keep in control of yourself and the direction of the interview. It may be very critical for you to cover all the points you planned on covering. By keeping in control, you will also be able to consciously omit any part of your agenda you choose. You do not want to be caught short of time, thus having to skip important areas, because you unconsiously let the interviewee determine the pace and content of the conversation.

Provide information when and where necessary--for clarification and/or when interviewee ignorance requires it. But, don't use an interview situation as a platform to teach, preach, or advocate your pet notions. If you do, you may have lost sight of the purpose of the interview, unless of course, teaching or preaching was part of its planned purpose.

Establish rapport by responding to what the interviewee is talking about. Rapport suggests understanding at a feeling level. Your skill at conveying to the interviewee that you perceive accurately her or his feelings is certainly the quickest and most effective way to establish rapport. For example, examine the following statement: "Though you are fond of the people you currently work with, you're resolved to move to a situation where job satisfaction will be higher." The words "fond of" and "resolved" are the two key words in that sentence which convey understanding of feeling and are thereby the avenues toward rapport establishment. Rapport occurs as a result of your actions and your words, never because of your intentions regardless of how virtuous they may be.

Stay on important, relevant areas long enough to learn something of value. A common interviewer error is to flit quickly from one area to another leaving the interviewee virtually breathless in attempts to provide enough information for valid, meaningful conclusions. This mistake is most commonly made when the interviewer has not prepared adequately for the talk.

Think of an interview as a conversation you and the other person are constructing or composing out of the verbal raw materials you each contribute. The "cement" holding

this construction together, giving it its identity or shape, is your skill in transitions. Herky-jerky jumping around will cause the edifice to collapse into a rubble, burying with it all the information blocks you need. Effective transitions will solidify the structure, keeping each block of information properly in relation to each other block and to the conversation as a whole. For example: "You have just described the progression of how each of your last three positions led one to the other. I see now how this one fits ogically next. I don't see, however, the career goal out in the distance, in the future, toward which all your experiences aim."

With this response, the interviewer has cemented together a large section of the interview while at the same time has handed the interviewee a whole new set of "plans" for the next section of the talk. You may also notice that the interviewer did not ask a question. There is no need, most of the time, to ask questions. By ending his remarks with a period, the interviewer has helped this transaction seem much more like an ordinary conversation, a result which could not have been achieved as easily had the comment ended with a question, such as, "Where does all this lead? What is your eventual career goal?" The skilled interviewee knows when it is his turn to talk and exactly what he needs to talk about. A question at this point is not only unnecessary, but probably would retard a full disclosure of information.

End the interview decisively. Do not let it dribble off into irrelevant or social talk. The end is just as important as the beginning and you should be prepared.

to stop. Do not insult your interviewee by glancing at your watch, saying, "Oh my goodness. It's 10 after 12 and I was supposed to meet someone five minutes ago.." Prepare yourself and the other for the end by making a statement near the conclusion of the talk, such as "In three or four minutes we'll need to stop. It might be a good idea for each of us to think of items we may have forgotten." After three or four minutes, you probably ought to summarize and then brief the interviewee on the anticipated next steps, if any. In short order, sweep back through the interview, locate some significant themes, and state them. You may also wish to evaluate some aspect of what had transpired. For example: "Beth, I am impressed with your level of awareness and frank disclosures about how intellectual stimulation is important to you on the job. You also noted how you prefer to work alone but in close proximity to others doing similar work. I do appreciate how well-prepared you were for our conversation. Here's what you can expect to happen next..."

c. Interviewing Skills

Pay attention to the interviewee. As a rule, when in doubt, pay attention. Good attending behavior demonstrates to the interviewee that you respect him or her and are interested in what is said. Relax physically. Feel the presence of the chair as you sit on it. Let your posture be comfortable and your movements natural. For example, if you usually move and gesture a good deal, feel free to do so during interviews. It is crucial that you, the interviewer, are comfortable. The interviewer should initiate and maintain eye contact. Keep in mind that eye contact can be overdone. A varied use of eye contact is most effective; staring fixedly or with undue intensity usually makes the interviewee uneasy. If you are going to listen

to someone, look at him. At least part of the time, take your cues from the interviewee and follow what he is saying. If you cannot think of anything to say, think back to something that interested you moments before, make a comment about it and the interview then can proceed. There is no need to talk about yourself or your opinions when you are attending.

Provide open invitations to talk. Open invitations to talk often help begin an interview. For example, "What brings you here today?" Invitations help an interviewee to elaborate on a point--e.g., "Tell me more about how you decided to quit." They help elicit examples of specific behavior so that the interviewer is better able to understand a particular point--e.g., "And then, what exactly did you do?" They help focus attention on feelings--e.g., "And when that happened, you were experiencing..." Questions, comments, and reactions should be designed by you to yield information about the other person and to permit you, the interviewer, time and energy to listen. If an interviewer relies on closed questions to structure the talk, he usually is forced to concentrate so hard on thinking up the next question that he fails to listen and attend to the interviewee.

Closed questions used appropriately, (for example, following a rambling discourse by interviewee) can help focus attention on central themes or issues. If it is necessary to use closed or other types of questions, you ought to work consciously to vary the type of questions asked. Types of questions are as follows:

- Leading questions are those which imply that the questioner already knows the answer.
- Double-barrelled questions are those that follow one after the other in series before the interviewee has a chance to answer the first one.

Closed-ended questions are those which can be answered with "yes", "no", or any response of very few words.

Open-ended questions are those which provide room for the respondent to express herself without the imposed categories of the interviewer.

Encourage disclosure. Use short, effective encouragements to assist someone to answer you. The interviewer needs to say very little to encourage someone to continue talking, elaborating, or explaining. This technique presupposes that the interviewer is actually responding to what is being said, and not a phony nicety to avoid making substantial contributions yourself. Typical minimal encouragements are: "oh?" "So?" "Then?" "And?" "Tell me more." "Umm-hmmm." and "What does that mean to you?" The repetition of one or two key words is also a form of minimal encouragement. Too many interviewers are unaware of the power and importance of short encouragements. As a result, easily obtained details are frequently missed and bad decisions may result.

Selectively respond. Utilizing the skills outlined in Part II B-2, Basic Listening Skills, the effective interviewer decides what he or she wants to do next and uses that skill. By "selective" response, we mean that the interviewer is conscious of the wide array of possible responses available to her and then deliberately chooses those best responses to employ at any given moment. Conscious, intentional choice is preferred for an interviewer with personnel responsibilities. The reader is directed to review all the communication skills discussed in Part II B for application in interview situations.

2. THE MOTIVATION MYTH

As a result of some misguided attempts by industry and other commercial arenas for personnel administration to translate

certain psychology research findings into productivity increasing aids, a great myth has built up in the minds of many professionals about motivation and its place in the work of the personnel manager. This process has yielded desperate "how-to" strategies: How to get employees or other people to do more, perform certain tasks or become more productive. Absenteeism, poor productivity, bad attitudes, and lousy interactions with the public are among complaints attributed to "a lack of motivation". Countless hours of manager or supervisors' time is spent trying to figure out "how to motivate" people. The effort may well be a waste of time.

a. An Alternative Perspective

Motivation is a vastly overblown concept, at least as it relates to personnel managers. Motivation is a very private matter. That is to say, whether I am motivated or not to write the words in this sentence or not is really, in the last analysis, my problem, not yours. If I am unmotivated, the task will not be done and some consequence, which affects me will ensue. Motivating me is MY JOB. Personnel managers and supervisors should get out of the business of trying to motivate people. It really doesn't work anyway, and in another sense, it is a demeaning experience for all involved.

How did we get into such a mess? It no doubt all started in school with well-meant (but terribly damaging) teachers manipulating and coercing small children into doing things which they believe the children would not have thought of doing in the first place. Someone crazily believed that one had to "motivate" human beings to learn. The very idea is ridiculous, since a moment's reflection on it reveals that an infant does not need to be motivated to learn. No one needs to be motivated to learn. Learning is natural, obvious, and unstoppable. The effort, however, by the educational establishment progressed unchecked and we all became its victims. Slowly, as individuals grew to adults, people turned over to others the notions of deciding for them what they ought to do, what they ought to learn, and how they ought to (minimally) perform. As individuals matured through the learning system, they yielded more and more to the authority which they believed must know better than they. Motivation developed into competition. Pressure to excel or succeed or to do better than competitiors motivated us. Getting done with it was the reward. The terrible result is that schooling has left most all adults very ill-prepared as learners and worse, as workers. Perfectly capable adults wait for others (such as supervisors) to tell them what to do and why they should be motivated to do it. The consequence is an absurd psychological situation: the human being has been stripped of his own responsibility to provide his own motivation for performance. Gimmicks, zany manipulation, and illogical "rewards" are created in the name of assisting entirely capable individuals to motivate themselves.

Personnel managers ought to have none of this. The matter of motivation should be left in the hands of those to whom it belongs--the employees themselves. The employee's motivation is his or her business and if the manager would realize this, both would be spared its unproductive results.

b. What to Do

Resolve immediately to revise your thinking on the nature and characteristics of motivation. Motivation certainly does exist. It is real and an important psychological

concept. Individuals do vary dramatically on their apparent levels of motivation. An individual varies from moment to moment on his or her level of motivation. Different kinds of consequences result from different kinds of motivational drives and pressures. Motivation is a real, rich, and extraordinarily complex sociological/psychological phenomenon. But motivation is not something that you can provide for another person.

View motivation as largely an internal matter. For adults, motivation to "do" is based upon what the adult sees as desirable performance or learning goals and acceptable methods to accomplish them. Motivation, then, for most adults is directly related to what the individual perceives as being required of him and the ways to reach the goals. Most adults screen work requirements through a series of perception filters.

Discuss with employees (and potential employees) the kinds and types of internal pleasures and internal rewards they find in their day-in, day-out work. For adults, internal pleasure from success and accomplishments probably superceded external rewards in terms of power to motivate. You can become a much more effective "motivator" of those you supervise by assisting them to become clear about what it is that actually motivates them. Such feelings and intrinsic reward systems will vary broadly from adult to adult and from work situation to work situation.

Include the employee in decisions about what goals, outcomes, performances, and expectations are assumed. As a supervisor, you can be certain that psychological feelings of success for an employee will be enhanced to the degree that the employee feels included in setting the standards.

Include the employee in developing paths or methods for accomplishing job performances to the standards you have in mind. In many, if not all, kinds of work there are different ways an individual can go about doing the work. Usually, adequate performance is not limited to one method, except perhaps on an assembly line. The more an employee can be included in developing optional methods or styles for working, the more he or she will feel a part of the system and free to exercise some individuality on the job.

