Performance Strategies for Managers and Supervisors from the Division of Personnel

Summer 2010

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Quick Tip:

Use this tip to conquer a negative emotional reaction to something a colleague is saying: Stayed tuned in despite the volume of information you may be receiving and listen for evidence that may prove you're wrong.

"You must learn from the mistakes of others. You can't possibly live long enough to make them all yourself."
-Sam Levenson

Click here for previous Issues of ***Solutions***

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Capacity Challenge for Business

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

As I travel around the world, meeting with clients in all different walks of life, capacity is one of the issues that continually comes up as one of the greatest challenges for business.

Let me ask you a few questions. Do you see things getting simpler or more complex? Faster or slower? More organized or more chaotic? Easier or more demanding? It's really a set-up, isn't it? We know that the world we live in is changing at record pace. Yet, change is really nothing new. What is different today is that change is faster. It's different. It's more intense. And to be able to harness that intensity, we must help our people gain additional kinds of skills to take on the additional capacity that's needed.

For those of you with young people in your life, think about your youth – what your childhood was about compared to theirs. We often talk about the intensity of their schedules – and now our kids even have play dates! My father doesn't even know what play dates mean. Back then we went out outside, we found some friends and we played. Now it's scheduled appointments somebody must manage. And a lot of times the people managing those play dates are the same people who work with you every day.

Think about capacity in terms of a basic model. When you look at capacity, think of an outer ring as a required capacity. This is what the world is demanding of us. It's everything that our customer and our clients are all saying is necessary. Then consider an inner ring. We'll say this ring represents existing capacity. This is the capacity that comes to work every day. It's each of us and our talents and our abilities and our skills.

Yet, of that existing capacity, how much would you really say is accessed on any given day? Most people that we ask say, "Well, maybe twenty, thirty percent."

When dealing with human resources, we have a lot of talent that is untapped. One of the biggest challenges for management and leadership today is how we access more of the capacity of our people.

As you think about how you deal with the onslaught of adversity and change and challenge that comes, also ask yourself, "How are we dealing with the capacity of our people? Are we creating goals that are clear enough and specific enough that allow people to get rid of some of the noise – and manage the work to be done in a way that's efficient and effective for them?"

Our role as managers and leaders is to ask: "How do we help people manage capacity more effectively?" The only way we can do that is to understand that ourselves and help people grow and develop in a positive direction.

Problem Solving
Six steps to better problem solving

Take these steps to lead your group through a problem-solving session:

1. **Discuss the problem.** State the problem, and then invite teammates to describe their experiences with similar problems. A teammate's past experience with similar problems can point the team toward a solution.

2. **Define the problem's source.** Encourage teammates to brainstorm. Focus on clarifying any and all root causes, probing for more information by encouraging the team to consider unfamiliar angles. Uncovering the root causes provides a checklist for evaluating potential solutions.

3. **Evaluate the benefits of solving the problem.** Teammates must understand how doing so will benefit them personally and improve working conditions on the team. If teammates don't see any benefit, they won't buy into the problem-solving effort.

4. **Brainstorm possible solutions.** Invite teammates to contribute suggestions for solving the problem. Don't allow them to concentrate yet on implementing those ideas; everyone should remain neutral at this point regarding whether solutions are realistic and actionable.

5. **Choose your approach.** Keep in mind that the best solution may be a hybrid of several individually unworkable ideas. Guide teammates to keep the best of their ideas, referring back to your checklist to confirm that solutions address the problem's causes.

6. **Chart action steps.** Answer these questions: "What is the first thing we need to do?" and "What is the next thing we need to do?" and so on. Develop an action plan that includes responsibilities, due dates, a communication system and an overall project schedule that everyone agrees to support.

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Flexibility
How to keep employee stress under control

You don't want to completely eliminate stress from your workplace; deadlines and performance requirements should keep people on their toes. Still, too much pressure drains employees' motivation and energy. Here's what your people need to keep stress manageable:

Honest reassurance. Employees want to know that you've got their back. Tell them what's going on and what you're doing to assist them. Listen to their concerns and give them straight answers. They'll respond better if they know you're thinking about their well-being.

