Performance Strategies for Managers and Supervisors from the Division of Personnel

Spring 2010

CONTENTS

Quick Tip:

If you want people to be accountable, be receptive to their needs. Make your employees accountable for doing premium work by responding to their needs and supporting them. That places the accountability at the appropriate level—with the people who do the work.

"Each day comes to me with both hands full of possibilities."
-Helen Keller

[Click here](#) for previous Issues of ***Solutions***

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Paradigm Shift

By Dr. Rick Kirschner
Taken from ***myquickcoach***
The Division of Personnel's online source of practical answers to workplace challenges

You hear it on the radio. You see it on TV. You read it in the newspapers.

It seems as if the world we live in is coming together and falling apart simultaneously. It's a real good news/bad news situation. A world of mixed messages—bombarding you every single day!

With greater frequency, you probably are finding yourself asking this question: *'What's going on?'*

Well, what if we can answer that question in a way that was meaningful to you, that actually gave you some leverage—that empowered you to ride the waves of change sweeping through every realm of human endeavor?

Well, I think we can, but to do so, we've got to use a word that you've probably heard way too many times. That word is **'paradigm.'** And if you don't know what it's worth, it's really worth about 20 cents.

Let's define the term. A paradigm is a shared set of perceptions, a shared set of assumptions, or a shared set of rules that we have together about where we are and what's possible. And what we're witnessing is a global paradigm shift of unprecedented proportion.

But what's it shifting to?

Well, to answer that, we must look backwards for a moment, to the old paradigm, in which people couldn't see the forest for the trees. A world where people learned more and more about less and less, until they knew everything about nothing. And then we called them experts and specialists, and we put them in charge.

The new paradigm is the big picture paradigm, in which we finally learn that the best way to solve a problem, the best way to build the future is by starting with the biggest picture possible, to give us that informed perspective, and then working our way back to the particulars.

That's the paradigm shift taking place in education, government, economics and healthcare. Starting with the big picture and working our way back to the particulars, just like you do if you were doing a jigsaw puzzle. You wouldn't reach in the box and pull out one piece, and then try to find one that matched it. No, you'd look at the top of the box. Open the box. Empty all the pieces out on a flat surface. Turn them all over so they're all facing in the same direction. And then begin to look for patterns.

A key skill in this new paradigm is to chart the trends, to make the invisible visible. To look for the principles by which things operate because these things give us the leverage we need to make tomorrow different than yesterday.

Influencing

Explore employee mindsets to spur success and satisfaction

Developing your employees and helping them advance in their careers starts by finding out what drives them to succeed. Ask these questions:

What's going well? Find out what employees like about their current jobs—and about your organization. Their responses will tell you what they value.

What are you proud of? Explore their accomplishments. Most employees want to work on projects they can brag about, and you might be surprised at what they consider their most significant successes.

What would make you feel more successful? Set pay aside and find out what employees really want to do. Don't limit the conversation to work topics. Discuss life goals, and look for ways to connect personal and professional fulfillment. For instance, an employee who wants to teach might find satisfaction in training new workers.

What would make you feel successful in five years? Help employees look at the big picture by considering goals for the long term—and the near future. A roadmap to career advancement will focus their efforts and attention.

What would you like to do more (and less) of? While you probably won't be able to completely change an employee's job description, looking at what he or she enjoys and detests can lead to small changes that provide more satisfaction.

How do you define success? It's an important question, and not an easy one. Your conceptions of success may differ, but if you can find common ground, you'll do a better job of steering employees in a direction that benefits you both.

Leadership Strategies
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SPECIAL SECTION:

Integrity

Trust: The toughest leadership challenge in tough economic times

Development Dimensions International (DDI) President Bob Rogers points out that it is possible to build and maintain trust even in bad times.

In my 40 years as a leader, including 20 as president of DDI, I have held some very challenging discussions, from terminations to layoffs, from salary reductions to why someone didn't get a promotion.

But the toughest conversation of all is talking to employees in down economic times–trying to communicate difficult messages while retaining their trust in me and the organization. These are the toughest because of the ambiguity of the situation and the constraints you are under in terms of what to share, promise, or withhold. I am sure many of your leaders feel the same way. Sadly, we know that when leaders feel intimidated by these discussions, they may not conduct them well, or may even avoid them altogether. And this damages trust in both individuals and the organization they represent.

This is illustrated by a recent study reported in the January/February edition of the *Harvard Business Review*. It showed on a scale of 1-5 (1 being the least amount of trust; 5 being the most), bosses rated a mere 2.7 in the amount of trust their subordinates had for them, versus 3.0 for their organization. I think these numbers reflect the pain of leading during this economic downturn.

