Hiring the Right Person

A main concern expressed my many managers and administrators is finding the right person to hire. The interview process is not a favorite duty for most administrators, who find it tedious and unpleasant. I'm not sure what can be done about the tediousness, but there are things that you can do to make it a little more pleasant.

- **Attitude is everything** – No matter what you do, if you approach it with a negative perception, you will dread it and find it unpleasant. Look at hiring as an opportunity to stretch yourself, meet new people, and find a new team member to benefit your organization.

- **Understand the need** – Before you hire someone for your staff, you must make sure there is a need for a new employee. Can the workload and payroll support another employee?

- **Understand the organizational culture** – To know whether or not someone will make a valuable addition to your staff, you must first know if they'll "fit in" with your organizational culture. If the new employee doesn't "fit," there will be tension and strife in your organization. What is organizational culture? All the factors below, combined, creates a subculture within your organization.

  o How you run your organization

  o How you relate to your employees

  o How your employees perceive the organization

  o How everyone is expected to present themselves

  o How you relate to those you serve and the community

  o The management style of your leadership

One of the main reasons why the wrong person is hired or the person doesn't fit with the organizational culture (and it's realized after they are hired) is a lack of a proper screening process when hiring a new employee. This seems especially true with nonprofit organizations. If an individual shows interest, volunteers regularly, and is eager to help, it is assumed that that person will make a good employee. That is not always the case. If

an applicant is hired and either doesn't work out or is unhappy in the position, their leaving can cost the organization hundreds, even thousands of dollars to recruit, rehire, and retrain a replacement. In-depth interviewing will help prevent these kinds of situations in many cases.

Hiring Skills Inventory

To examine the hiring procedure in your organization, consider the following hiring skills inventory. These questions address the major considerations of a successful hiring effort.

1. **Have you defined the type of person that does well in your organization?**

2. **Are your procedures consistent and well defined?**
   Is the employee selection conducted without clear procedures or performed in a haphazard way? If so, this can result in high turnover, discrimination, lawsuits, or loss of your best applicants.

3. **Is everyone well informed?**
   Often, too many people are involved in the hiring process and can cause a communications breakdown. Only a few people should be responsible for screening and making timely decisions.

4. **Are you tracking recruiting costs?**
   How much did it cost to replace the last employee who left the organization?

5. **Are you cultivating new contacts and sources for applicants?**

6. **Are you considering the versatility of candidates?**
   Small organizations should attempt to hire people who can handle multiple tasks or be willing to retrain if needed. You must hire for the future.

7. **Do you have a good reputation as an employer?**
   Have you developed a reputation as an organization that treats its employees well? Quality people are drawn to quality organizations.

On many occasions an organization will hire additional people because of a perceived need. Hiring new people may sound like the right thing to do, but they may not be needed. Use the following list to help you decide if you need to fill a new position.

1. What is the purpose of this new job?

2. Who is presently performing these tasks?

3. How long have the employees who presently perform this task been overloaded?

4. Is this added influx the result of a temporary increase in activity or is the pace more permanent?

5. What will be the initial goals of this position and how long will it take to accomplish them?

6. What is the best that can happen if we fill this position with a good person?

7. Is there enough work for a full-time position? Can it be performed by a part-time employee?

8. Can some of the overload duties be switched to another area within the same department or location?

9. Is this a true need or can the systems in this function be streamlined for better productivity?

10. How much will this new position cost?

11. Is there a sufficient labor market from which to choose?

12. Will this position exist 24 months from now?

13. Have you checked with all other parties involved to determine if everyone feels there is a need?

14. How will other departments view adding this position?

15. What impact will the creation of this new position have on the jobs from which the tasks are being removed?

16. What is the worst that can happen if we do not fill this position?

The Interview Process

In most small and medium-sized organizations, the person who does the interviewing is usually the supervisor or the administrator. In many cases, the interviewer does not have the necessary interviewing skills to make a sound decision. The decision to hire is usually based on the halo effect—whether the person being interviewed said something that the interviewer liked or had the "look" that he thought he was searching for, causing him to overlook what the person really is about. Some base their hiring decisions on where the applicant comes from, their religious affiliation, or how well prepared their résumé was. While these factors may be important in many cases, they are not a basis for hiring.

An in-depth interview can take an hour or more as the interviewer hopes to hear enough information to make the right hiring decision. Since most interviewers are supervisors or administrators who have many other job duties pulling at them, they only have a small amount of time to spend on interviewing, sacrificing the necessary task of preplanning and having to cut the interview short because of other responsibilities.