Rest. You can't expect your people to work 24/7 and do their best work. Keep an eye on how hard they're working. Encourage vacations and breaks to help them stay fresh. Even during crunch time, find ways to give them a few minutes or hours of downtime so they don't lose their effectiveness.

Food and drink. Emphasize good nutrition. When you bring in lunch and snacks, provide some healthy options, not just pizza and candy bars. Water and juice will provide better energy than coffee and soda. Don't become a diet counselor; just offer options that support good health.

Healthy surroundings. Your workplace should be efficient and safe. Make sure people have the equipment they need and an environment where they can do their best work without distractions. Do they have adequate light? Is noise a problem? Are supplies and equipment easy to get to? Giving people what they need to do their jobs shows you care.

Discussion. Allow people to talk about their work, their problems, and what's happening in the workplace. Employees need a chance to let off steam and also learn from each other. Don't let discussions turn into gripe sessions, but do encourage coworkers to share their war stories.

Meaning. Employees want to know that their work makes a difference. While they're working, remind them how others are counting on them and how their efforts contribute to the big picture. Reward their successes and recognize their desire to do the right thing even when they fail.

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"Leaders excite action and welcome accountability. Without action a good decision has little meaning in the world."
-Dan Zadra

Problem Solving
Frustrated with a problem?

Next time you're frustrated with a problem, try this technique:

Think of the problem as something happening to someone else. To do this, **frame it using the third person:** *"She wasn't sure how to handle a difficult employee."* This creates emotional detachment, and allows you to focus on solutions instead of feeling frustrated.

Influencing

Harness the power of persuasion

Giving orders may work in some situations, but you can't always depend on sheer authority to get people to do what's necessary. You want more than compliance, after all—you want energy and enthusiasm. And when you don't actually have formal authority over someone (a colleague or superior), you can't just issue commands and expect instant agreement.

Persuasion is your best strategy. Successful persuasion has three fundamental elements:

1. **Suggestion.** Let the person know what you want—without explicitly ordering him or her to do it. People like to feel they have a choice.
2. **Emotion.** Give the other person a reason to want it, a personal benefit.
3. **Logic.** Provide a rational reason for why the task needs to be accomplished—how it helps your organization or other people.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? It is—and it isn't.

Start small

Think of a time when you had to enlist an employee's support. Not just obedience, but support. You probably started by thinking about what the person has done in the past, how he or she responded to similar requests, orders, or situations. Consistency is key. People tend to do what they've always done, either from habit or belief that they've been making the right choices.

You can use that impulse by starting small. Instead of asking an employee straight out to lead a task force, solicit his or her opinion on the task force's goals—does he or she agree that the project is important? If so, you're on the way to convincing the employee that he or she should take an active role.

Or you can gain a token commitment. Invite a colleague to sit in on a meeting reviewing a particular strategy. If the coworker comes, then you know he or she is at least somewhat invested in the outcome. In both cases, people will tend to follow-up with decisions and actions that are consistent with what they've already done. Now it's time to put the principles of persuasion to work.

The personal connection

Here are some of the basic principles you can use to bring people around and gain their participation in your plans:

Relationship. People need to know who you are—and you need to know who they are. If you've just met, devote some time to getting to know each other before launching into persuasion mode. Don't obsess about what you want right away; concentrate on finding out what the other person wants so you can target your approach accurately. Even a few minutes can establish a basic framework of trust.

Credibility. People must believe you know what you're talking about. Citing your experience and knowledge isn't enough—you have to show that you understand them. Ask questions that pinpoint what's important to the other person. Don't be manipulative, but frame your argument around their self-interest as much as your own: "Leading this task force will give you a role in setting the agenda as the organization grows over the next year."