Frontline leaders are having an especially tough time. They don't know what the future holds, and have less leadership experience in managing ambiguity. As a result they are sharing less, and communicating poorly at times when employees need to hear more from their leaders. It's a delicate situation, for on one hand frontline leaders can't say what employees want to hear most: Don't worry, your job is safe, everything is fine. But on the other hand, in the absence of communication, employees will fear the worst.

So what is holding leaders back from having open and honest discussions with their people during ambiguous economic times? Our belief is that there are three reasons why leaders don't do enough of these discussions to retain the trust of their workforce.

Reason # 1: A Lack of Confidence
There are a number of reasons why frontline leaders may lack the confidence necessary to have these conversations. For one thing, they don't have them very often so there is little practice. In my career I have lived through four recessions–this being the worst–and I've been able to draw on what I learned before. Many new leaders aren't similarly equipped.

Also, organizations don't provide leaders with enough information and guidance on what they can share and what they can and cannot promise (such as we won't have any layoffs, or your job is absolutely safe). Leaders need to see or hear their own leader modeling these conversations, so they can apply what they see to the conversations they'll have with their own people. If senior executives don't hold honest and open discussions with their subordinate leaders, how can those leaders be confident that they will handle these discussions with their people in line with what the organization expects?

Finally, leaders are not sure what skills and behaviors will be most effective in these situations. They need guidance. When DDI laid off a small number of employees last year, we prepared a booklet for leaders on how to discuss with employees what happened, why it happened, and what the future looked like for our company. Individual meetings with leaders who had to conduct lay-off discussions as well as a group meeting with all leaders ensured everyone was prepared for this tough period of change.

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

Trust: The Toughest Leadership Challenge in Tough Economic Times

Reason # 2: Under-developed Skills
Many leaders haven't developed enough of the skills most important to maintaining trust. Let's take a look at the key skills and behaviors:

Maintenance of Esteem. In tough times people more than ever want to know that they are adding value and are important to the organization. Even if the leader can't promise "no layoffs," it is necessary to assure an employee that they are a capable, valuable contributor. This will foster a sense of security in or out of the company.

Listen and empathize. Sounds easy, but when people are fearful of losing their jobs and they are the only earner in the family, the anxiety will be at its highest. It is critical that they know the leader is listening and understands their fear. This can be very tough, and leaders are most likely to be weak in this area because it takes practice to be able to express both the content and feelings while being sincere. That doesn't happen with one or two practices–it takes a sustained effort to master this skill. And even for experienced leaders, I advocate role playing tough conversations that require listening and empathy in practice runs to prepare for the real thing.

Share appropriately. Offering a leader's own feelings or rationale for decisions is touchy when there are things that cannot be shared. Also, associates may think that their leader's job is safe so why should he or she worry? By sharing feelings of anxiety and stress about the situation, a leader provides reassurance and shows an employee that he or she understands. Leaders should be positive and provide hope that things will get better without saying things that they do not actually feel. Leaders need to state why the course of action the organization is taking is going to be successful in the long run.

For example, many employees at DDI were frustrated that our company didn't use pay cuts or reductions to part-time work in order to save jobs. I was able to alleviate frustrations and help them understand our decisions by explaining that since we did not anticipate a quick recovery in the global economy, we needed the reduction in staff to ensure our organization was the "right" size for the next few years.

Ask how you can help them. Sure you need to ask them for their help in reducing costs or improving productivity, but the emphasis here should be on you helping them! What they might say may be very different than at any other time, but may provide valuable information about how the leader can continue to build trust with the direct report.

Reason # 3: No Accountability
When these discussions don't occur, it's often because the organization and senior executives don't hold all leaders accountable for conducting the discussions. Without that accountability many leaders will shy away from these discussions because some will be very difficult. But as I like to say to our leaders, that's what leadership is. It's holding the tough discussions, retaining trust in tough times, and motivating others when they want to focus on the bad times. This is the time when leaders should be communicating more, not less.

What Can Organizations Do?
Training and support for all leaders is essential in times like these. And frontline leaders are likely to have the most acute need to build skills and confidence. Pivotal topics to target for the best results include trust, retaining talent, leading change, and motivating others. For more senior leaders, the ability to lead with courage and develop emotional intelligence helps these 'leaders of leaders' conduct and model tough discussions to build and retain trust.

This is the time your leaders need the confidence and skills to hold these tough discussions. Are your leaders up to it?