Looking back at my early days of hiring employees, I see now how haphazard my techniques were and understand why I made some of the poor hiring decisions that I made. The problem that occurred over and over again was that I didn't ask the right questions. I really didn't know who the applicant really was or if he or she would fit in the organizational culture. When interviewing, you must get to know the person and understand what his or her real capabilities are. One of the best interviewing techniques that I've found is Behavior Based Interviewing (BBI). This process can help reveal who the person is and what can be expected from them. The following are questions that can help to reveal the interviewee's integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness.

Behavior Based Interview Questions

1. Discuss a time when your integrity was challenged. How did you handle it?

2. What would you do if someone asked you to do something unethical?

3. Have you ever asked for forgiveness for doing something wrong?

4. If you ever saw a coworker doing something dishonest, would you tell your boss? What would you do about it?

The following are questions that can reveal personality, temperament, and ability to work with others.

1. What motivates you the most?

2. If I call your references, what would they say about you?

3. How would you describe your personality?

4. What brings you joy?

5. If you took out a full-page ad in the newspaper and had to describe yourself in three words, what would those words be?

6. Do you consider yourself a risk taker? Describe a situation in which you had to take a risk.

7. Tell me about a work situation that bothered you.

8. What kinds of people would you rather not work with?

9. What previous job was the most satisfying and why?

10. What do you think you owe to your employer?

11. Have you ever had to resolve a conflict with a coworker or client? How did you resolve it?

Red Flags

1. The interviewee does not take the time to find out about the organization.

2. The interviewee accepts your salary or hourly terms and then tries to up the offer.

3. The interviewee is rude to those he or she comes in contact with in the office.

4. The interviewee dresses inappropriately.

5. The interviewee did not set goals at his or her former job.

6. The interviewee arrives late for the interview.

7. The interviewee provides references that cannot be reached.

8. The interviewee is over-qualified.

9. The interviewee reveals confidential information about his or her former employer.

10. The interviewee lacks enthusiasm.

11. The interviewee appears angry during the interview.

12. The interviewee quit his/her job without giving notice.

13. The interviewee appears to lie about certain matters.

14. The interviewee talks inappropriately about other people.

Sample Interview Questions

1. What do you think sets you apart from the other applicants?
   (The interviewer is asking why he should hire you instead of the other candidates.)

2. Describe the best boss you ever had.
   (This description can also help you understand what the interviewee expects in a boss.)

3. What spreadsheet programs are you familiar with?
   (If a person says that they have computer experience, they should be familiar with at least 2 or 3 spreadsheet programs.)

4. Did you bring your résumé?
   (If the interviewee did not bring a résumé, that means he or she is not prepared for the interview.)

5. What are some of the reasons that you are interested in this position?
   (A good interviewee has researched the job beforehand; the response to this question will tell whether or not he or she has done the homework.)

6. Why do you want to leave your current job?
   (Sometimes from the response you can tell if he or she is hiding something.)

7. Are you willing to stretch the truth if needed?
   (What you are really asking is, "Will you lie?" If he or she says yes, beware.)

8. Is money a strong incentive for you?
   (What you really want to know is whether the applicant left his or her last job because of money or lack of job satisfaction.)

9. Are you involved in extracurricular activities?
   (If the interviewee is not involved in activities outside the job, will he or she have difficulty being a part of a team at work?)

10. You must have interviewed for a number of jobs. Why haven't you been successful?
    (If the interviewee starts a pity party, he or she may not be a premium candidate. It may also show a lack of motivation.)

11. What are your personal objectives for the year?
    (This question can possibly show if the person plans and is interested in self-improvement.)

12. In the last four years you have had three jobs. Why?
    (Moving to too many jobs could be a signal of a problem.)

13. Why can't you look me in the eye?
    (Good eye contact can connote sincerity and truthfulness. Lack of eye contact may be construed as a sign of weakness, poor self-esteem, or evidence of lying.)

14. Would you recommend your last place of employment to others? *(If he or she says no, find out why. It may tell why the interviewee wants to leave.)*

15. "I absorb what concerns me directly." How do you feel about that statement? *(This question will help you understand if the interviewee is concerned about others or just about his or her own needs.)*

16. What interests you the most about the available position?
    (This will let you know if the interviewee has really thought about the job.)

17. What on-line service do you use?
    (This will help you understand if the interviewer is computer literate.)

18. Are you smart?
    (The response will help you understand if the interviewee has good self-esteem and a positive self-image.)

19. What accomplishments do you feel most proud of?
    (This will help you understand what the person has accomplished, if he or she is an achiever.)

20. I don't really like how you answered the questions at all.
    (This statement will rattle the interviewee and possibly reveal another side of the individual's personality.)

21. I just don't know if you are the right person for this position. You have not convinced me. *(Hopefully this statement will bring something out that the interviewee has not told you.)*

22. How do you save time when working on tasks?
    (This will help you understand if the interviewee has basic organization skills.)