Include the employee in setting realistic outcomes for work performance, levels of aspiration, and standards. Motivation to perform is negatively affected when the expectation (from external forces) is either too overwhelming in scope or too easy to reach. There needs to be some logical balance between challenge and comfort. It is not uncommon in many professional work settings to find morale and motivation a problem due to boredom--relatively bright people in a daily monotonous rut of unchallenging work. As a manager/supervisor you can often do wonders for employees and the entire organization by assisting people to raise their levels of aspiration and work difficulty expectations such that they feel they are using their intelligence more appropriately.

Model in your own behavior what you expect from those you manage and supervise. As is true for children in school settings, employees take their cues from supervisors. Employees watch managers very closely and tend to pick up the values of those in authority. If you are late to meetings, your employees will also be. What is especially important to model or demonstrate authentically is your zest for work. Employee motivation and morale problems can often be traced to very similar problems at the management level.

Utilize appropriate extrinsic reward factors for encouragement and feedback. Approval and support from supervisors and managers create an atmosphere for the person to increase his motivation. Even better, when employees can stimulate and encourage each other (the peers-reinforcing-peers method) morale and motivation are rarely serious problems. A beneficial side effect from the widespread use of external rewards is that the employee becomes much more accessible, much more open to critique, feedback, and "supervision" from the manager/supervisor. Something almost mystical occurs in organizations which have made sensitive application of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. A productive atmosphere of uncomplaining "forward motion" is created, not unlike the synergetic notion of increasing organizational effectiveness and efficiency resulting from each cycle and recycle of energy put into its improvement.

Counsel with individuals with whom you perceive a problem in morale or motivation. Find out from them what the problem is. Tell them how you see their work, their attitude, and the effect they have on the whole organization.

Contract with individual employees to improve their performances. A contract in personnel work is similar to any other kind of contract. You and the employee together draw up an agreement, even putting it in writing, in which you have identified certain behavior to be demonstrated. You specify what actions the employee will take to reach the objectives, the methods you will use as supervisor to give support, the records you both will keep on the accomplishments, and the methods you will use to evaluate whether or not the goals have been reached. Such a "contract" can be quite informal, a verbal understanding between two people, or it can be formal, written, and elaborate--

a method used when the changes needed are extensive and the employee needs quite a bit of help in pursuing the step-by-step activities leading toward the goals.

Assume that all employees, yourself included, in the organization have full lives outside the organization. Those life activities from time to time will affect job performance, motivation, morale, attendance, production, attitude and interpersonal relationships on the job. No one can be expected to leave 100% of his outside-of-work life behind when coming to work. The supervisor/manager who is aware of this normal phenomenon will be more effective when approaching any individual in the organization about motivation/morale issues. Adults do have preoccupations, real problems, and concerns outside of work. Plans, commitments, recreations, and interpersonal responsibilities can and do dilute an employee's focus on the job-- at times significantly so. Effective supervisors keep this reality in mind and approach each employee with a variety of ideas to assist each person to use fully his or her available concentration and energy.

3. HANDLING MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Since interpersonal communication is a complex phenomenon, it is no surprise that people have problems understanding each other. Misunderstandings occur frequently--they are normal. At times, misunderstandings are deliverate; that is, someone will feign misunderstanding to create a problem: Those occasions generally are limited to a pattern found in certain types of "problem employees". (The problem employee is treated separately in Section III.C.) Ordinary misunderstandings may or may not require action on the part of the supervisor/manager. Each situation may be different, and depending on the managerial style you have implemented, you may or may not choose to involve yourself.

Just what is a misunderstanding? Is it a fight between two employees? Is it when one employee comes to you complaining about another? Is a misunderstanding when you and someone are in an argument? How do you know when you are in the middle of a misunderstanding? Though the answers to the above questions may be quite obvious, a useful purpose can be served here to outline briefly the two most common kinds of misunderstandings and contrast them with other types of conflicts which are not misunderstandings. Misunderstandings fall on the lower end of an intensity scale; they are not fullblown fights or out-and-out confrontations. They are, typically, mild and may be annoying. The first type is when you, the supervisor, observe an employee acting in a way which baffles you. Her or his behavior seems inexplicable--you just don't understand it. You may find yourself thinking that what they are doing is wrong, is odd, is against regulations, is not at all what you think they ought to be doing, is strange, is needless, and (certainly) is not the thing you would be doing in that situation. The second type of misunderstanding is interpersonal. In this type, two people are talking or discussing some matter and neither seems able to understand the other in ways that are acceptable to the conversants. Comments such as "No, I just don't get it." Or, "I don't understand." Or, "No, that's not what I meant. What I said was..." Or, "Wait a minute. You keep interrupting me and I can't explain what I mean."

In both common types of misunderstandings, confusion is prevalent. If fear, anger or upsetness is present, it probably is fairly mild. In this way, a misunderstanding is in direct contrast to other interpersonal problems in which strong feelings of anger or fear predominate. To complicate matters slightly, it turns out frequently that a fight, a confrontation,

or ugly scene results from what originally was merely a misunderstanding. In the service of preventing the larger, more disruptive problems from occurring, skill in handling misunderstandings is crucial for the effective supervisor.

What to Do

Accept the fact that misunderstandings will happen, both to you and to your employees. You need not try to create an impossible or unrealistic environment wherein misunderstandings never occur. They will occur and you, occasionally, may even be the cause of them. On the other hand, a work setting in which misunderstandings are the rules is in great need of rectification.

Act quickly. Most reasonably intelligent people can easily perceive when there is a misunderstanding. Most people, however, do not act quickly enough to pay attention to it. The passage of time occasionally clears up the problem; more often it does not. Handling an old misunderstanding that is now the foundation for several other problems is a more difficult task than dealing with it when it is fresh. Approach the misunderstanding directly--as it is happening. Intervene when you see the need.

Facilitate between two people who are in the midst of a misunderstanding. You may find yourself acting as a mediator in the presence of both parties. Even-handedness is crucial to your success in helping others resolve a difference. You must not show preference for one interpretation of the problem over another. You must help each side obtain enough "air time" to explain their side. You must insist that each party demonstrate that they understand what the other side is saying and how they perceive the other's position on the matter.

Teach. Usually best done by example rather than exhortation, teach those whom you supervise and manage how to reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings happening.

Reduce errors in perceiving the feelings, meanings, and intentions of others. A most common error, one which can be easily reduced, is that of interpretation. There is a general tendency for one to "interpret" another. This type of error can be reduced by simple investigation. Misperceptions also can be reduced by participating less in gossip conversations--wherein two or more people begin speculating about why someone is doing what they are doing, why someone is feeling what they are feeling, and so on. In summary, the main way to reduce this type of error is to stop interpreting. Refrain from answering the question "why" if your only answer is a speculation.

Avoid common listening errors. The most common listening error is failure to convey that you understood what was said to you. As a manager, your most powerful tool in reducing listening errors is by setting a good example. Demonstrate unfailingly the ability to convey to employees that you have understood exactly what it is they have said to you. You, the supervisor, must show that you know how to avoid listening errors. You should be able to show that you are not simply waiting for your turn to talk when engaged in conversation with employees.

Increase the number of valid inferences you make from nonverbal cues by being a more astute observer of the nonverbal aspect of human communication. Listen for voice tone; watch eye contact; notice posture and gestures; hear changes in speech rate; pick up on words, phrases and feelings

which are emphasized by volume or some other indicator; watch the person with whom you are talking for the microexpressions which flash across the face; acknowledge the legitimate expression of feeling shown on the face and in the hands. By becoming a better observer of the nonverbal element of communication, the inferences you draw from them will increase in validity. It will become easier for you to understand the nonverbal expressions of others. It is preferable to ask someone what their frown means rather than assume it means that they are bothered by something you did or said. Thus you can avoid a misunderstanding by becoming a better observer of nonverbal messages and by discussing your observations with the people whom you observe.

Recognize some of the underlying features in disagreements. In most disagreements, there no doubt has been a listening failure. There usually has not been a failure to talk. In fact, in most disagreements you will notice both people talking at the same time. Disagreements are competitive. Many people like combat and tend to enjoy argument as a form of competition. You may want to discern whether or not a misunderstanding is merely a common manifestation of some individual's enjoyment of combat or it if represents a more serious problem. A problem can occur if one of the parties to a disagreement enjoys it while another does not. Your role, in that case, is to facilitate an understanding in both parties of what is in fact happening. You can best accomplish this by intervening (especially if asked) and insisting that they have a conversation about how they interact and what kinds of rules they would like to have made explicit with each other to avoid problems.

A final point about disagreements for the supervisor to consider is that frequently the matter over which the disagree-

ment is occurring in the moment is often not the real issue between the parties. The interactants may be expanding territory, may be exercising power or control, may feel frustrated by each other's attempts to gain someone else's favor, or may be upset about something that happened long ago. Your role as a facilitator in this case is to assist the parties address frankly the real problem. You can accomplish this best by boldly insisting that they do so. Remember, though, you could be wrong in your assessment of the situation; be ready to back off if neither party acknowledges that there is another problem underneath the misunderstanding. Readily accept the solutions they come up with.

Mediating Disputes. When the personnel administrator finds herself or himself in a mediation role with employees, certain general guidelines apply. A mediator does not have the power to impose a settlement or render a decision unless the parties so ask, in which case he becomes an arbitrator. When possible, the supervisor should play the mediator's role, because generally employees should be encouraged to learn the skills of dispute resolution for themselves.

The mediator should encourage the parties in a dispute to seek actively a settlement. The dispute settlement process works best when the disputants themselves seek a mutually agreeable solution. The mediator should emphasize the consequences of not reaching agreement. Will tensions increase? Will the situation deteriorate? The parties should be pressured to consider the consequences of continued disputes. Next, the mediator should accentuate the positive side. He must try to identify areas of agreement between the parties, even little ones. Perhaps they can agree that they want to settle the problem. Perhaps they can agree on some ground rules for the future.

4. GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Feedback is a method of providing information and is always given in a spirit of goodwill. If you are angry while giving feedback, you are violating a major guideline for its appropriate use. Giving feedback has as its purpose the creation of an environment for the receiver to consider changing his or her behavior. It is a highlighting opportunity for the receiver to plan alterations in behavior--behavior which arouses strong negative reations in others, behavior which causes a loss of effectiveness, or behavior which is not serving the ultimate aims of the organization.

