

Continuing Education

Effectively managing employees

Learning Objectives

Describe strategies for effective supervision.

Identify and explain the elements of coaching.

Describe ways to motivate and counsel employees.

Explain major diversity paradigms and identify conditions that optimize diversity.

Describe methods for understanding and managing change.

This second article in a three-part series discusses aspects of effective management. Topics include: supervising, coaching, motivating and counseling, managing diversity, and understanding and managing change.

Bruce A. Berger, Ph.D., professor and head of pharmacy care systems, Auburn University, Auburn, AL; and Martha Reeves, Ph.D., visiting assistant professor, marketing and management program, Duke University, Durham, NC, served as consultants for this article for the Certified Medical Representatives Institute Inc.

Supervising

Effective managers communicate the importance of the work to their units and explain how it fits into the grand scheme of the company, while allowing employees to decide how to do the work. They also give their employees a sense of control over their work by letting them choose some of the assignments.

Delegating is an important tool managers use to develop their employees. To delegate successfully, you should:

- Assign more whole tasks than pieces and parts.
- Provide a variety of assignments, including those projects that others can do and tasks that can provide professional development for both you and the employee.
- Allow more time for an employee to complete the assignment for the first time than it would take you to do it now.
- Try to match the size and difficulty of the assignment to the capabilities of the employee, while allowing him or her to stretch (by providing a slightly larger task than responsibilities dictate).
- Share the enjoyable or tough tasks; don't retain them for yourself.
- Overcome your fears and trust that your employees may perform as well as you on certain tasks.

Effective managers set goals, standards and expectations for their employees in order to create a mutual

understanding of what needs to be accomplished. Also, managers should point out mistakes others may have made while completing a similar assignment. Other helpful tasks for the manager include:

- Identifying the human, financial, technical and organizational resources that the employee can use.
- Setting up the standards of performance that will be used to evaluate the results.
- Specifying the times when reporting and evaluation will take place.
- Spelling out the consequences, both good and bad, that may result from the evaluation.

There are ways managers can monitor the progress of their employees without hounding them. For example:

- Suggest that employees provide updates on their progress regularly (on a daily or semi-daily basis) via e-mail.
- Set up regularly scheduled meetings, in which all employees working on different parts of the same project report on their progress.
- Set a checkpoint for reviewing work when the employee has completed a specific proportion of the assignment, such as 10% or the first draft.

Coaching

While supervision includes the day-to-day management of employees, coaching focuses on personal

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development. Put simply, coaching involves taking steps to develop specific skills and knowledge in employees in order to achieve specific goals. Several elements are involved in the coaching process, as described below.

Providing direction. As coaches, managers help their employees identify their unique strengths and weaknesses, encourage them to develop long-term goals, and work with them to make a plan for reaching those goals. For example, effective managers can create career maps that include an assessment of employees' current skills and those they need to develop for future positions.

Providing support. Managers may provide financial support (for example, by providing reimbursement for training or education), emotional support (by showing empathy and caring) or broad support (by investing time in developing employees). Broad support is important because employees' growth depends on the amount of time and effort their managers spend on them. Managers will reinforce employees' learning, and encourage more of it, by asking them what they learned in training and how they can apply it to their jobs.

Giving feedback. Employees need continuous feedback from their managers and others to develop. The most useful feedback is consistent, frequent and specific. Managers should give nonjudgmental feedback, focusing on the specific action that the manager wants the person to continue or avoid. For example, if the manager says, "You were rude during the meeting," the employee may not know what behavior was rude, but if the manager says, "You interrupted Denise when she was speaking during the meeting," the employee knows which action was inappropriate and can avoid it in the future.

Receiving feedback. Feedback, however, should not be a one-way street. A manager should also invite feedback from others and create an environment that makes it safe and easy for employees to give others candid feedback. The manager may, for example, ask employees for feedback on coaching, requesting discussion of aspects that have and have not been helpful to them in their development.

Listening. It is essential to listen to employees carefully because their input is critical to successful development. Learn which areas the employee sees as strengths or opportunities for development and whether he or she has any suggestions for improving the job. Effective listening also includes non-verbal, as well as verbal, communication.

Communicating. Effective coaches establish rapport and trust by having personal conversations with employees. Besides sharing their professional experiences, these coaches may also openly share their worries and emotions with their workers. In doing so, such leaders create an atmosphere of mutual support, tremendous team loyalty and a strong sense of connection.

Figure 1

Supervising

1. Give assignments and delegate.

2. Set expectations.

3. Monitor progress.

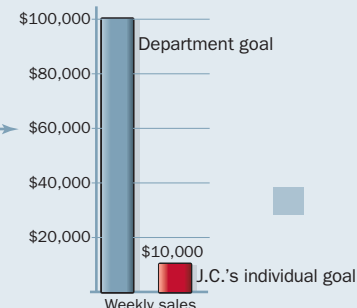
4. Review and provide feedback.

Company mission: _____

Department goals: _____

Person	Assignments
J.C.	
Ted	
Amy	

Next company meeting: Friday



Motivating and counseling

Each person is unique in the ways he or she becomes motivated. Examples of motivational tools for the effective manager include:

- Communication of company missions and a sense of pride at work.
- Deep involvement of employees in their work (for example, increased responsibility, goal-setting and acquisition of new skills).
- Recognition and rewards (such as bonuses and public or private praise).
- Reputation and respect (for example, public recognition and visible awards).