23. What risks did you take in your last job? What were the results? *(The real difficult decisions can only be made if one is willing to take risks.)*

24. Name three books you have read in the last six months. *(Being well read is a plus.)*

25. Do you exercise regularly?
    (This question will help you find out if the interviewee is fairly healthy. If the person is extremely overweight and says that he or she exercises, beware.)

26. Describe a typical day in your present job.
    (This will help you understand what the person really does.)

27. What are your weekends like?
    (This will help you understand if the person has a wholesome lifestyle.)

28. Tell me about yourself.
    (This is an open statement and can get the person to start talking. The person may end up revealing more than he or she had planned to.)

29. Did you have difficulty finding our office?
    (If the person had difficulty, or was late, perhaps he or she didn't plan ahead.)

30. Did you really accomplish all those tasks or were you just in the room when they happened?
    (Resumes are embellished so the person can look better than he or she really is. This question will help get to the truth.)

31. In your previous job, how much work was done on your own and how much as part of a team?
    (This question will help you clarify what responsibility the interviewee really had.)

32. How do you let a person know that you hear and understand what he or she is saying?
    (What you want to hear from the interviewee is that he or she gives feedback, communicates understanding, or mirrors.)

33. Did you enjoy working at your last job?
(If the interviewee portrays the last job in a negative light, beware and ask more questions.)

34. Were you ever dismissed from a job for a reason that seemed unjustified? *(If the person starts complaining about a situation, beware.)*

35. Do you take work home, daily, weekends?
(This will help you find out if the person is a "company man" and will go the extra mile, but keep it in perspective.)

36. Is your spouse able to keep up with you intellectually, or is he/she mainly concerned with their duties?
(You are asking, "Will the pressures of this job affect your marriage; does your spouse understand what you do?")

37. Are you innovative? Give me an example.
(This question will help you see if the person is creative.)

38. What kind of career development activities have you participated in during the past years? *(This question will help you understand if the interviewee has been involved in self-improvement.)*

39. Did you supervise any committees or special team projects at your last job?
(This question will help the interviewee express his or her possible leadership ability.)

40. Do you really think that you can do this job? Explain why.
(What you are really saying is, "Help me justify giving you this job.")

41. Have you taken on new job responsibilities at your present job?
(This question will help you find out if the company thinks enough of the person to have given him or her additional responsibilities.)

42. *(If the interviewee walks in late to the interview)* Did you allow yourself enough time to get here?
(There is usually no excuse for being late for a job interview.)

43. How would you describe your present boss?
(This question can reveal the type of management style the interviewee had been exposed to. If he or she is extremely negative about his or her former boss, it could indicate a problem.)

44. Does stress bring on physical illness?
(Stress can cause low productivity and high absenteeism if not handled correctly.)

45. Why do you want to switch careers at this stage of your professional life?
(If the person was a success in his or her former career, why does he or she want to change?)

46. What was one of your greatest challenges on your present job?
(The interviewee should describe how he or she faced difficult situations. Ask for examples.)

47. Can you give some examples of your leadership ability?
(If the interviewee cannot give solid examples, her or she may not have been a leader.)

48. Where would you like to be in three years if we hire you?
(If the person wants to be president in three years, he or she is unrealistic. If the person wants to grow with the company, that's more realistic.)

49. What type of people do you have little patience with?
(This question will help you understand how the person wants to be treated, and what type of impression he or she would like to project.)

50. In your résumé, there is a large time gap. Why is that?
(A time gap may reveal a problem like prison, prolonged illness, or some other reason.)

51. Are you overqualified for this job?
(This question may rattle the interviewee, giving you a better idea of who he or she is.)

52. What do you expect from a supervisor?
(You are trying to find out the type of supervisor the interviewee works well with.)

53. What do you consider your major weakness?
(If an individual says that he or she has no weaknesses, the question is then raised whether or not the person is truthful. Everyone has weaknesses.)

54. How did you prepare for this interview?
(This question helps you understand if the person is a planner.)

55. When do you plan to retire?
    (If the person is an older interviewee, this question will help you understand how long he or she plans to be around.)

56. Please take this sheet of paper and write two paragraphs telling why you would like this job.
    (This process will show two things: 1. Writing skills, 2. Organized thinking.)

57. To what professional associations do you belong? *(Belonging to professional associations is a plus.)*

58. If you could turn back the clock, what would you do differently in your present (or past) job? *(This question will help you understand if the person has regrets about his or her past.)*

59. Name ten of your favorite TV shows.
    (If the person can name ten TV shows, he or she may be a couch potato and lack motivation.)

60. Tell me some inside information about your last job.
    (If the interviewee starts telling you confidential information, what will he or she say about you?)

61. Will your previous employer be a good reference?
    (What you are really are asking is, "Are you on good terms with your previous employer?")