Giving someone feedback requires you, the manager, to have spent time alone thinking about and planning what it is you wish to say. It is best if you can conduct the talk on neutral turf, or at least somewhere where there is a warm atmosphere. Timing is crucial as well, since you want your messages to be received. Your motive for providing feedback should be a desire to help, a caring, and a commitment to the person and the organization which manifests itself in your wanting to improve a situation rather than remove it. Giving feedback is an eyeball to eyeball kind of conversation. That is, it is unwise for you to use your power to bulldoze the receiver into accepting your comments. Think of the conversation as one in which power dimensions are minimized and the conversants are on equal footing. There is a low "fight potential" in these conversations; they are low key and emotions are controlled. The giving of feedback is typically a first approach to addressing what might seem to you at first glance as a problem. It is a way of your saying, "Here's how I see you in this situation. Let's talk about it."

What to Do: Giving Feedback

Check the readiness of the receiver. Is the receiver ready? Has the receiver indicated that she or he is ready to listen to you and accept the messages as intended? There is little point to giving information which will not be heard or might be misunderstood. The effective supervisor/manager probably has informed employees that occasionally he or she will initiate a feedback conversation. Obviously, feedback is best received if it becomes a routine and non-threatening part of the supervisor's activity with employees. Employees will tend to be wary of even positive feedback sessions when those conversations are few and far between.

Respond to solicited feedback rather than impose feedback. Feedback is most useful when the receiver has formulated the kinds of questions which the information can answer. In other words, a very desirable office/organization environment is one in which employees ask each other and the supervisor, from time to time, for feedback. A supervisor can encourage this type of environment by modeling this behavior and verbalizing a desires for others to seek feedback.

Describe behavior when discussing an employee's actions with him rather than evaluate or interpret it. Feedback is best thought of as a verbal description of your perceptions and reactions. Interpreting the meaning of another's behavior can be a resented guessing game. Do invite the employees to share interpretations and meanings of their behavior if you are so inclined. Use perception-checking as outlined in Section II, A.2. to make sure you understand their interpretation of their behavior.

Comment on recent happenings. The closer feedback is to the time that the behavior occurred, the more helpful it is. When your feedback is timely, all parties know exactly to which events the comments refer. Feelings are more current and valid. It does no one any good to bring up matters which are old and cold from the passage of time. Most relationships and certainly all organizations prosper better when interpersonal "business" is kept current.

Relay information to a person only about those matters which in fact are changeable. The value of feedback is that it enables the receiver to modify behavior. Comments about matters that can't be changed are usually not helpful. Only frustration results when one is reminded of shortcomings over which one has no control. It is crucial for the manager to consider this factor before beginning a feedback session.

Don't overload. It is unwise to go on and on once you start a feedback conversation and cover a whole laundry list of previously untalked-about matters. If you give another feedback that is too lengthy or feedback with too many itemizations, the person may lose track, feel overwhelmed, and be unable to absorb anything of what you are saying. Overloading also seriously damages your credibility with the receiver. It will tend to single the person's sensibilities to the extent of uncooperativeness and engender a wariness about what to expect from you in the future.

Be specific and concrete rather than vague and general. Give concrete examples; use quotations from actual interactions; and provide specific information about behavior. This approach will reduce defensiveness and argumentativeness. There will be a realness about the conversation and you will be seen as someone who really knows what he is talking about.

Give something of yourself. Share your feelings and concerns about the person as you give your reactions and comments. This will help the receiver feel more in contact with you. You may be disappointed, for example, in some aspect of the person's behavior. It will help to comment on your disappointment so that the receiver doesn't mistake your nonverbal disappointment for anger. Be active and energetic in the dialogue rather than somber and heavy. Remember, too, that feedback can be destructive when it serves only your own needs and fails to consider the needs of the receiver. Receiver needs certainly include the chance to speak openly with you about how she or he is reacting to your feedback. Receivers of feedback need to express feelings and feel as though they can provide you with information and not be seen as defensive while doing it. Invite such comments from the receiver.

What to Do: Receiving Feedback

Check for clear understanding. When an employee or fellow worker gives you feedback in a spirit of good will, demonstrate that you understand his message and its meaning. Use a skill such as paraphrasing or summarizing. Convey your understanding of his message to you before you begin formulating a response. Avoid defensiveness, argumentativeness. Don't explain yourself endlessly. Few are interested and it is inappropriate to take up a lot of time to give reasons for the behavior under discussion. Work hard to understand the message.

Ask for specifics. You have a right to know exact details and examples which led up to this conversation. But be sure you are not sarcastically demanding 100 examples of your behavior before you will admit that it happened. "It would help me understand if you could tell me when that occurred. I really don't remember it." is a much better approach than, "When in the heck did I do that?"

Share your reactions. You, as the receiver, can have the last word, and you can have it undefensively. No one can force you to change nor do you have the actual power to force anyone else to change. Giving your frank reaction can help the giver improve her or his skills at giving feedback. You are obliged to let the giver of feedback know where you stand on a feeling level about what was said to you. In that way, your relationship can grow.

5. CONFRONTATION

Confrontation is a strong, though not necessarily hostile, invitation to another to examine carefully behavior and its consequences on others. Similar to feedback, confrontation is a method effective communicators use to provide certain kinds of information to others. Unlike feedback, the atmosphere and spirit surrounding the giving of a confrontation is not necessarily one of good will. Quite often the feelings involved are strong and definite and are a distinct part of the message. As such, a far greater level of skill is required for effective confrontation. The potential is high for a confrontation to escalate into argument, result in injured feelings, severed relationships, and severe misunderstandings. Anyone who uses confrontation as a technique to convey certain kinds of messages in certain kinds of situations must be highly skilled in its use and able to handle responsibly all consequences which might result. Because of its difficulty level and the potential for harm, confrontation is typically not the preferred mode for effective interpersonal dialogue. It should hardly ever be necessary to use; it is never sufficient and never a substitute for less drastic methods of communication which have not yet been tried. No manager or supervisor should develop confrontation as a style of managing. Yet, from time to time, confrontation is appropriate and is effective.

It should be used only by those supervisors and managers who have proven competence in all other relevant communications skills and are able to use any combination of them as an integrated approach to difficult communication situations.

Sometimes confrontations happen spontaneously, though when possible (always in an organizational setting) thought should be given ahead of time to the content, structure and strategy of the confrontation. Thought should be given to all issues prior to the confrontation. Confrontations should be used when, after the passage of time, feedback and other more gentle approaches to needed changes have failed. Confrontation is typically the second of three steps involved for a supervisor or manager in attempting to assist an employee correct an unacceptable set of behaviors or habits. Though negotiation is possible in confrontation, the major objective is to set conditions, boundaries, and limits which are not to be breached. As such, news and rules may be thought of as imposed on the employee (as opposed to discovered in feedback). The conversation as a whole is much less equality oriented than is a feedback conversation.

With confrontation, there is a higher potential for the loss of control, enough so that the manager must maintain a vigil to ward off such a loss, both in himself and in the other. While there is quite a bit of mutual "give and take" in feedback, there is more "give" only from the supervisor in confrontation. Confrontations work best if the individuals involved have a history of free expressions of feeling with each other. For those with whom the supervisor has a tenuous relationship, confrontations are very tricky and often fail.

Confrontation as a concept has a bad reputation, because it is frequently equated with fighting and a lot of nastiness.

The reader should keep in mind that fighting is one thing and confrontation is another. Confrontation is successful as a method of dealing with certain kinds of problems only.

What to Confront

Ignorance, incorrect information, distorted facts, and knowledge gaps are suitable areas to confront. This set of confrontables is perhaps the most common phenomenon confronted. When you say, "No, that's not the correct procedure; the correct procedure is...", you are confronting.

Unacceptable behavior. All organizations, every person, and most societies have boundaries, which when crossed by individuals or groups leads to confrontation. Giving people information to correct their boundary crossing violations is a common form of confrontation. It may not be acceptable to you as a manager of an office that an employee is habitually late. You may wish to confront him or her about this unacceptable behavior. (Assume that you have already had several feedback sessions with these employees which resulted in no behavioral change.)

Wasted Potential. When you know as a manager that an employee's performance record is far below actual capability, you may decide to have a confrontation with the individual about the problem (again, presupposing that you have attempted through feedback conversations to address this issue on earlier occasions).

Improverished relationships and shallow interactions. Less relevant to the work situation than personal situations is this category in which relationship deterioration has affected job performance. Thus the occasion may call for a confrontation to highlight the impact of discussing and changing this problem.

Phoniness, discrepancies, distortions, evasions, smoke screens, and game-playing. This situation develops when you as manager continue to receive and observe explanations for employee behavior which just don't mesh with the reality of the work setting. When you experience the person quite differently from the way he says he experiences himself, then you may choose to confront the individual about the discrepancy.

Self-deceit and/or lack of self-awareness. The work situation may demand skills for the employee which directs them to demonstrate a high level of self-awareness. For instance, an employee may need to monitor how much he or she talks socially with the public at a service counter. The employee may not realize the extent to which he wastes time and monopolizes space. Such a situation may call for a confrontation. You may know the individual in that instance at that moment better than he knows himself.

How to Confront

Provide knowledge. Give information, facts, and correct details. Fill in the gaps. Teach. At times it is useful to reference an objective, third source to distance both parties from the emotions involved as to who is right. Even this example is a form of giving information: "Smoking is not permitted here in the office; please don't light your cigarette."

Encourage action. Urge the other to do, to act. Initiate talk about how to accomplish things or the item under discussion. This approach is especially useful when you are confronting wasted potential. You as manager can suggest a clear-cut, sequence of do-able steps. Instead of debating

whether the problem exists or not, enter into a conversation on the necessity of finding a solution that is acceptable to you and the organization. In a feedback session, you as supervisor might say, "I believe there is a problem here which we need to discuss; for instance, I observe you..." In a confrontation conversation you might say, "To solve this problem, you are going to have to change your approach; perhaps if you..."

Inventory resources. At times in a confrontation it becomes necessary for the supervisor to bolster the individual in focus. A good way to accomplish that is by a mutual inventory of resources which this person possesses. Its other purpose is to marshall evidence for gaining commitment to accomplish the changes required. Because some employees tend to become discouraged during a confrontation, pointing out strengths (only real ones) is especially helpful to enable the employee to see "light at the end of the tunnel".

Reveal your views. Especially in confrontation, you, the supervisor, can consider sharing your experience with the person. You can offer your observations, state your limits, describe what you will and will not tolerate, and describe in unambiguous terms your feelings, especially your observations regarding their impact on the office and the organization. In a confrontation conversation, you as manager should set the limits. The purpose of the conversation is to set conditions and put boundaries on employee behavior. It is important that you remember to control your negative feelings.