About the Author
DDI President Bob Rogers is a recognized expert in strategy execution, performance management, leadership development and succession management.

Team Work

Managing Team Results

Ask yourself the following thought questions about the team or work group you belong to:

YES	NO	
☐	☐	Does every team member know exactly what the team goals are?
☐	☐	Does every team member know what his or her role is in achieving those goals?
☐	☐	Does every team member know what success "looks like" to the team? In other words, does everyone know how success is measured?
☐	☐	Do team members meet regularly and frequently to account to each other for progress on team goals?

Remember:

Winning teams have simple goals with clear targets and strong follow-through. All team members know what to do about the goals and they execute precisely.

Solutions

"The problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." Albert Einstein

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My CPM Journey!

By: Kelly Levy
Division of Personnel

Pictures from Top

"Blackboard" Online Academic Suite Logo

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The Division of Personnel is pleased to collaborate with Missouri State University's Management Development Institute (MDI) to provide Missouri's first Certified Public Manager® program. This historic event took place in Glass Hall on the campus of Missouri State University on March 17, 2010 – and I was there!

As part of the first Certified Public Manager Program cohort (or group of people who learn and participating in the same classes together), I have the opportunity to take part in a program designed to help refine and improve the management skills of today's emerging leaders in state and local government, and non-profit agencies. At the end of the program, I hope to have developed exemplary leadership skills so that I can serve our fellow Missourians at the highest level possible.

Management in the public sector is very unique in comparison to management in the business sector, and I'm fortunate to have been selected with 6 other students to attend the 305 hours of study that comprise the CPM curriculum. Cohort members experience a blended in-class and online learning format. The program includes 7 in-class sessions during three separate conferences throughout the course of a year, 15 online sessions, and 45 hours of self study.

On the first day we had an orientation and met MTI staff members. Since a great part of the program is on-line, we were also taken to a computer lab and introduced to "Blackboard" – the platform students use to attend the online classes and post assignments.

The second day we started The Leadership Challenge® to learn how successful leaders mobilize others to accomplish extraordinary things. It's about the practices leaders use to transform values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovations, separateness into solidarity, and risks into rewards. It's about a climate in which people turn challenging opportunities into remarkable successes.

Prior to attending class, each cohort completed the *Leadership Practices Inventory* (LPI), a 360-degree assessment instrument consisting of thirty behavioral statements. We rated ourselves on the frequency with which we think we engage in each of the thirty behaviors. Then, we asked five to ten other people to complete a similar assessment rating us on the frequency with which they think we engage in each behavior. Each person indicates their relationship to the person they are rating—manager, co-worker or peer, direct report, or other observer. With the exception of each person's direct manager, all the feedback was anonymous.

As a trainer, I recognize that all feedback is a gift and it was insightful to find out how I saw myself and how others perceive me in a leadership role.

Once I returned to Jefferson City, I started my first online module, Public Service 101 with Dr. Patrick Scott. The module focuses on the meaning and importance of public service. We discussed how the unique setting of the public sector presents particular constraints for managers in terms of how they discharge their responsibilities. We also discussed the role that public administrators play to assure the vitality of civil society.

Overall, it has been a challenging and exciting experience. I will continue to chronicle my experience as I go through this year-long program. And I hope that Solutions readers will follow me on this remarkable journey of learning.

Technical Knowledge

Understanding the minimum qualifications for merit system job classifications

By; Kathy Miller, Division of Personnel

Understanding and correctly interpreting the minimum qualifications (MQ's) for Merit System job classifications can sometimes pose a challenge to many people when using them for position eligibility determinations, or providing explanations to others.

"Is there an easier way to 'decipher' the MQ's?" "What information is used to determine the MQ's?" These are just a few of the questions Division of Personnel staff receives throughout the year.

An important item to remember is that the MQ's should be carefully reviewed by the user of the information – which includes agency personnel or the general public. The Division of Personnel can also help with clarification.

The minimum qualifications are the *Experience* and *Education* (E&E) requirements that applicants must meet in order to be determined eligible for a job class; and are contained within the class specifications.

Class specifications are developed jointly with agencies that use the classifications to keep the classification current, reflective of the work performed; and reflective of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed of someone in the job classification. Revisions to a class specification can be recommended by the agency, along with supporting rationale, to the Division of Personnel.

Classes typically contain a *promotional route* which provides a career path for employees of the Uniform Classification and Pay System, and one or more outside *"competitive"* routes which provide various paths for persons not currently employed in an agency to qualify.