62. In your performance appraisals what strengths and weaknesses were discussed? *(This will help you understand the person better, if he or she is truthful.)*

63. What causes you to perform poorly?
    (What you are really asking is, "What are your weaknesses?")

64. Have you ever been fired?
    (If the interviewee is truthful and says yes, that could show integrity on his or her part.)

65. How do you know a listener comprehends what you are saying?
    (What you want the interviewee to say is that he or she wants feedback from the person.)

66. Silence— Just look at the interviewee with skepticism for 30 seconds or more. Instead of actually asking a question, use silence to see how the interviewee handles himself or herself. Will he or she use this time to ask a question, offer information, or remain quiet and calm until the interview resumes.

67. Describe projects you have started and completed at work.
(Have the interviewee explain those projects that he or she started, not the ones they were involved in.)

68. What are some of the things that your supervisor did that you disliked?
(This question will provide room to discuss and find out more about the person and his or her work environment.)

69. Did you ever consider leaving your present position before?
(What you want to find out is if this is the interviewee's first bailout attempt from his or her job or has the person tried to leave before.)

70. When you are in a group of friends, who talks the most?
(What you want to know is if the interviewee is a loner, if he or she feels comfortable interacting in a group setting.)

71. How much do you know about us?
(This question lets you know if the interviewee has done his or her homework.)

72. Do you volunteer for projects on the job?
(Volunteering shows initiative on the person's part.)

73. What makes this job different from your current or last job?
(What you are really asking is, "What skills would you bring to this job if we hire you?")

74. When should or shouldn't you take a risk?
(The interviewee's response will help you understand if he or she is balanced or a loose cannon.)

75. Was succession planning implemented at your company? Why weren't you considered?
(Succession planning is usually found at the executive level. This question would be appropriate for a leadership position.)

76. When is it not appropriate to tell the truth?
(This interviewee's response to this question will give you insight into his or her character.)

77. How do you spend your free time?
(You want to see if the person is proactive and industrious even in his or her spare time.)

78. What are your greatest achievements?
(This gives the interviewee an opportunity to blow his or her horn. It will reveal how industrious and aggressive the person really is.)

79. Are there any conditions of personal business, health, or family that would limit your flexibility in taking on a new task or assignment?
(What you are really asking is, "Do you have any hidden problems?")

80. Have you ever received awards or commendations?
(This will help you understand what the interviewee has accomplished.)

81. We all miss opportunities. What opportunities have you missed?
(This question will help you find out if the interviewee is satisfied with himself or herself, and looks forward to new opportunities.)

82. What do you think about office romance?
(Office romance should be kept out of the office; romantic situations cause a tremendous amount of wasted time.)

83. Would you be in a position to work overtime if required?
(If the person says no, that could be a problem if you require overtime.)

84. Describe your decision-making responsibilities in your last job.
(If a person claims to have managed at his or her last job, he or she should be able to explain the responsibilities.)

85. "The only way to get something done is to do it yourself." Comment on that statement.
(What you want to find out is whether the interviewee is a team player.)

86. What motivates you?
(Some good responses: meeting goals, positive feedback, or team effort. Many will say money. If that is the case, he or she may not stay with you long.)

87. Would you like to own your own business?
    (The response to this question may let you know if the interviewee is just passing through to collect a check to start a business or to scope you out as their competition.)

88. Do you bend the rules?
    (Bending the rules and being flexible are two different things. Beware.)

89. Why do you want to work here?
    (What you are really asking is, "Why do you want to leave your other job?")

90. How has your training and education prepared you for the job you are applying for?
    (The response will help you understand how much job experience the person really has.)

91. Have you experienced times when you felt you were capable of making decisions, but did not have the authority?
    (If the answer is yes, ask why they didn't have the authority.)

92. Give me quantitative proof of your management skills and performance.
    (A good response would be: increased attendance by... lowered overhead by.... increased productivity by...)

93. Have you always been an exempt or nonexempt employee?
    (Exempt employees are those who are salaried. Nonexempt are those who are paid hourly. Usually management types are salaried.)

94. For what things did your boss compliment you?
    (This will tell you a lot about how the person performed his or her job.)

95. Using examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations, and environments.
    (This will give you insight into their experience.)

96. What are your strengths in relation to the job you are applying for?
    (A good response would be some of the following: knowledge of job, organized, team player, person of integrity, good communication skills, etc.)

97. Are there any other offers that you are considering?
    (What you are really asking is, "Is our organization the only one interested in this person?")

98. Were you treated fairly in regard to advancement options?
    (What you are really asking is if the interviewee was passed over for a promotion. This question may also get the person talking about situations on his or her job.)