Reciprocity. This strategy can be as simple—and blunt—as saying, "Do X for me, and I'll do Y for you." It's more powerful when it's subtle. Do a favor without negotiating anything in return. For example, take someone out to lunch to discuss a project. Most people will feel motivated to repay you in some form whether you demand it or not. You'll create a positive impression that strengthens your position.

Value. Show how the task you're focused on helps the organization and the person you're trying to persuade. But go beyond that—add value to the persuasion itself. If you're making a presentation, give your audience something they can use (information, a handout) whether or not they decide to help you. They may respond to the principle of reciprocity (see above), and even if they don't, you'll lay a good foundation for future persuasive attempts.

Courtesy counts

One final component of effective persuasion is vital: politeness. Employees and others do things for two reasons: because they have to, or because they want to. You'll generally get better results if they want to, and treating them with courtesy and respect will open them up to being influenced.

Persuasion is ultimately about knowing people. Take some time to think about the employees, colleagues, and supervisors you need to convince, and let your plan reflect what you know about them. You won't succeed every time, but the odds will be in your favor.

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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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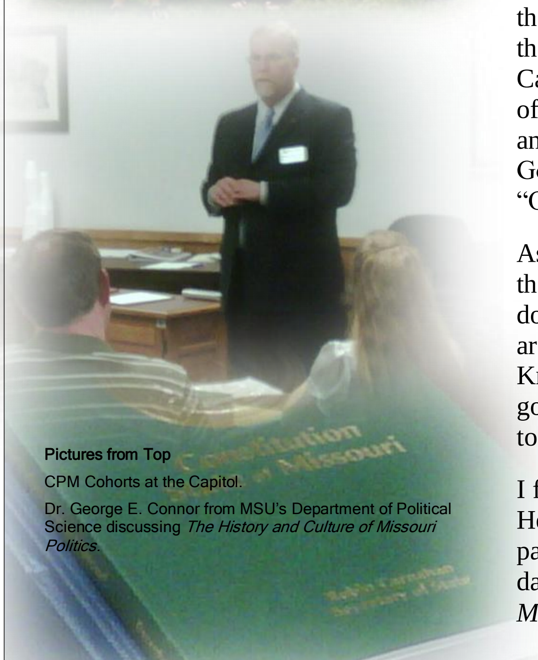
Strengthening Missouri's Future

My CPM Journey!

THE CAPITAL CONFERENCE

By: Kelly Levy
Division of Personnel



Pictures from Top

CPM Cohorts at the Capitol.

Dr. George E. Connor from MSU's Department of Political Science discussing *The History and Culture of Missouri Politics.*

On July 14 – 16, 2010, the Division of Personnel in conjunction with Missouri State University (MSU) hosted the "Capital Conference" for the Missouri Certified Public Manager (CPM) Program. The three-day conference held at the State Capitol in Jefferson City included a guided tour and special educators. The CPM designation is nationally recognized as the premiere designation for public sector managers in 34 states and 4 governmental entities. Individuals who achieve a CPM designation do so by completing a course of study that better prepares them to handle the leadership challenges facing today's mid and upper level managers.

I am fortunate to be a part of the first cohort for Missouri. Here is a continuation of my CPM journey.

DAY ONE: JULY 14TH

I knew the conference would provide a unique setting to explore the history of Missouri politics and current issues facing public administrators.

Although it was hot, I was enjoying my walk to the Capitol admiring the huge dome rising into the sky. I squinted to see the statute at the top of the dome. Who could that be? I wondered. I found the answer to my question as I entered the building and encountered one of the Capitol tour guides from the Department of Natural Resources. The guide politely answered, "The statue is of Ceres, Roman Goddess of Agriculture." I responded, "Oh that makes perfect sense!"

As I continued on my way, I looked up at the massive chandelier that hangs in the dome and started admiring the other architectural features of the Capitol. Knowing that a tour of the Capitol was going to be part of the conference added to my anticipation of the day.