Special Issues in Confrontation

Because confrontation carries considerable risk, it is important to outline a few special issues associated with it.

These issues can be thought of as rules, and although they are not iron-clad, they ought to be kept in mind by the confronter.

Unload the agenda to some extent by covering only one or two behavioral items at a time. Even more so than in feedback, in confrontation the receiver is apt to "burn out" if your list of confrontable items is long.

Be concrete and verbal. Don't use nonverbal "hints" such as slamming doors or not talking to someone for a week. Directness is not only preferred but mandatory.

Be clear; be descriptive and exact; and be nonpunitive, though firm. You need not be overbearing, critical, punishing, or devastatingly evaluative.

Sort out your needs. Figure out ahead of time why you are doing confrontation. Decide that it is appropriate. This is one of the main items which separates confrontation from fighting.

Take responsibility for not escalating a confrontation into a argument or fight. It is up to you to keep it under control not only because you initiated the conversation, but because you are the more skilled of the interactants. If the receiver becomes angry, then that is the time for you to employ the basic listening skills outlined earlier. It is not the time for you to become angry.

Refrain from using confrontation at all unless you have earned the right by being competent in this skill and in all other supporting skills required to handle the reactions to confrontation.

Don't confront at all unless the situation meets one or more of the following conditions: a) you want to grow closer to the other (an inevitable result); b) the issue at hand is of vital importance to you (and you have thought through the issue for yourself thoroughly); or c) it is your professional responsibility to confront this individual about her or his behavior. Unless you can show compliance with one of the above, spare yourself the energy drain of confrontation.

6. HANDLING CRITICISM

No matter how skillful you are as a manager or supervisor, you occasionally will be criticized. Moreover, you will observe others criticizing each other. During the normal course of your work as a supervisor, giving feedback, commenting on others' work, or during a confrontation situation, you may have occasion to help others understand what is and is not criticism. The way you handle criticism will speak more loudly than any explanation you give. Examples of criticism are: "Why are you picking on me?" "Doggone it, you call a meeting for 10:30 and then you don't come to it until 10:45." "Well, if you had to work with that judge every day, you'd be singing a different song, I'll tell you!"

Standard response to criticism is defensiveness. People defend themselves unnecessarily, as if the criticism were valid. Two explanations for defensiveness seem likely. First, if the person who is criticized has a shaky image, that image can be threatened by criticism. The old saw (rewritten) states, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will hurt me if my self-concept is shaky." It is in areas where a person is not sure of herself or himself, which if attacked or poked, become vulnerable and

trigger defensiveness. Secondly, the one criticism suggests a problem and every problem has one or more "owners". If I incorrectly identify myself as the owner of a problem, then a vague defensiveness creeps into my responses. The first problem to solve when criticized is to decide who owns the problem.

Unfortunate Standard Responses

Withdrawal. This person, when criticized or attacked, accepts the abuse silently. While such a response does maintain a certain kind of peace and quiet, self-respect may suffer and self-esteem may be lost in the failure to stand up for one's rights. Conflict is difficult for many people to handle and their unfortunate response to criticism is to withdraw, deflect the subject to something less sensitive, or simply respond with a loud silence. Some, unable to ignore the criticism or tolerate the silence, physically leave the premises. "I didn't like the way you ran the meeting today." "Well, I'm late to a lunch appointment. See you later." The withdrawal policy can lead to increasingly strident outbursts of pent up tension eventuating in an ever-widening cycle of relationship breakdown.

Justification. Although everyone has reasons for their behavior, and most can explain their behavior in detail, few are interested: "How could you have said that in public in front of the judge?" "Well, let me tell you about that.." Not only are long, detailed explanations boring, they are not what the critic was talking about. The critic had feelings which were being expressed and already knew the reasons anyway. A problem with justification is that unwittingly you have placed yourself in a worse position with your critic by failing to acknowledge his or her feeling expression. Frequently, attempts to justify make minor disagreements mushroom into ugly arguments.

Counterattack. Striking back is a tempting response. Your critic, who after all is hardly perfect, undoubtedly has vulnerable spots open for you to nail. It may also provide you with momentary tension release. "You were late again and then you took three phone calls while I just sat there wasting my time." "Well, do you remember yesterday when I was talking to you and you abruptly turned away to read your mail?" After the fact, people can lose respect for themselves and for each other; although in calmer moments, they are likely to reflect on the unproductiveness of counterattacking. The counterattack never leads to consideration of real problems or possible solutions. For the effective manager and supervisor the challenge is always one of making the deliberate choice not to be defensive, not to counterattack, not to withdraw, and not to justify.

Preferred Responses to Criticism

There are several undefensive, honest responses to criticism which should serve the manager and supervisor well. Admittedly, difficult to practice when the standard responses are so tempting. A concerted effort to employ them is worth the effort, just to prove to yourself, for instance, that they are quite workable and yield the kinds of results you have been wanting all along. A major benefit to these new responses is that you gain time; you are not giving a knee-jerk response. You also gain insight into the thinking of your critic, and your critics calm down when they see you are giving consideration to their opinions.

Seek more information. When criticized, request specifics. Use this skill as a tool for understanding for it is neither an offensive weapon nor a defensive shield. Your tone of voice is important when asking for specifics. "When did I do that?" "Really, what was the situation as you remember

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1 OF 2

it?" When criticized, guess about the specifics. "Oh-oh. I'll bet you're talking about yesterday's session with the group of us, right?" When criticized, you can always paraphrase the critic to check for understanding. "You're upset because I wasted your time while I chatted on the phone." When criticized you can ask for information about the consequences of your behavior. "What happened to you when I ignored you?" And finally, when criticized you can ask for more information by soliciting additional complaints. You might as well invite the criticism if you guess you're going to get it anyway. "You don't like it when I answer the phone during our conversations. Is there anything else I do when we talk that annoys you? I'd like to know." It is important that all your requests for information carry no hint of defensiveness or sarcasm. With additional information, continue to refrain from justifying, counterattacking, and withdrawal.

Agree with the critic. How can you agree with critics who might be outrageously wrong? It's easy and honest. First, agree with the truth. Criticism directed at you is frequently correct. When it is, agree with it, accept it. "You know, you're right. I'm embarrassed to come late to the conferences I called myself." The easiest way to handle it is to repeat the very words the critic used for criticism. You may be accused (or criticized) of patronizing your critic unless you go one step farther and mention how you might want to change your behavior. Of, if the criticism is too broad, you can narrow it. "Right, I was late today by 15 minutes and I apologize for that, but, you know, I've been working on my tardiness problem and this was the first time I was late for 2 months."

Agree with the odds. Sometimes the critic is making a comment on the consequences of your behavior. "If you continue to be late to your own meetings, I'm afraid I will lose interest in coming at all." You can agree with the odds, saying,

"I understand that chances are you will lose interest. It's a decided risk for me to take, isn't it?"

Agree with the principle. Critics may compare your way of behaving against some ideal way. It is entirely possible for you to agree with the general principles and yet disagree with their conclusions. No one acts in complete accord with their principles. When coupled with a self-disclosure response, this form of handling criticism avoids defensiveness and manipulation. "I can't stand it when you continue to take several phone calls during the course of one brief conversation with me." "Yes, I can see that. It is wrong to interrupt one dialogue and make you wait while I start another. I surely do feel a conflict of priorities sometimes and frankly I just don't know what to do."

Agree with the critic's perception. Even if you can't see that the criticism is true, if you can't agree with any principle beneath it, and if you can't see the odds as favoring the proposed consequence, you can still agree that the critic has a right to her opinion. And, by doing so you can maintain your own position without making the critic defensive. "Bill, I can see how you would come to the conclusion that I don't care about having uninterrupted conversations with you. Yes, I can understand that you would feel put down." "Yes, your comment makes sense. I see that you value promptness. From my value position, I believe I am prompt if I arrive within 15 minutes of when I said I would."

Whichever method of response to criticism seems to work for you consider the following guidelines:

When criticized, take responsibility for:

- making sure you understand what was said to you;
- making sure you conveyed that you understood what was said to you;
- formulating your response thoughtfully and in a complete way;
- stopping your own internal chatter, your rehearsal, or your comeback while the critic is talking;
- your own well-being (after all, the critic might be crazy, distressed, projecting, stupid or wrong); and
- finishing up unfinished business now before it builds up into something worse later.

D. EXTRAORDINARY SITUATIONS IN PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Personnel management as a conscious activity is most visible in those situations which really do not occur that frequently. These extraordinary situations, however, tend to have dramatic, even catastrophic consequences, particularly if handled badly by the manager or supervisor. To help prepare for these infrequent yet demanding circumstances, this section deals with four areas in which interpersonal skills can be improved:

- Crisis Intervention
- Stress and Coping
- The Problem Employee
- Bad News Interviews

1. CRISIS INTERVENTION

Employees turn to managers and supervisors in times of personal and professional crisis because they face some kind of conflict or uncertainty which they have been unable to resolve on their own. Speaking generally, as a person faces problems in his daily life he may become temporarily emotionally upset, but soon returns to a former point of stability. These temporary upsets can be handled by previously learned problem-solving skills. When the problem is greater, however, when it touches the person at a vulnerable spot, the previous problem-solving methods are unsuitable. The stress situation is of great intensity, or several problems impinge all at once. Then, the person may move from an emotionally hazardous situation into a crisis state.

Crises vary in terms of intensity. Some involve simply requests for information; others are much more critical, necessitating some type of immediate response or action. At whatever level of urgency, the supervisor needs to remember that his job is to assist the employee to recognize the realities of the situation and to explore choices open to him in resolving the problem. The manager may suggest ideas for consideration (or even give a personal opinion if asked), but the focus is always placed on the employee's own resources and experiences. In this way the employee not only remains the responsible agent, but the coping strategies developed have meaningful anchorage in his own world as well. The supervisor must not forget that the employee, even in a crisis, has the capacity to recognize his views and modify his behavior. Few employees in crisis benefit from advice-giving, ready-made solutions, or any other unilateral impositions which in effect displace

the employee's own responsibility. The ultimate thrust of helping someone in crisis is toward clarification--clarifying the problem; clarifying feelings; clarifying options for action; and clarifying the continuation of self-exploration.