99. Are you experienced at public speaking?
    (Public speakers are self-assured and confident in themselves. This can be a real asset as a leader.)

100. Do you own a computer?
    (It would be a concern if the interviewee were not computer literate.)

Background Checks

Reference and background checks are a valuable way for employers to look into an applicant's history. Hiring an employee who has committed an offense puts an employer at risk. If the employee has a record for molestation, you certainly don't want to hire him/her to work in your nursery; if he/she has embezzled money, they wouldn't be a good choice for your bookkeeper. It is important for employers to be knowledgeable of their rights as well as the rights of the applicant. Employers should be as thorough as they can be, within the limits of the law, when checking into an applicant's background. Reference checking reduces the risk to the employer when hiring a new person.

There are several types of background checks. These include credit checks, criminal record checks, driving records, and past employment checks.

- **Credit checks**
  Utilizing credit checks for employment purposes is regulated by the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). Credit checks are often performed for positions that involve financial responsibilities, especially if the position involves handling large sums of money or exercising financial discretion. If the position does not require this type of responsibility, the employee should not be subject to a credit check. This could be misconstrued as a violation of privacy. It is, therefore, a good practice to limit the use of credit checks to situations where the position demands good credit references. There are two types of credit checks:

  - Investigative consumer credit reports – This credit report includes a written report along with interviews from business associates, neighbors, etc. Written notice must be given to an applicant before an investigative credit check is performed. In addition, the applicant should be briefed as to the types of questions that will be asked.

  - Consumer credit reports – This credit report is a written report issued by a third party. If an applicant is denied employment because of the credit report, the applicant must be informed and furnished with the name of the credit agency that issued the report.

- **Criminal record**
  Employers may want to consider doing a criminal background check for positions that involve a high level of unsupervised contact with the public. Examples of this type of position would be security guards, teachers, childcare, and eldercare personnel. Private employers are able to acquire criminal records at the state level,

if there is proven need. In many states, the employer would have to demonstrate that the applicant would be in close contact with the public and that securing the conviction record would be in the best interest of the public. Obtaining criminal conviction records does not mean that this information can be used in making the hiring decision. Some states have laws prohibiting discrimination against people with criminal records. Check your state's Department of Labor.

- **Driving record**
  Employers should check driving records of applicants who will be using church vehicles before the applicant is hired and periodically during their employment. The employer could be held liable for negligent hiring if he or she knows or should have known about anything contained in the record such as DUI and speeding violations. Employers should also check to see if the applicant has a valid driver's license.

- **Past employment checks**
  When verifying employment with a former employer, it is likely that the former employer will be willing to provide ONLY the dates of employment and the position of the employee. Legal action resulting from negative reference checks is on the rise. A defamation suit could result if a former employer gives out false and negative information about an applicant. Defamation is defined as *the unprivileged publication of a false statement tending to harm the reputation of another person*. Because of increased litigation, many employers have a "say nothing" policy.

  Saying nothing appears to protect the company from liability, but this is not always the case. Employers can be sued by other employers if they fail to disclose negative information about an applicant that could negatively impact the inquiring organization.

This basic concept of negligent hiring can be extended to situations where the employer failed to investigate the background of the applicant and therefore placed the applicant in a position that could be dangerous to others. If an employer hires an applicant without properly checking out their background and that person is later found to be committing the same offense as in a previous job, the employer faces lawsuits based on negligent hiring. If the employer had looked into the background of the person, this information would have been discovered.

Reference checking is a double-edged sword. There are potential consequences for not checking references (negligent hiring lawsuits) and there are potential consequences if

you do check references (defamation lawsuits). The important thing is to know what is the right course of action in each situation.

When you are asked to provide a reference on a former employee, be sure the former employee knows the company's reference-checking policy and obtains his or her written permission before providing references. Document the positive and negative performance evaluations and refer to these documents when giving a reference. It is important to provide truthful information; truth is an "absolute defense" to a defamation charge. Never volunteer information, but do provide job-related information. Make sure that you identify to whom you are giving the information to and be sure to take down their name, title, address, and telephone number. Advise them that you will return the call. This allows the former employer to verify the identity of the potential employer.