I found the elevator and headed down to Hearing Room 7. I was one of the first participants to arrive for a special one-day program, *The History and Culture of Missouri Politics.*

Even though this particular session was a part of the conference, the Division of Personnel and MSU worked together to make the session available to other state supervisors and managers. By the chair count, nearly 40 participants were expected.

Dr. George E. Connor from MSU's Department of Political Science would be presenting this full-day session. Dr. Conner delivered a dynamic presentation, which started with the political culture in Missouri and ended with a lively discussion of political parties, elections, initiative and referendums. I gained a wealth of information and benefited tremendously from the discussion and questions asked.

Later that evening, my CPM cohorts and Scott Scobee, Program Director for Missouri Training Institute met at the Capital Plaza to discuss our previous work and experiences so far in the CPM program. We all had dinner and participated in an energetic discussion. The cohort has really starting to bond.

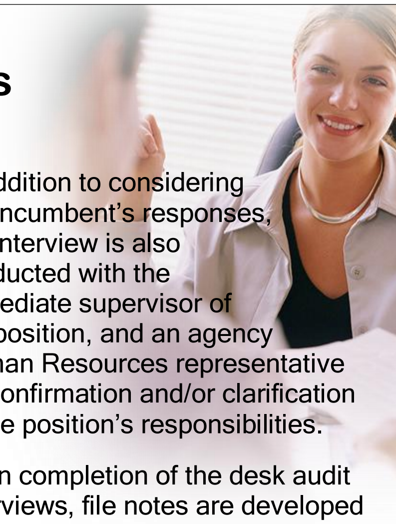
DAY TWO: JULY 15TH

The next day Dr. Patrick Scott, also from MSU presented *Promoting Ethics in the Workplace: Your Role as a Leader.* The course focused on the nature of leadership in public agencies and the ethical dimensions of leadership behavior. Included in Dr. Scott's program was discussion on the role of the leader in creating ethical climates and building effective ethical cultures, organizational change strategies, power and politics, and motivation strategies. This session was available to only the participants in the CPM program.

Technical Knowledge

Understanding desk audits

By: Blanca Mora, Division of Personnel



As part of the position review process, a **desk audit** – either in person or by telephone – may be conducted by analysts from the Division of Personnel if the current duties of the incumbent (i.e., person in the position) and responsibilities listed on the *Position Description Form* submitted to the Division of Personnel require clarification to determine the proper job classification title assignment.

In preparation for the audit, the analysts familiarize themselves with:

- ☐ respective specifications for the job class the incumbent currently holds
- ☐ classes requested for consideration by the employing agency
- ☐ other classes which may encompass concepts, responsibilities, and scope similar to the duties assigned to the position being reviewed.

In addition, using organizational charts associated with the position being reviewed will provide information about the organization's structure to the analysts. Based on this information, the analysts will consider what information is needed in understanding the role of the position.

An essential element for a successful desk audit involves meeting with interested parties in an atmosphere of collaboration and professionalism, keeping in mind that the goal of the meeting is to impart a deeper understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the position in question.

Typically, the desk audit involves the analysts informing the incumbent of the purpose of the interview, followed by questions directed to the incumbent which are necessary to help the analyst understand the role and duties of the position.

In addition to considering the incumbent's responses, an interview is also conducted with the immediate supervisor of the position, and an agency Human Resources representative for confirmation and/or clarification of the position's responsibilities.

Upon completion of the desk audit interviews, file notes are developed and all relevant information to the position review is analyzed before a final determination concerning the correct classification is made.

Once a decision has been reached – *which considers the position's assignment rather than the competency or abilities of the incumbent* – an official notice of determination is sent to the agency Human Resources representative.

Desk audits are not a standard part of the position review process. However, in certain circumstances, clarification of duties is required and the best option in obtaining this information is communicating directly with the incumbent and other individuals that can speak to the role of the affected position.

Through collaboration between Division of Personnel analysts and the agency representatives, essential information is collected to ensure an adequate understanding of the position.