Some employees have issues or problems that require counseling, either by the manager or an outside professional. These include:

- "Plateaued workers," whose job performance or growth has leveled off because they are unhappy in their positions.
- Employees facing a potential layoff or whose co-workers have been laid off or fired.
- Employees experiencing personal or family difficulties, such as a divorce or a serious physical illness.
- Employees with severe personal problems, such as active alcoholism, drug dependency, depression or an untreated mental illness. It is important to learn to recognize the signs of abnormal behavior. Such employees should be advised to seek outside professional help or be referred to an employee assistance program via the human resources department.

The following are important counseling skills:

- **Listening:** Let people say what is on their minds without interrupting.
- **Mirroring:** Reflect what the employee has said and summarize it in your own words so he or she knows you have heard and understood it correctly.
- **Showing concern or empathy:** Imagine how you would feel in the employee's situation and respond appropriately.
- **Disclosing:** Share similar experiences that you have had and what you did to get through them.
- **Guiding:** Be careful not to give direct advice unless you are asked, but challenge the employee to consider a variety of options and discover his or her own solution.
- **Offering help:** Offer whatever tangible help is reasonable – perhaps a day off or an applicable resource.

Managing diversity

Most managers agree that discrimination is wrong, both legally and morally, and recognize the importance of achieving diversity by recruiting and

retaining minorities. There are several paradigms being used to manage diversity that connect diversity to work perspectives.

Discrimination-and-fairness. Under this paradigm, managers, as a matter of fairness and federal compliance, work to restructure the makeup of their company so that it more closely reflects that of society. However, progress in terms of diversity is measured by how well the company achieves certain recruitment and retention goals, instead of by how much the company allows all of its employees to draw on personal experiences and perspectives to perform their work more effectively. This paradigm puts pressure on employees to assimilate, thereby limiting the open acknowledgment of their work-related and culturally based differences.

Access-and-legitimacy. This paradigm is based on the acceptance and celebration of differences. Under this philosophy, managers match the demographics of the organization to those of critical consumer or customer groups. This has resulted in more professional and managerial opportunities for women and people of color. However, this paradigm can lead some employees to feel exploited – that they were just hired and are being used for their talent in one area, to increase the market share of their employer.

Emerging paradigm. Leaders who follow this paradigm incorporate different employees' perspectives into the main work of the department. Effective managers believe that diversity of viewpoint, background, education, culture, experience, beliefs and attitudes can help produce a superior product or service in a diverse and global marketplace. In this way, the company learns and grows because of these diverse perspectives, not despite them.

The following internal conditions help organizations optimize diversity:

- Leaders understand that different perspectives and approaches to work reside within a diverse workforce, and they value a variety of opinions and insights.
- Leaders recognize both the learning opportunities and the challenges that may result from the expression of different perspectives.
- The culture creates an expectation of high standards of performance from everyone.
- The culture stimulates personal development.
- The culture encourages openness.
- Workers feel valued in the company culture.
- The company has a well-articulated and widely understood mission.
- The organization has a relatively egalitarian, non-bureaucratic structure.

Understanding and managing change

Effective leaders not only need to manage change, but they must also passionately champion both

change and innovation in order to stay ahead of the competition. Two models have been particularly useful for understanding and managing change in organizations, namely the force field model and the Bridges model.

Force field model. According to this model, in any problem situation, opposing forces exist that have led to the current condition and can influence any future changes. These opposing forces include a number of both driving forces and restraining forces:

- Driving forces, such as continual pressure on subordinates, or commitment to objectives and technical knowledge, push toward a solution to the problem, tending to initiate a change and keep it going.
- Restraining forces, such as hostility and apathy, inhibit improvement and act to restrain or decrease the driving forces.

In order to manage change using the force field model, managers should follow these steps: (1) specify the problem, (2) define objectives, (3) brainstorm, (4) analyze the forces more fully, (5) compare the strategy against the objectives, and implement and evaluate the strategy.

Bridges model. According to this model, proposed by business consultant William Bridges, change has three key phases: the transition, the neutral zone and the new beginning. Effective managers can positively affect a changing corporate environment through their actions at each phase. These actions help employees perform the psychological reorientation that is necessary for the change to work. For more information on this model, refer to the book “Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change,” by William Bridges.

Although some resistance to change should be expected, there are strategies managers can use to effectively deal with this resistance and “sell” the change to employees, including:

- Exploring why employees are resistant to the change.
- Communicating a vision of the change to employees so they can easily understand and “buy in.”
- Involving those who will be affected by the change in the decision-making and planning processes.
- Preparing employees to expect change as a part of doing business.

The final article in this series will discuss managing and measuring performance, and building and managing teams.

Article Summary

- **Effective managers communicate the importance of the work to their units and explain how it fits into the grand scheme of the company, while allowing employees to decide how to do the work.**

Delegating is an important tool managers use to develop their employees.

Effective managers set goals, standards and expectations for their employees in order to create a mutual understanding of what needs to be accomplished.

Managers can monitor the progress of their employees without hounding them.

- **Coaching involves taking steps to develop specific skills and knowledge in employees in order to achieve specific goals.**
- **Each person is unique in the ways he or she becomes motivated.**
- **The effective manager may sometimes need to act like a counselor rather than a traditional supervisor.**
- **Several paradigms are being used to achieve and manage diversity.**

Certain internal conditions help organizations optimize diversity.

- **Effective leaders not only need to manage change, but they also must passionately champion both change and innovation to stay ahead of the competition.**

Two models have been particularly useful for understanding and managing change in organizations, namely the force field model and the Bridges model.

Managers can use certain strategies to deal with resistance to change.