Applicants must qualify (e.g. meet the MQ's for the classification) by one of the available routes – either promotional or competitive.

Any established substitutions are specifically stated within the route and "mixing and matching" of routes or stated substitutions are not permitted.

Minimum qualifications indicate that degrees must also be from an accredited college or university.

College accreditation can be verified through the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education (www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation/) or Council for Higher Education Accreditation (www.chea.org/search/degault/asp/).

Questions regarding the interpretation of MQ's should be referred to and/or discussed with the agency Human Resources office.

To become more familiar with the minimum qualification requirements and other related information regarding class specifications (job descriptions), visit the Division of Personnel website at: http://oa.mo.gov/pers/ClassSpecs/List_A-Z.htm

The MQ's for a class typically have varying requirements. Here are some established standards for several of those requirements:

Bachelors Degree requirements with credit hours "in a combination of"

Applicants meet the degree requirements if they have a total of the specified earned credit hours from any one or combination of the indicated degree areas.

Bachelors Degree "in"

Applicants must have been awarded a degree in the specified fields(s), no substitution is allowed.

Professional Experience

- Professional experience typically does not occur until after the degree is completed; and the work requires the individual to use the acquired knowledge and to function in a professional capacity.
- It is, possible for an individual to have the appropriate degree and to work in a capacity not requiring the use of those professional skills, either in a different profession, or within the profession but at a non-professional level.
- Depending upon the profession (those not requiring licensure or certification) and a person's prior level of training and experience, it is also possible for a non-degreed person to be performing at a professional level.

Technical experience

Technical experience typically involves occupations which require a combination of basic scientific or technical knowledge and manual skill which can be obtained through specialized post-secondary school education or through equivalent on-the job training.

Workforce Management

Encourage *PRIDE* in your workplace

To motivate your staffers to give their best, adopt the ***PRIDE*** system:

***Provide* a positive working environment.** *Example:* Walt Disney World Co. offers an excellent work environment for its employees or "cast members." Some of the services include employee discount programs, childcare information, money orders, postage stamps, check cashing and bus passes. Disney realizes that taking care of its employees keeps them motivated, on the job and loyal to the company.

***Recognize* everyone's efforts.** Recognition is a powerful tool in building morale and motivation. A pat on the back, a personal note from a peer or a supervisor does wonders. Small, informal celebrations are many times more effective than once-a-quarter or once-a-year formal events.

***Involve* everyone.** To improve morale and motivation, involve workers at all levels of the business. Increase employee involvement by soliciting and rewarding employee suggestions, creating cross-functional committees to solve problems and holding monthly meetings to report on organizational progress.

***Develop* skills and potential.** Training and education motivates people and makes them more productive and innovative. At FedEx, all customer-contact people are given six weeks of training before they answer the first phone call. Learning never stops and testing continues throughout their employment tenure.

***Evaluate* continuously.** Don't keep employees in the dark about their performance. Are they hitting or missing the mark? Employees shouldn't have to wait for yearly evaluations to find out you're unhappy with their work. Give weekly or monthly feedback to let staffers know where they stand.

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Technical Knowledge

The ADA: Test before deciding on employee's limits

Shirley Hoffman was a whiz at her indexing job at Caterpillar Inc. She moved faster than almost anyone, even thought she was born without a left arm below the elbow. Accommodations that included rearranging some items in her work space allowed her to do the job.

But when Hoffman asked to be trained on the department's high-speed scanner, her supervisor declined. He didn't think Hoffman could possibly perform that key position fast enough to meet production demands, particularly because the operator frequently needs to clear paper jams.

Hoffman sued under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), claiming she was denied training. A lower court tossed out her case, but the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sent the case to trial. *Its reasoning:* The ADA specifically prohibits discrimination in regard to "job training," and the supervisor showed a discriminatory intent.

(Hoffman v. Caterpillar Inc., No. 99-3023m 7 Cir.)

Advice: You can deny training to an employee as long as you have a legitimate, nondiscriminatory business reason. Test the worker in the job first, document your efforts – then decide. In this case, Caterpillar didn't have to train Hoffman on the high-speed scanner if she wasn't capable of running it. A test – not an assumption – is the legal way to decide.

You and the Law
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Verbal Communication

Delivering bad news: Good ways to make it positive

No question, delivering bad news is one of the things managers dread doing the most. Following the guidelines below won't make it easier, but it can lessen the impact on an organization's productivity and morale.

Minimizing the damage

Do it quickly. It's generally better to deliver bad news as it happens. Stringing it out in an attempt to minimize its impact actually creates more stress and makes employees distrustful.