Managing Work and Personal Issues

WORK-FAMILY PROGRAMS

Work and family issues generally fall into three categories:

Dependent Care
- Childcare
  - On-site childcare
  - Voucher systems
  - Referral networks
  - After-school programs
  - Summer camps
- Night care for late-shift workers
- Education-consulting services
  - Motivate kids in school
  - Help with learning problems
  - Select schools
- Sick-child care (subsidized medical supervision)
- Elder-parent care

Alternative Work Schedules
- Compressed work weeks
- Job sharing
- Part-time options
- Flex time
- Telecommuting
- Summer schedules
- Overtime
- Taking vacation time in shorter increments (hours and days)
- Stress results rather than hours worked
- Job rotation

Leave and Other Policies
- Work-family policies
- Care for elderly parents
- Care for young children
- Elimination of nepotism (no spouse) rules
- Support for transfers and relocations
- Trailing-spouse assistance

Fostering Open Communications

IMPORTANCE OF OPEN COMMUNICATIONS

Open communications is a management philosophy that refers to many things. It can mean:

- Interacting with all people openly and directly.
- Providing others with open access to information.
- Encouraging others to express contrary viewpoints, opinions, and concerns.
- Conveying necessary information to others to keep people up-to-date with information and make sure people experience no surprises.
- Encouraging employees to share information.
- Keeping management informed.

Open communication fosters trust, enhances information flow, and builds strong relationships that lead to productive, successful teams. On an individual basis, open communication provides employees with the information they need to do their jobs. In addition, having information available enables employees to work within a broader context. It allows them to feel part of the bigger picture and enhances their self-esteem and connection to the company.

IDEAS FOR FOSTERING BETTER COMMUNICATIONS

Take a moment to review these ideas and identify those that you think you *do very well now* and those you think you could *do more often*.

Do Very Well	Do More Often	Idea
☐	☐	Find out what your employees want to know. Provide it.
☐	☐	Encourage your staff to keep one another informed and share information.
☐	☐	Hold regular, periodic staff meetings to share information.
☐	☐	• Encourage two-way communications.
☐	☐	• Solicit agenda items from employees.
☐	☐	• Allow employees time to raise issues.
☐	☐	Keep both management and non-management employees up-to-date by submitting a monthly activity report for your area.

Do Very Well	Do More Often	Idea
☐	☐	Identify key people in the organization upon whom your success and the success of your employees depend, and make a special effort to keep them informed.
☐	☐	Talk to peers or people in other departments about "communication breakdowns." Consult with your employees and devise ways to avoid them.
☐	☐	Use the "informed organization" as a way to keep others informed. Wander around, have coffee with people, ask them questions, and listen.
☐	☐	Don't "shoot the messenger" who brings bad news. Welcome him or her.
☐	☐	Establish a departmental bulletin board to keep people up-to-date on both personal and professional items of interest and opportunity.
☐	☐	Hold monthly one-on-one meetings with each of your team members to discuss both group and individual goals.

With these current and future trends as a backdrop for your leadership, you can see the increasing challenge of management responsibilities.

- Describe the impact of employee relations in the workplace.

- Describe the supervisor's role in establishing and maintaining sound employee relations in an organization.

- Name four management strategies that support positive employee relations.

- Describe the purpose and intent of employment legislation governing workplace supervision.

- Identify diversity issues that exist in a team and overcome related barriers to productive employee relations.

- Describe management guidelines for effectively handling work and personal issues in a work team.

- Describe supervisory activities that facilitate open communications.

- List the elements of a formal problem-resolution process.

Workplace Trends

Past Trends

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   _____

2. _____
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3. _____
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6. _____
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7. _____
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   _____

8. _____
   _____
   _____

Current and Future Trends

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   _____

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   _____

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7. _____
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   _____

8. _____
   _____
   _____

Consequences of Poor Employee Relations

- Non-compliance fines
- Court-awarded damages
- Loss of employee morale
- Lower productivity
- Increased turnover
- Lost customers
- Personal damages

Strategies for Positive Employee Relations

Think about your responsibilities in your organization. *Which of your day-to-day activities do you feel have the most impact on employee relations?*

_____

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_____

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_____

Your challenge is to use every opportunity to build and maintain healthy and supportive relations between yourself and your employees.

Four Strategies

There are four key employee-relations strategies that can help you successfully approach this challenge:

- Ensuring legislative compliance
- Managing diversity
- Managing work and personal issues
- Fostering open communications

Your time and attention in these four areas can help to ensure your leadership contributes to the goal of positive employee relations in your organization.

Understanding Employment Law

IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT LAWS

The need for an understanding of employment law is essential for all organization leaders. You make employment-related decisions daily. It is risky to make those decisions without knowledge of important legal parameters that govern them.

Employment law has had a significant impact on employers.

— A Seattle jury awarded $1.1 million to an employee who claimed that her employer discriminated against her because she suffered from repetitive strain injuries and the employer did not "reasonably accommodate" her.

— A jury awarded $22,000 in back pay and $222,000 in compensatory and punitive damages against a company and its owners. The director had been terminated for inability to perform essential job functions because of irregular attendance due to treatment of a disability – terminal cancer.

— Harris Trust and Savings Bank resolve a 12-year-old race and sex bias case by agreeing to pay $14 million in back pay.