Helping another in crisis does not require a degree in psychology or experience in mental health agencies. It does demand that the supervisor know how to establish a relationship in which productive talk will occur. The supervisor must also:

- recognize and handle his own feelings evoked by the employee;
- accept differing values and lifestyles;
- tolerate strong expression of feeling in others;
- separate self from employee, in respect to problems, feelings, and responsibility for solutions;
- accept limits for his own responsibility and for situations in which change may not be possible.

Special Circumstances in Crisis Intervention

The crisis intervention conversation between an employee and a supervisor is delicate. Not infrequently the supervisor is unsuccessful, because it requires him to adopt some behavior with which he may not be fully comfortable. The nature of the crisis intervention relationship makes the conversation unfamiliar to most managers and supervisors.

Equality of social power. The two participants in this kind of conversation must feel that they are equal in power with each other. They man not equal in status, knowledge, or strength, but each must be able to withdraw or participate without coercion. Neither can feel subordinate to the other

in terms of worthiness and individual value. If the supervisor cannot step temporarily out of his role "over" the employee during a crisis intervention talk, then he is better off not having that kind of conversation with employees. Rather, the employee should be referred outside the office or organization. Skill at crisis intervention does not automatically come with advancement up the management ladder. The supervisor should be perfectly willing to recognize his or her limitations.

Presence. The helping listener should be present as a human being, as a person. He should be interested, concerned, empathic, attentive, responsive, modest, nonpunitive, nondestructive, and receptive.

Confirmation of the other. The listening supervisor confirms the other as a person. This implies and requires acceptance and respect for the other, helping him to use all of his adult resources.

What to Do

Clarify feelings. Unrecognized and/or unacceptable feelings compound and confuse crises for most people. The sensitive listener can be extremely helpful in a brief period of time by focusing responses on feelings. The objective is to bring the vague or unsurfaced feelings to consciousness. Of course, the responder needs to have available a large "feeling word" vocabulary to be of maximum assistance.

Identify ambivalence. Basic to all crisis is conflict of feelings. Such conflict tends to render the problem unsolvable in the eyes of the complainant. Feelings of "being stuck" tend then to paralyze the person in conflict. By clarifying ambivalent feelings through a close examination

of the feelings, the person in conflict is able to see a way out of the dilemma. In other words, those feelings previously viewed as in opposition to each other or incompatible with each other may be viewed as separate, unrelated, or distinct and discrete true facets of the problem to be solved.

Example:

Clerk: It's simple. I just can't communicate with that judge.
Supervisor: It would help if you could be more specific.
Clerk: Well, I want to talk to him about this but I just can't. I just can't.
Supervisor: OK, let's look at the reasons why you want to do it and the reasons you can't.

Clarify options. An unsolvable component of a crisis experience often is the consequence of perceived limitations. In this circumstance, an individual believes he cannot influence events or control contingencies. The person in crisis sees himself as a victim of circumstances--circumstances that he believes are beyond his control. No one likes being out of control--it is a blinding experience: One cannot see choices while at the same time fighting to be back in control. In crisis intervention, the listener can play a significant role to clarify accountability. What emerges is a recognition of options not previously viewed as such. Choice opens up as the person in crisis realizes that he constantly is making choices, such as the choice to not do anything about the problem. Options, choices, and subsequent new actions are related directly to issues of accountability.

Example:

Clerk: It's the judge's fault. He's so unapproachable. He never lets me get a word in edgewise. He's always talking at me, not interested in what I have to say.

Supervisor: I see. You think that his unapproachability actually controls what you can do, that you are limited in your range of verbal choices because of his talking.

Clerk: Exactly. Well, I'm not saying that I can't ever say anything to him. Once in a while, if I catch him in the right mood or if I feel really strongly about it, I...

Supervisor: Um hmmmm. So there are times when you feel in control of what you can do. Tell me more about how you feel successful with the judge when you have something strong to say to him.

Focus. A person in crisis is frequently unable to place the various elements of the crisis into perspective. Surely the elements of a crisis vary in degrees of significance in relation to the overall issue. The listener can facilitate productive thinking by responses which ask the other to elaborate on areas which seem to have greater significance and relevance.

Example:

Clerk: Oh, it's always been this way. He's always talked at me as if I'm a machine. He's never respected my comments. I don't know how I've put up with it so long.

Supervisor: Are you sure that there hasn't been something happen recently, maybe even some little thing, that has resulted in your seeing this relationship as so hopeless now after two years of working together?

Clerk: It really has been pretty bad all along. About a month ago, though, ...

Supervisor: OK. Let's talk more about this incident of a month ago. It seems to be pretty important to you.

Encourage self-clarification. An effective listener ought to encourage in conflict to continue (on his own) to clarify the problem. The biggest mistake most people in crisis make (other than doing nothing for too long) is to act prematurely on problems. The best help that the crisis intervener can

provide is to assist the one in crisis figure out exactly what the problem is. Retrospection teaches everyone that frequently we act without knowing clearly just what the problem is that needs solving. The role of the listener in crisis intervention is to insist that the real problem is known clearly before any kind of solutions are ever seriously examined.

Example:

Clerk: Well, I'm just going to go in there and tell him off. I think it's the only solution. Then I'll quit. Nothing else makes sense.

Supervisor: I'm not sure I understand. Let's see. Tell me just what problem you are solving by doing that. Yes, describe to me the problem that that solution solves.

Terminate. Keeping in mind the admonition that the listener not take on the problem, terminating the crisis intervention conversation is an important step. Ideally, ending the conversation would come about by some form of mutual awareness that the talk should be ended with the understanding that some openings, clarifications, or options have been found. It is not necessary to have found solutions to the identified problem, nor is it necessary to have located some "right" solution from an imaginary file of solutions after compulsively searching the file for the right one. The listener must not act so as to take responsibility away from the one with the crisis. Finding solutions is not the business of the intervener. Clarification is. Solutions are seldom found in moments of crisis anyway, let alone in short conversations. The listener should always examine his own motives for wanting to continue in the conversation. Settle for clarifying, not solving. When the listener is intuitively convinced that the other is somewhat more able to solve his own problems and is armed with increased clarity about them, that is the time to stop.

Other Skills

Avoid jumping to conclusions in your eagerness to provide some kind of service. Watch out for making assumptions based on partial information. You probably don't know enough and never will.

Analyze (to yourself) what you think the problem is. Why is the person talking to you? What is relevant? What is the immediate problem? What are the priorities? What is the crisis? What does the person want and need? How do you fit in?

Avoid meandering conversations. If you are bored, the conversation is probably getting off the track. Give the one in crisis time and freedom to tell his story completely and in his own way, but stay in control and provide structure when needed. Don't be manipulated. Don't be a party to reinforcing an employee's tendency to gripe and complain for its own sake. A crisis intervention conversation has to be all business.

Be aware of your tone of voice and your feelings as conveyed to the person in crisis. Is your impatience coming across? Are you intimidating or making them feel you are as overwhelmed as they? Are you annoyed that the problem is so small and your time wasted? To be effective in crisis intervention, you must genuinely convey concern and interest.

Be able to admit you don't know solutions and that you don't know what to tell them. It sometimes is preferable to take a "time out" for both of you to do research before talking further. It is perfectly all right for you to say you do not know what to do.

Listen, listen, listen. Try your best to figure out what is being said to you rather than trying to come up with clever responses and sure-fire solutions.

A Checklist for Your Effectiveness in Crisis Intervention

Initial Response. The first few minutes of the conversation are critical. Do you demonstrate sincerity in a desire to help? Do you demonstrate respect? Do you reduce the other's anxiety and fear?

Patience. You must not become angry or defensive even if you are misunderstood. You must not become impatient if you cannot understand. You should repeatedly try to paraphrase and rephrase what is being said to you. Never interrupt the other. Never be sarcastic; appear comfortable in your role as helper even though the other may be agitated.

Clarity. Do you demonstrate that you can speak to the person in crisis clearly such that the other does not have to ask you repeatedly for clarification? Do you use concepts, language and ideas which are readily understood?

Identify Problem. Do you work so as to identify specific precipitating events to stress. Do you discriminate between the real and unreal needs of the other and respond accordingly?

Understanding Feelings. Do you encourage the other to talk about feelings? Do you work hard to check your perceptions of those feelings? Do you accept feelings, rather than challenge or question the feelings? Do you determine how the other perceives the precipitating event, i.e., what it meant to him? Do you work at focusing on present feelings? Do you work at reducing fear generated by the precipitating event? Do you work at not providing inappropriate sympathy and inappropriate emotional support for the one in crisis?

2. STRESS AND COPING

Stress has been the subject of a myriad of books in recent years, and stress reduction is a major training effort in many management development plans. Stress is actually the wrong word. DISTRESS is what most people mean when they mention stress. Unmanageable stress, too much stress, and interfering stress creates distress and that is the problem. Stress is natural, normal, and required. A little stress, a bit of pressure, the need to accomplish, or a time deadline are all exactly the kinds of pushes we all need to do our daily activity. Stress and tension give us motivation and is, in fact, indispensible to ordinary human activity. The human body, itself, is designed to work on the homeostatic principle--e.g. a buildup of tension followed by a relaxation of tension. The ebb and flow of relaxation and tension is a definition of life itself. To eliminate stress is impossible. Instead, we must learn how to reduce distress. This section of the manual will address four major areas of distress relevant to the personnel manager and supervisor: origins, burnout, interpersonal distress and time management.

Origins

Stress can derive from direct stressors, indirect stressors, and from the unique characteristics of an individual. Direct chemical stressors are drugs, diet, toxins, alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, and sugar. Direct physical stressors involve input through the five senses (loud noises), physical trauma (injuries), the weather, and the physical environment. Direct emotional stressors include anxiety, (especially time urgency and worry about others' evaluations of you) fear, love, hate, depression, and exuberance. Emotional stressors also include the consequences of inadequate interpersonal communication, problems within an individual and with others.

Indirect stressors include symptoms of disease: insomnia, headaches, colds, flu, allergies, impotence, ulcers, colitis, asthma, dermatitis, hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, and cancer. Each individual brings a unique heredity which may be an indirect stressor. Depending on the length of the stress period, its accurate identification, and varying degress of adaptation to severe stress, the individual may be quick or slow to return to physiological homeostasis. Slow returns to "normalcy" (healthy stress) increase the probability for disease, illness, and incapacitation.

Burnout

Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that frequently occurs among individuals who do "people work"--those who spend considerable time in close encounters with others under conditions of occasional or chronic tension. Increasingly, a person developing burn-out finds that contact with others is charged with feelings of anger, embarrasment, frustration, fear, or despair.