Accept responsibility. If you or the organization are responsible for the bad news, then accept responsibility. Getting defensive only escalates conflicts. But don't apologize unless it's appropriate.

Be honest. You don't have to share every detail, but be as candid as possible. The quickest way to lose credibility is to lie.

Listen. Let people vent and respect their emotions. Listening is the highest form of respect.

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"Don't let what you can't do interfere with what you can do."
-John Wooden

Workforce Management

Organizational change: 6 things you must do to become an effective leader in the midst of change

All progress is the result of change. But not all change is progress. Some changes don't make any sense. In fact, some leadership behaviors actually create more stress for yourself and your coworkers. *So what works?*

Based on my 22 years of consulting and speaking to organizations around the world, I've found six things you must do to become an effective leader in the midst of change.

1. Don't beat yourself up.

You did not cause the tough, changing times in your industry, and you could not have predicted all the changes coming down the pike. The nature of change is unpredictable.

For example, who could have predicted the change in fashion? Do you remember when clothing tags were worn on the inside? Now if you go to the malls, you will see many teenagers wearing them on the outside.

In 1973, Ken Olsen, the President of Digital Equipment Corporation said, "There is no reason for anyone to have a computer in his house."

So don't beat yourself up for not being able to predict or prevent tough changing times. This will deflate you, and you need to be out there motivating your colleagues.

2. Keep your coworkers' hope alive.

Effective leaders project an optimistic view of the future, even during times of change. Your colleagues need to know that you believe a better day is coming. However, you also need to provide a realistic assessment of the obstacles that your organization must overcome in order to reach that better day.

3. Keep your employees fully informed.

You must keep your employees fully informed. In downsizing environments, the levels of uncertainty run high amongst employees. You must reduce their confusion, even if that means sharing some bad news. As I tell my clients, newsletter readers, and members in my speaking audience, the certainty of misery is better than the misery of uncertainty.

Your employees have the right to know what's happening, why it's happening, and what the next steps will be. By not sharing information immediately, you're allowing the rumor mill to churn out any number of ridiculous stories that do nothing but increase stress and decrease motivation levels in the workplace.

4. Tell the truth.

If you try to relieve your employees' misery by saying things will calm down after the reorganization, you may be heading for trouble if that's not the truth. Plus, the next time your organization announces a change your employees' trust will take a nosedive. Employees need to be taught how to handle changes, not be told it will soon be over.

5. Continue to reassure your employees with your presence.

Dr. Bev Smallwood recently completed a best practices study on those companies dedicated to retaining their best employees. She discovered that sixty to seventy percent of employee retention is directly linked to management behavior.

In particular, managers that spend time with their employees and build relationships tend to keep their employees longer. If you want to retain your best employees during times of change, you must be visible. In uncertain times, seeing and hearing the leader is important. Too often managers or leaders only meet with other senior executives, or they disappear behind closed doors. Employees need to see and hear their bosses. So become accessible and make yourself available for questions.

6. Cut and simplify the work.

If you're organization has downsized, you probably cut only the workforce, and not the workload. There's a time when "doing more with less" makes a lot of sense, but there's also a time when it's just plain ridiculous. There comes a point when "doing more with less" is not only impossible, it's absolutely demoralizing to keep saying it.

So what can you do?

You can't pretend things are the same. You can, however, reorder priorities on a task-by-task basis. You can cut extraneous tasks, forms, and procedures. You can encourage your associates to take shortcuts in non-critical, routine areas to make time for more important items.

You can also allow your associates to collaborate and figure out how the extra work will be handled. In fact, the sense of teamwork that comes out of collaboration can be a great motivator.

That's what Ameritech did. Executives from corporate headquarter traveled from office to office, from department to department, in one city after another. They queried fieldworkers on the types of reports that are necessary to complete their day-to-day activities. By listening to their fieldworkers, they were able to cut out 6,000,000 pages of reports that no one needed and no one read.

Final Thoughts…

No one likes to go through change, and no one likes all the sacrifices required by change. However, you can relieve the misery of uncertainty if you follow the six things you must do to become an effective leader in the midst of change outlined today.

About the Author:
For over 20 years, best-selling author and Hall of Fame professional speaker, Dr. Alan Zimmerman has helped more than a million people transform their power to lead and communicate. For a free subscription to his award-winning Tuesday Tip Internet newsletter, for a free e-book of his most popular articles, and for a free $10 product coupon, go to: www.DrZimmerman.com