— Whitney National Bank of New Orleans agreed to pay up to $1.9 million in back pay following a government agency's investigation of discrimination against blacks and women in hiring, placement, promotion, and compensation.

— In response to business losses, a large company laid off 1,200 employees with the least productive sales records. They ended up paying nine of those employees double damages of $1.63 million when the jury agreed that the company's standards were biased against older workers.

These and other types of situations that occur in the workplace can require careful thought to guide your decisions and actions. Many situations do not have simple answers. Rather than relying on knee-jerk reactions to similar situations, take the time you need to consider the legal parameters that must guide your decisions and actions so that you can ensure compliance with equal employment opportunity laws and regulations.

Employment Laws

- Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII)
- Executive Order 11246
- Equal Pay Act of 1963
- Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Vietnam-Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Family Leave Act of 1993
- Immigration Reform and Control Act

Refer to the *Employment Law Quick Reference Guide* for information on the intent and coverage of each of these laws.

Managing Diversity

What are some of the characteristics that make you a unique person?

Down the first column, list characteristics that you think make you unique. In the second column, write down how those characteristics contribute to your team – in other words, how do your unique characteristics, background, and perspectives benefit your work team?

Unique Characteristics

How It Contributes

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  _____
  _____

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- _____
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  _____

If a team is made up of people who have a lot in common, what impact can this have on the team's productivity and effectiveness?

_____

_____

How might that differ from work teams made up of people who are more diverse?

_____

_____

On a scale of 1 to 10, how diverse would you consider your team and why?

_____

_____

In what ways could a person's uniqueness limit his or her understanding of others and affect the person's ability to work with others different from him- or herself?

_____

_____

It is difficult to know our own biases. Our beliefs about other people are so much a part of our experience we rarely question them. But because of stereotypical assumptions, prejudices influence our team in very subtle ways. Without an awareness of and an effort to manage diversity, prejudices can squelch the advantages that diversity brings to our teams.

Consider the story of the wealthy man who needed to buy a new car. He wanted to spend the day going to car dealerships researching the new models and sizing up the features and benefits of each. However, he dreaded the pushy salespeople he would encounter as he browsed the showroom floors. He knew they would persist with rushed offers to test drive cars and ask their intrusive questions. So he skipped his morning shave, dressed in his grubbiest work clothes, and took the bus rather than diving to the main street where most of the car dealerships were located.

What did this man understand about stereotypes and how they influence interactions between people?

_____

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_____

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Managing diversity goes beyond recognizing obvious differences. It takes work to overcome the less evident barriers and discover what's truly unique about individuals on your team. It is important to move past the assumptions and stereotypes that may be comfortable or even subconscious and value the differences each person brings to the team.
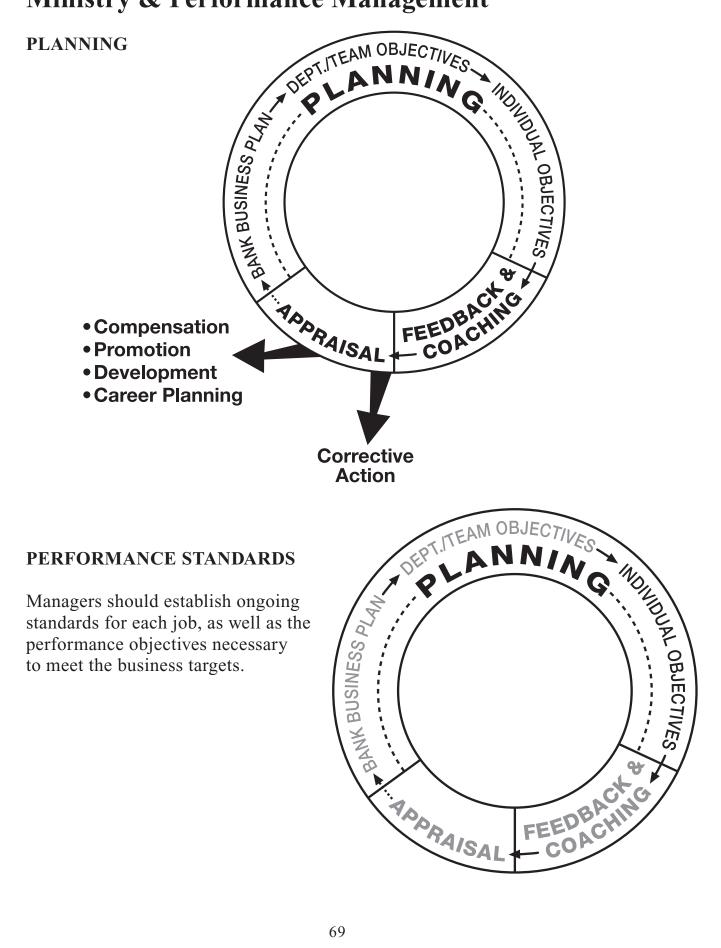
Resistance to Diversity

Several beliefs prevent people from dealing effectively with diversity issues in the workplace.