Over time, a person working in a constantly stressful situation may begin to distrust and even dislike co-workers, the public, or supervisors and begins to wish they would "get out of my life". This detached and even callous response is, in part, a protective device: it reduces the amount of emotional involvement and consequent stress, but unfortunately also seriously impairs the quality of human contact.

In addition, these individuals begin to feel negative about themselves. Burnout may be accompanied by physical exhaustion, vulnerability to disease, or by psychosomatic symptoms. Drugs or alcohol use often increase as might smoking or poor nutrition habits. Burn-out victims frequently let

their physical condition deteriorate such that they also begin to look exactly like how they feel.

At an institutional level, burn-out can contribute to low morale, imparied job performance, absenteeism, and high job turnover. The people served (the public) who are personally mistreated or given the institutional run-around by public servants experiencing distress, may in turn develop disrespect not only for these individuals but for the institutions they represent as well.

The personnel manager can think of burn-out as having four dimensions:

- emotional exhaustion;
- negative, cynical attitude toward work and others;
- negative evaluation of strengths and accomplishments; and
- emotional distancing from others, including associates and family.

Finally, there are three levels of burn-out:

First Degree Burn-out: Short, a day or two. Recovery is quick. Experience burn-out motivates individual to act sensibly in own behalf. Work and productivity slows. Frustration is apparent, manifested as grouchiness.

Second Degree Burn-out: Up to two weeks. Depression, some physical symptoms. Work is definitely impaired. Disease probability increases. The syndrome is harder to reverse. Person is irritable, harder and more withdrawn.

Third Degree Burn-out: Long-lasting. Disease likely to occur. Permanent damage likely. Chronic physical problems occur and recur. Negative or flat emotional state. Possibility of severe depression. Combination of symptoms and factors accelerate the problem.

What to Do about Burn-out

Check out the indicators. Below is a list of questions and statements which are suggestive of methods to use to inventory some of the stress/burn-out/tension indicators which make themselves visible to the close observer.

- Do I bring my problems home?
- Irritable over petty things?
- Becoming hypercritical of others?
- Irritability turn to anger, rage?
- Trouble getting out of bed?
- Am I a non-stop talker?
- Do I have to be first in everything?
- Minor disappointments throw me?
- Too much to do, no time?
- Just don't care any more?
- Fewer friends, too hard to relate?
- Unable to stop worrying?
- Anxious about the future?
- Never discuss feelings any more?
- Dizzy spells?
- Smoking, eating, drinking, sex levels changed significantly?
- Am I increasingly rigid about right and wrong?
- Am I out of control?
- Too busy to eat?
- Trouble falling asleep?
- Trouble staying asleep?
- Too tired to think?
- Do I feel I never win?
- Am I time-urgent to an extreme?
- Am I tough and aggressive at home?
- Want to escape, run away?
- Do I feel there's no let-up?
- Do I feel trapped?
- Am I becoming more and more silent?
- I only see people when they're at their worst?
- Require a drink or tranquilizer to relax?
- Worry about aches and pains a lot?

Discuss patterns of indicators you observe with employees with whom you have concerns. Your showing an interest will be considered a helpful and relieving event by the employee. Be careful not to indulge the employee in a "woe-is-me" conversation. Your objective is to help the other increase his

or her awareness of what might be a serious problem. You needn't be unduly "heavy" about it, but on the other hand you must not treat it humorously either.

Encourage employees who believe they have serious distress to obtain a complete medical check-up as soon as possible. Follow-up in a few days personally with these employees to gently insist that they comply--for the sake of the organization as well as the person.

Assist the more mild cases of stress and distress learn how to approach the skill of relaxation--a skill which some people believe is lacking in our society. There are many easily obtainable publications on the topic. Below is a partly serious, partly humorous list--deliberately left a bit vague and meant to stimulate the thinking of individuals who want to take some gentle steps toward stress reduction on their own. Think of it as a creative coping starter list.

- Don't let things drift.
- Find out what you are afraid of.
- Don't blame others.
- Increase comfort in your life.
- Sweat heavily, once a day.
- Don't be so overeager.
- Decide, don't procrastinate.
- Choose your associates.
- Even when you're right, give in.
- Read an escape book.
- Respect yourself and your judgment.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Listen to what you are saying.
- Sleep less.
- Pretend you are not tense.
- Analyze your pet peeves.
- Seek humor.
- Take one thing at a time.
- Change the environment.
- Change your morning routine.
- Work off your anger.
- Arrange for some privacy.
- Don't stick to a problem; let it alone.

- Talk to a friend.
- Don't overdo the details.
- Music hath charms.
- Take a warm bath.
- Compromise when in doubt.
- Bake bread.
- Get more sleep.
- Relax as soon as you are fatigued.
- Stop making excuses.
- Solve puzzles.
- Make your own list.

Interpersonal Distress

Failures in interpersonal communication account for a large portion of the kinds of distress which managers and supervisors see every day. What people say and do to each other creates stress. Table 3 depicts a model for interpersonal stress reduction designed by Gregory May, Ph.D. and Ronald Singler, M.D. Their contention is that in tough interpersonal situations, people tend to behave in one of the three "walled" ways open to them. We develop a style, in other words, of being hard-walled, or fragile-walled. As such, that style is all that we show to the world. In fact, they further contend, every person experiences events in all three ways--that is, hard, soft, and fragile. In difficult interpersonal encounters, we internally experience hard feelings, soft feelings and fragile feelings simultaneously. We fail to communicate two-thirds of our experience and as a result our interactions are massively incomplete.

What to Do About Interpersonal Distress

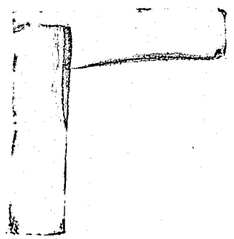
Identify which category you typically show the world. (Use table 3 as a starting point.)

Practice gaining access to the other, buried parts of you, the parts you do not show to the world when the chips are down. The "hard walled person" mentioned above should practice becoming aware of his own soft and fragile feelings.

	HARD WALLED RESPONSE	SOFT WALLED RESPONSE	FRAGILE WALLED RESPONSE
FEELINGS	Anger, jealousy, rage, frustration, irritation	Love, tenderness, concern	Incompetence, confused, inadequate, helpless, hurt, uncertain, sad
COMMUNICATION BEHAVIORS	Loud, aggressive, highly verbal, hostile, defensive, attacking, sceptical, critical, blames others	Moderately verbal, polite questioning, understanding, sympathetic, empathetic, over-protective, maternal	Silent, blames self, helpless responses, despairs, makes worried statements
ACCOMPANYING BEHAVIORS OR PERCEPTIONS	Perfectionistic, compulsive, structures activities, logical, self-righteous, self-assured, confident, competent, action-oriented, problem solver, "thick skinned", 1st born	Pollyanna view of the world, anxious, worry, sensitive, internalizes others feelings, takes care of others before themselves, act as saviour, fair, impartial, thin skinned, middle children	Suffering, forgetful, youngest children
CHARACTERISTIC STATEMENTS	I'm right, you're wrong. Get your act together. You just don't understand. There are 3 reasons why. I'm tired of always initiating things. You really make me furious.	I understand. I can see what you're saying.	I don't know. I'm sorry. I'm always wrong. It must be me. I guess I just can't help it.

TABLE 3

Feeling/Response Categories for Stress Reduction in Interpersonal Interactions



State a more complete verbal response, one which includes all the elements which you now access inside. A before and after example for illustration ought to clarify what needs to be done:

Before

Bill: Look, Hal, I'm not pleased with the way you handled that lady at the counter just now. I happended to over hear it and you were really pretty rude to her.

Hal: Shove it, Bill. First, she bombed in here like a B-29 demanding that I hand over that form to her. And I was busy talking to Lorraine. I don't think you saw the whole thing.

After

Bill: Look Hal, I'm not pleased with the way you handled that lady at the counter just now. I happened to overhear it and you were really pretty rude to her.

Hal: Yeah, I see what you're saying. I was pretty sharp with her and you know what, sometimes I feel unable to handle everything that happens all at once, especially with the public. And one more thing, I don't think you saw the whole event and your comment makes me a little angry. I think you're overly critical without sufficient information.

Hal's second response is complete. It covers all areas of his experience--the fragile, the soft, and the hard. It will permit Bill to move off his hard-walled approach. Tensions should reduce and distress will not occur.

Time Management

It is not enough merely for a manager or supervisor to save time or even to get more done in less time. "Hurrying up" is pointless and usually counterproductive. Time management

must contribute to getting more of the things done which promote the goals of the organization and its members' development and dignity. Managing time well will also succeed as a major means of reducing distress.

Set priorities. What is most important for you to do right now? Once you are clear about what is to be achieved, you move a step closer to achieving it. Divide all of the possible activities you have scheduled for a day into three categories: "A's", "C's", and "F's". "A's" represent about 5% of your possible activities and these are the things you should focus your attention and energy upon. "A's" lead directly to the accomplishments of your goals. "C's" are about 15% of your possible activities. They are important and rank in second place. As you get better at making progress on your A's, you will be able to perform more "C's". "F's" are about 80% of all possible activities. They are little things which you can do in a short time. Often, one is tempted to do them so one feels as if things are getting done. Just as often, they are a waste of time and rob you of time for "A's" and "C's." It will be hard to ignore all of those on your calendar, with "F's" beside them, but that is what you must do.

Keep a calendar. You should keep one master calendar. The authority to confirm appointments must be reserved for you. Never calendar "F" items. Treat "F's" as interruptions. This makes it possible for you to use a very small calendar (one you can put in your pocket) for on it will be only calendared your "A's" and "C's". Leave at least one hour per day unscheduled. Tell everyone you are completely booked. Save that hour for the inevitable emergency.

Keep a daily to-do list. Clip it to your calendar (a 3x5 card, for instance) and do a new one at the start of each day. Keep it handy; label the "A's", and keep fewer than 15 items on it (you are not superhuman).

Concentrate. Some say that concentration is the key to motivation. Most efficient people are characterized by the ability to concentrate. Learn to do one thing at a time, completing the task (or a phase of the task) in one effort. Real progress can be made on a task in only a few minutes, if and only if you concentrate. You need to have presence of mind in addressing--don't daydream or approach it half-heartedly.

Use memory systems, so you do not have to remember everything in your head and little reminder slips don't clutter up your desk (or your organization's files). Many devices work: filing systems; graphs, charts, posters, slogans; procedural manuals, reference works; notes of meetings; logs, journals, diaries; follow-up memos; tickler files; calendars, and to-do lists. Try to avoid memory systems that involve writing. Instead, use charts, graphs, forms, and card systems. If data are not worth organizaing, throw them away. Never collect data that is irrelevant to your "A's."

Bring events and activities to closure. Most effective leaders, managers, and supervisors are effective at closure.

Terminate. Make things stop. Most of the time stopping should happen sooner rather than later. Stop when failure is obvious, as soon as your best effort is spent, or when it is appropriate for others to take over.

Summarize. Summaries serve as transitions, speaking to where you have been and where you want to go. You may recognize that confusion, wandering, indecision, repetition, unresolved conflict, and silence are indicators that a summary is needed. When provided, a summary often opens up a constructive future.

Decide, autocratically or democratically but preferably immediately: Decide autocratically after time for relection and research, or after one-on-one or group consultation. Skill is required for each of the forms of decision-making, including selecting which approach to use in a particular situation.

Table. Postponing further work on an unfinished task has its place but is frequently mis-used. Use it when you discover that you lack resources to accomplish the job. Use it when a task emerges for which you are not emotionally prepared. Table a task when the opportunity (or necessity) for working on a higher priority task presents itself.

3. THE PROBLEM EMPLOYEE

Problem employees are usually a small part of the work force. Despite their few numbers, problem employees cause difficulties far beyond their proportions. Not only do management and those in supervision find them a headache, but fellow workers do as well. Most people in an organization would admit that far too much energy and time are devoted to this minority of the employee population.

Who are these "problem" employees? How can they be managed more effectively? Why should so much attention be paid to these particular employees? Whose responsibility it is to act decisively with them for the good of the entire organization? The manager and supervisor certainly need to consider carefully the answers to these and to other questions. Following is a list of problem employee types:

The time waster
The habitually tardy
The frequently absent
The overly social
The painfully shy

The under-educated
The gossiped about
The pothead/alcoholic
The training resistant
The one being divorced
The mentally ill
The chronic complainer/griper
The overly ambitious
The intellectually inadequate
The mistake-maker
The playboy, the playgirl
The never-ending family tragedy
The perpetually depressed
The system critic
The inadequate parent

Do these brief captions describe a few employees in your organization? These categories may or may not contain the types of workers whom supervisors and managers consider to be a problem--there may be twenty other types or combinations of types found in your organization. What the supervisor must do, what the personnel manager must do, is develop a method for identifying problem employees.

Criteria to Determine Who the Problem Employees Are

Amount of management time consumed. One good indicator of whether or not a particular employee is a problem is the amount of management level time which must be devoted to his or her "care and feeding". Who spends time with or for this employee? What drain on the thinking time of management is caused by this employee? Who manages his problem, patches up his mistakes, or has to deal with other employees who are ruffled, bothered, or distressed by his behavior? A manager needs to investigate thoroughly the quantity of time consumed by this employee--in relation to the time taken by others. Since time is money, this employee may be costing the organization far more than is necessary or tolerable--more than can be justified rationally. By assessing the time cost, the manager can more effectively determine the types of attention to be paid the problem employee.

Kinds of work created. A second good indicator of whether or not a particular employee is a problem is the kind of work that he and his problem create for the manager, the supervisor, and/or any other employee. Is someone frequently on the telephone in this employee's behalf? Is it necessary for the supervisor to patch up mistakes, to do computer runs over, to write letters in response to an angry public, or to process paper work that this employee's problem has some how created? Obviously there is a direct relationship between the amount of time devoted to someone and the kinds of work they create. It is important for the supervisor to separate her thinking and analysis into both categories, however, to assess the level of the problem.

Other employee effect. A third good indicator of whether or not a particular employee is a problem is his or her direct and indirect effect on others. Who bears the brunt of the problem? It could be, that fellow workers are hassled daily by this person verbally, or that since his work is not done, a fellow worker or you have to do it. It could be that no one is really affected by this person's problem, even though some fellow workers complain that they believe they are affected. In this case, the "problem employee" creates a values dilemma for some people--a far less bothersome problem than if he created extra work for them. An interpersonal value conflict can be taken care of through some kind of management intervention to solve the problem.

Kinds and amounts of work not done. A fourth good indicator of whether or not a particular employee creates a problem is a determination of how much and what kinds of work are left undone. Because of workload and work schedules, is there any work which simply goes undone because of this

employee and his problems? Does the undone work cause any problems down the line for anyone else who handles some subsequent aspect of the case? The manager or supervisor may find the analysis in this category easier to conduct than first thought. Tracing the flow of cases through this employee's hands is a first step. Asking others who feed work to him and who deal with his work after him is second. A frank discussion with the employee in question might be required as well. In any event, the manager ought to assess the work undone in attempts to determine if, as suspected, a particular employee is creating problems in the organization by virtue of his own problems.

The psychological price. The last indicator for determining whether an employee really is a problem is far more difficult to ascertain. The manager and supervisor should try to determine how much worry time, thinking time, and wasted time they devote to mulling over solutions for the persistent problem employee. Though "hard data" are difficult to locate in answer of this question, it is still an exercise worth doing. The manager may find that she ponders the problem employee's dilemmas as much as one hour per day. Whether or not that is too high a price to pay is up to her to determine. Feelings may be involved as well. Do you resent having to work longer hours to put out the fires created by this employee? Do you and others get behind in your work, a situation which causes you annoyance? Are you in conflict when it comes time to fill out a performance rating on this person and do you spend hours figuring out diplomatic ways to say nothing? The result of this section of the analysis should reveal the amount of and types of psychological costs to you and others paid in dealing with problem employees. Your (and others) mental health is at stake, too, and the effective manager or supervisor is mindful of this important element when looking at the overall picture of the problem employee.

What to Do

Having determined through an investigation (as opposed to assuming) that you as manager have a problem employee on your hands, what are you going to do about it? Clearly, action is preferred over inaction. You should not let much time go past before decisively doing what needs to be done. However, doing nothing is preferred over inappropriate action, since in this kind of activity, it is difficult for you as supervisor or manager to repair an ill-advised action taken on an employee's behalf--especially if that action affects his employment status in any important way.

Document the results of your analysis as well as all other data on the employee which relates to his problem status. It pays in the long run to be concerned with detail in these matters: times, places, dates, names, occasions, documents left unfinished, consequences, errors, and the like. It may seem at times that you are building some monstrous case against someone, but try to think of it in terms of protecting everyone's (including yours and the organization's) due process rights.

Write honest performance reports. Start today. You probably are not doing anyone a favor by "being nice" on progress reports.

Examine how you might be contributing to the problem. Have you swept it under the rug? Have you spotted the problem and not done anything. Have you had any initial (feedback) conversations yet with this employee? Have you minimized a problem which, now that you think about it, should have been highlighted and forthrightly dealt with some time ago?

Prepare for a face-to-face conversation with the problem employee. Have it in your office. Make it brief and to the point. Prepare an agenda to follow. Name the problem and the conditions you believe ought to be met for its solution.

Refer the person to outside help if necessary. Be prepared with a list of known referral agencies and answers to all questions and challenges which the employee may raise about your "imposing" yourself in his life.

Follow-up on suggested referrals immediately. Don't wait a week for an alcoholic to refer himself to a clinic for help. Follow-up the very next day.

Be firm about what needs to be done. Don't settle for anything less than a total resolution to the problem. If it is important enough for you to take action on, don't pussyfoot around when it comes down to the hard part. Your responsibility is to see that your organization runs smoothly and with a minimum of problems.

Continue documenting all of your efforts, conversations, and agreements with the problem employee.

Be matter-of-fact, moderately cheerful, up-beat, and all-business in each and every contact you have with this employee. Do not talk about your feelings, how much work this is for your, or how bad you feel. That will not help either you or him and it may very well damage your efforts at solving the problem. Self-disclosure to the person giving you problems is simply not a good strategy.

What to Do: Counseling the Problem Employee

You as manager or supervisor may decide to initiate a short-term, direct counseling effort aimed at helping the employee solve his problems. The main results you want is problem resolution, changed behavior, and a return to productivity. The second result you want is a reduction in the amount of your time this problem employee takes. Toward that end, one of your major strategies will be to reverse the current

trend: immediately and deliberately begin spending less and less time with and for this employee. Do not "reward" problems any longer with your attention. Reverse this trend by rewarding success with your attention. Some of the following guidelines may apply in this situation.

Arrange for a series of interviews with the problem employee. Schedule the interviews at your convenience. Limit the time period to no more than 20 to 30 minutes. Do no more than two such interviews per week. Schedule no more than five successive weeks of interviews after which time there will be a break from interviews for at least three weeks.

Start the first interview with an overview of the plan for the interview series. Next, name the problem which you have isolated as the one on which the two of you will focus. Focus all the interview time at each session directly on the problem.

Define in detail the problem with the employee in conversation. This means that you and he will discuss the problem in behavioral terms. What actions does he do? What work is caused or left undone? What exactly is the problem in observable, behavioral terms?

Identify possible solutions in the same fashion. What behavior do you want and must you see to consider the problem solved?

Contract with the employee in step-by-step, clearly identified procedures exactly how he can show you that he is working toward improvement. Solutions may not come over night. You can insist, however, that improvement be shown in demonstrable ways.

Don't punish for lack of progress. Simply terminate the appointment within the first five minutes of the conversation if the agreed upon progress was not accomplished in the interim. Reschedule the next appointment as usual.

Review progress repeatedly. That is the whole purpose of your interactions. At the conclusion of the series of interviews, do not seek out the employee. He may wish to find you from time to time (which is fine) and you can be accessible.

End the interview series in the same matter of fact way in which you began. Be sure to compliment the employee for solving his problem. Encourage him to install a maintenance plan so that he does not slip backwards into the problem again.

Follow-up some comfortable amount of time later to see if the maintenance plan is in operation. Reward, reinforce, and reassure the employee at that time that you are very pleased with the progress.

Admit defeat when it stares you in the face. There are some problems which cannot be solved. There are some problems you cannot solve. If after repeated efforts to counsel with a problem employee with no results, you may have other options to consider and implement.

4. BAD NEWS INTERVIEWS

Bad news interviews are those rather unpleasant interactions with employees and others to which, frankly, you do not look forward because you will be passing on news which will displease. By definition, a bad news interview is one in

which you give to another (who is less powerful, lesser franchised, less credentialled, or less in contact with money or services) negative news about what they want, hope for, or need. In this situation, you are either the provider or the spokesperson for the provider. In a bad news interview you say, "No", or you reject or deny a request or application. You may reduce or compromise a request or need. You may be giving negative expert advice. It is possible you may even fire someone, remove someone from a favored position, or demote or reallocate services or people. A bad news interview can be as ordinary and brief as saying "no", to your twelve year old who wants to go to the movies or as uncommon and painful as dropping someone from the payroll for good because of their persistent alcoholism problem.