- Prejudice.
- "We don't have a diversity problem."
- Diversity is a personal matter.
- Fear of change.
- Fear of stirring up trouble.
- Where to begin?

_____

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"The worksite is the place where people most often interact with those different from themselves; people of different races and ethnic cultures usually live in homogeneous communities and do not have meaningful opportunities outside work in which to confront and disprove their biases. Thus, it is in the workplace that true understanding must ultimately be achieved, and that the differences among people must be accommodated."

Ministry & Performance Management

PLANNING

- Compensation
- Promotion
- Development
- Career Planning

**Corrective
Action**

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Managers should establish ongoing
standards for each job, as well as the
performance objectives necessary
to meet the business targets.

THE BUSINESS PLAN

Organization Goals
Department Goals
Individual Goals

INFORMAL FEEDBACK

1. Communicate your constructive reason for the feedback.

2. Share your observations and explain the impact of the substandard behavior or performance.

3. Get the employee's input.

   "Jack, how do you see the situation?"

   — Often a pause will elicit a response from the employee.

   — Ask an open-ended question.

   — Listen respectfully.

   — Use paraphrasing to summarize.

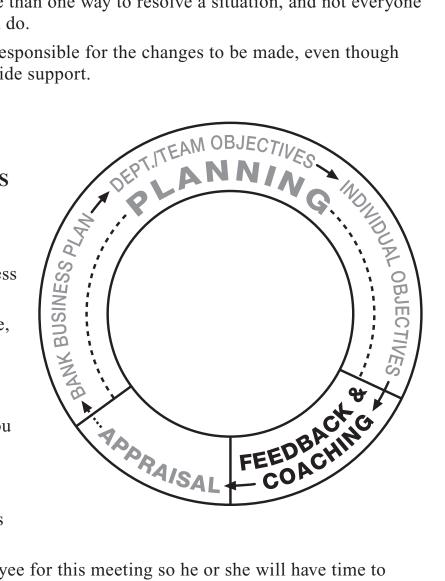   — Pitfall to avoid: Asking the question, "What's your problem?"

4. Discuss alternatives and gain commitment to doing something differently.

"Sometimes I write notes to myself or put up signs to remind myself to do something. What else do you think would be helpful?"

— Make a judgment based on the employee's reaction.

— You may need to go back to the earlier steps to establish the need for change.

— Don't underestimate the impact of your feedback.

— Often people don't commit to change on the spot. It may take some thought on the employee's part.

— Avoid coming across like the expert.

— There is usually more than one way to resolve a situation, and not everyone operates the way you do.

— Make the employee responsible for the changes to be made, even though you are there to provide support.

5. Conclude in a positive way.

FORMAL FEEDBACK IDEAS

- Assess the results of each objective to date.

- What is the employee's progress to date?

- Identify trends in performance, either positive or negative.

- Discuss accomplishments and suggested improvements.

- Address issues or concerns you have about the employee's performance.

- Make adjustments to the objectives as needed (or if it is within your authority).

- Schedule time with the employee for this meeting so he or she will have time to think about what to discuss about his or her performance.

APPRAISAL GUIDELINES

- Describe the results achieved for each performance objective.
- Assign a rating to each objective.
- Document specific examples that demonstrate the performance standards.
- Describe any unplanned results the employee achieved.
- Identify employee strengths and suggested improvements.
- Assign an overall rating.
- Review the completed appraisal with your manager so that you concur before meeting with the employee.

ADJECTIVES FOR THE FIVE PERFORMANCE ZONES

5	4	3	2	1
insufficient	adequate	timely	beforehand	infallible
deficient	acceptable	prompt	early	expert
lacking	unpracticed	punctual	anticipates	originates
incomplete	standard	competent	opportune	inventive
incompetent	admissible	ample	precise	ingenious
meager	passable	uniform	exact	innovative
scant	fair	constant	thorough	excellent
below standard	presentable	reliable	achieves	superlative
delayed	moderate	methodical	initiates	incisive
overdue	comparable	systematic	self-starter	underused
ineffectual	unexceptional	capable	resource	not challenged
inept	apprentice	qualified	team member	extraordinary
sparse	novice	skilled	enterprising	exceptional
erroneous	beginner	practiced	responsive	exceeds
inappropriate	provisional	suitable	knowledgeable	beyond
inaccurate	improving	commensurate	accurate	
faulty		appropriate	improves	
substandard		sufficient	organizer	
tardy		in keeping with	gets results	
belated				
delinquent				
inadequate				
unacceptable				
unsuitable				
intolerable				
minimal				