Bad news interviews are best handled on your turf. These interactions should be at your convenience, on your timetable, and in a climate in which you can be most comfortable. Unlike feedback conversations and even unlike confrontations, there is no possibility of compromise or negotiation in a bad news interview. The task is to tell, to render the decision, to take final action, and not to "discuss" the problem. High amounts of power are in the hands of the giver of the news. This type of conversation is very low on equality and mutuality. Status matters and the message is imposed on the receiver (not brutally or with hostility, but nonetheless imposed). Energy is definitely located in the giver of news, though the giver should probably not be "up-beat" about it. It is important to arrange things for the convenience of the giver of news as much as possible because you must be in a situation in which you can function at your best. The skill level required is high.

Bad news is never given on the first contact nor should it be the first time the problem has been addressed. In personnel matters, the correct sequence of events is: a) identification of the problem; b) at least one or more feedback sessions with the employee; c) if the problem remains unresolved, feedback is followed by one or more confrontation sessions; d) last is bad news, possibly termination or demotion. This sequence is important and should not be altered.

The skill level required to conduct a bad news interview is, as mentioned above, very high. It is a complex undertaking to accomplish well. It is easy to do it badly, and most managers and supervisors are not trained at all (through no fault of their own) in the delivery of negative news. Typically managers believe that they can "wing it". Impossible. Planning is totally crucial to the effectiveness of a bad news interview.

Special Issues in Bad News Interviews

Because delivery of bad news carries such a high hurt potential with high probability that a full range of emotional discharge may develop, it is crucial that the manager consider very carefully a few of the side issues involved. Because there are no firm answers or resolutions to these issues, it becomes even more important for the giver of bad news to have thought at some length and depth about the issues mentioned below.

Nice-guy. Most everyone likes and wants to be liked. Even when in the midst of delivering negative news to an employee, the manager may find himself wanting to be held blameless in the eyes of the recipient. This may be too much to ask of a recipient whose life is possibly being turned upside down. Put yourself in his shoes and be realistic.

Defensiveness. Some managers are uncertain of their role when it comes to delivering bad news. This unsureness or insecurity may show itself as a defense, an abruptness, a coldness, or even an apology.

Confusion. Some supervisors when faced with the task of delivering negative news become overly wordy, delivering long, rambling speeches which have little relevance to the task. This is usually a smoke-screen to cover pretty obvious feelings of vulnerability.

Thinking on your feet. As a substitute for planning, thinking on your feet is a sure-fire formula for failure. You can count on that.

Procedure vs. Outcome. The procedure, that is to say, the way you go about doing this difficult interview, must be caring, fair, clear, consistent, just, and humane, even though the outcome is firm, negative, unpopular, and emotion-arousing. There are times when this apparent discrepancy is confusing to the recipient whereupon you need to take time to explain the difference between process and content. Most people appreciate learning about the differences.

Supporting the decision. Occasionally, you may be the vehicle through which a majority-achieved decision passes. A committee or some other small group may have decided on the course of action with the particular employee. You may have the job of conducting the bad news interview. You may personally not support the decision, a fact which you will feel binding on you in the interview. For you to give indicators to the recipient that you personally do not support the decision may be doing great harm both to the integrity of the decision and to the recipient.

Routine process. The process of delivering bad news may become routine for you over the years. You must not lose sight of the fact that for the recipient, the impact of this one decision is powerful and may deeply affect his life. Guard against callousness.

Tears, anger, and silence. The three predictable responses you don't want to have to respond to may readily occur. Prepare yourself for it; anticipate them. Now, during the delivery of bad news, is the time for you to unfailingly be able to access the broadest range of listening skills and verbal responses possible. Arm yourself with sensitive and effective optional responses to recipient feelings.

How to Do a Bad News Interview

Prepare. Plan ahead, exactly what you want to say. Boil it down to three or four items. Be sure you know what it will sound like when you say it. Rehearse, if possible, to yourself while driving to work, for instance. If there is one cardinal rule for bad news interviews, it is: prepare.

Plan. Plan for adequate time for the talk. Don't short circuit this kind of interview. Don't squeeze it in at 11:40 with a luncheon date planned for 12:00. Although the interview may very well go smoothly and right on your timetable, the unexpected can almost be expected. Therefore, it's a good idea not to have anything planned immediately afterwards. You may need the time to yourself if there is any time left over.

Keep in control. Keep in control of yourself and of the discussion. Keep your purposes and goals in sight. How you use your power is very crucial. One effective way to use it is to keep on the agenda. Now is certainly not the time

for you to lose control of your emotions. If your employee cries or gets angry, you must remain calm (not unfeeling or cold, but calm).

Cover all points. Start with the Bad News. Do not start with pleasantries and niceties. Some managers and supervisors have been trained in the "sandwich" approach--sticking bad news in between two slices of good news. Consider abandoning that approach, for it is basically disrespectful to the recipient to set him or her up with some compliments only to knock them down with negatives. Do include positives in your talk, but not as a balance for negatives. The positives will never feel like a balance to the recipient. Do not use positives to soften or dilute your message impact. And, do not eliminate any part of your agenda. Deliver the entire package of bad news. The time to pare down your agenda is at the planning stage.

Document. Document everything you say, at least as much as is feasible. Everything you say should already have some kind of documentation behind it. Under no circumstances should you repeat second-hand information. All reasons and justifications for your decision should be in some kind of document form.

Avoid interpretation. Stick to descriptions and tangible reality. There is a good reason to avoid interpretations: an interpretation is your view of a possible explanation. The recipient can easily challenge the validity of your assertion. When firing someone, for instance, never tell him that he lacks commitment to the organization. The recipient will challenge you on the word commitment and pretty soon the two of you are arguing about what commitment means. You will have lost control of the interview and you will have been foolish to believe you could document

that assertion anyway. Instead of using the word commitment, describe in behavioral terms what this person does or does not do (which adds up in your mind to lack of commitment).

Insist on being heard. Ask for restatements from the recipient of his understanding of what you have said. You may have to repeat some of your message and ask again for understanding before you are convinced that your message has been received in the way it was intended. Many managers and supervisors are uncomfortable insisting on being heard--until they try it and succeed. It is vital that the messages in bad news interviews are understood and understood clearly.

Summarize the whole package briefly after you have finished.

Request comments and reactions. In case the recipient has not felt comfortable reacting, invite him to do so. It is up to you to demonstrate effective and non-defensive listening skills.

Plan time. Plan time for spontaneous, unplanned events, such as crying, explosions, or the recipient leaving for a few minutes only to return to confront you. You may have to do some problem solving, but do not become entirely sidetracked. This is the one interview which you have to see through from start to finish as planned.

Do not change your mind. Even if it seems to you that you have made a gross error in judgment, do not change your mind in the presence of the recipient. Even if the recipient has provided you with startling new data which somehow you did not have when you reached your decision, do not change your mind and reverse what you just finished stating. You

should, in the face of new evidence which contradicts your decision, take a recess for whatever length of time you need to research the newly uncovered information. Reschedule the talk or put everything on hold, but do not change your mind. If you do, you have violated unwittingly the preparation admonition.

Record the session. Record your early attempts at bad news interviews (with recipient consent) so that you may listen to yourself at some later time for self-critique and eventual improvement. Most professionals are so ineffective at delivering bad news that given the chance to hear themselves do one, the improvement in the very next interview is striking. Do yourself a favor and tape your session. Listen to the tape and make notes about what to do better next time.

Advise recipient of appeal procedures. If the buck does not stop with you, advise the recipient of where it does stop. Everyone has a right to know how to challenge decisions and where final answers are to be found.

Couldn't you just say, "you're fired?"

E. CONCLUSION

The intent of this manual has been to assist you, the manager or supervisor, to become a "conscious competent". Conscious competence is a goal worth striving for, not only for the obvious satisfaction you feel with increased accomplishment in your life work, but also for the positive effect your greater professionalism will have on those with whom you work. To achieve results, however, you will need to approach the task from the perspective mentioned many times throughout this volume: increasing competence is a matter of acquiring new skills and of improving the quality of existing skills. Such skill building takes planning, patience, and lots of practice.

As the manager of your own professional development--you and only you can be in charge, and you may want to develop a plan. In pursuing any goal, it is advisable that you spend the necessary time planning strategies and mapping an overall plan of action. Survey the materials in the manual and choose only a few skills for your objectives--or even just one--to undertake at any one time. Achievement often requires a single-minded purpose and tunnel vision. Upon mastering it, you may drop concentration on it and proceed systematically on to the next one or next set.

Fight the "phony" fear. Many people are unable to act in new (and more effective) ways because they incorrectly believe that they will appear as a "phony" to others, that they won't seem "natural." If you persist, however, you will feel increasingly comfortable with new skills. Soon thoughts of phoniness are overcome, replaced with new confidence and a new naturalness.

Reward yourself for achievement. Figure out (consciously) what small, meaningful rewards there are that you are willing to work for and then don't forget to reward yourself: a five-minute phone conversation with a friend in the middle of the day, a walk in the sunshine, leaning back and closing your eyes, a

pack of wintergreen life-savers--whatever. Just remember: behavior rewarded, increases.

Finally, please consider the important concept of Self-Critique. Self-critique is both a philosophical point of view about improvement and a practical exercise with oneself as a "loving critic". Athletes, musicians, and performers of all kinds practice every day with the goal of improved competence. Such goal-directed rehearsal, as opposed to mere mindless repetition, separates champions and real "pros" from everyone else. This internal drive toward excellence is the main building block out of which the skill of self-critique is made.

What is self-critique? Self-critique is an intense examination of detail, sometimes frustratingly tiny, but always important. The fine craftspeople of the world are all sticklers for detail. No professional can afford not to be. Self-critique is intentionally becoming more and more aware of what you are doing so that you can intervene carefully to alter it. Self-critique is sorting, sifting, and deciding. What is done well can be left alone. What needs work can be focused upon. Self-critique is not negative judgment, not criticism or a putting-down of oneself.

Self-critique is self-study, reflection, and intentional commitment toward renewed action. The exceptional result is a self-generating learner, a self-directed learner, the person who profits increasingly from her or his own personal and professional experience and continually improves. And, best of all, it's contagious. Nearly everyone around you catches it.

END