Regardless of the outcome of the audit, the Division of Personnel provides notification to the agency and will address concerns regarding the determination.

My CPM Journey

Continued from page 4

Lunch was something entirely different. We attended a two hour "lunch and learn" panel discussion entitled "*Contemporary Issues in Public Administration.*" The panel consisted of Renee Slusher, Deputy Commissioner of the Office Administration, Bill Miller, Director of the Division of Personnel, and Dr George Conner and Dr. Patrick Scott, both from MSU.

At the end of the panel discussion, Scott Scobee, and Dr. Kant Patel, Director of the Master of Public Administration Program at MSU hosted a CPM reception to provide anyone who was interested with information about the CPM program.

DAY THREE: JULY 16TH

On the last day of the conference, Dr. Mark Rushefsky from MSU presented information on *Policy Analysis, Implementation and Administration.*

In order to prepare for this workshop, participants read the Bardach book; *"A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis, 3rd Edition."* Dr. Rushefsky asked us to think about two or three problems facing our agency to discuss during the workshop. Dr. Rushefsky shared concrete tips, case studies, and step-by-step strategies for using Bardach's eightfold approach towards effective, accurate, and persuasive policy analysis.

I was thrilled to take part in the CPM Capital Conference. The professors, panel members, CPM cohorts and other participants shared an enormous amount of information. I am now half way thru the program.

Graduation is set for December 15th. Stay with me as I experience the second half of this magnificent expedition!

Verbal Communication

Why We Don't Hear Others

If you want to listen so you really hear what others are saying, make sure you're not in one of the following categories.

Check all that apply!

- ☐ **"Mind reader."** You'll hear little or nothing as you think "What is this person really thinking or feeling?"
- ☐ **"Rehearser."** Your mental tryouts for "Here's what I'll say next" tune out the speaker.
- ☐ **"Filterer."** Some call this selective listening- hearing only what you want to hear.
- ☐ **"Dreamer."** Drifting off during a face-to-face conversation can lead to an embarrassing "What did you say?" or "could you repeat that?"
- ☐ **"Identifier."** If you refer everything you hear to your experience, you probably didn't really hear what was said.
- ☐ **"Comparer."** When you get sidetracked assessing the messenger, you're sure to miss the message.
- ☐ **"Derailer."** Changing the subject too quickly tells others you're not interested in anything they have to say.
- ☐ **"Sparrer."** You hear what's said but quickly belittle it or discount it. That puts you in the same class as the derailer.
- ☐ **"Placater."** Agreeing with everything you hear just to be nice, or to avoid conflict does not mean you're a good listener.

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"We must use time as a tool, not as a couch."
-John F. Kennedy

Workforce Management

Management by delegation

Do these scenarios sound familiar?

You're walking to your office and an employee stops you to give you a rundown of what's happening: "I made a phone call to Bill. He says that we can't get the project done until July 7, so I'm going to work on the Smith account, and after lunch turn my attention to the Lion account. The newsletter project will be finished on June 17, and by the way, the copy machine is broken. Should I call a repairman?"

As you get to your office, another employee stops you to give a rundown of his situation. This lasts another three minutes.

Frustrating? You bet. And you wonder – why can't these employees take more responsibility and not drop every detail of every project in your lap? Maybe it's not them, but you. Maybe you are not delegating effectively. Here are some key points to remember.

Stress results, not details. Make it clear to your employees that you're more concerned about the final outcome of all projects, rather than the day to day details that accompany them.

Don't be sucked in by giving solutions to employees' problems. When employees come to you with problems, they're probably looking for you to solve them. **Don't.** Teach them how to solve problems themselves. This, too, can be frustrating because it takes time. But in the long run, you'll save yourself time and money.

Turn the questions around. If an employer comes to you with a problem, ask him or her for possible solutions. If an employer comes to you with a question, ask for possible answers.

Establish measurable and concrete objectives. With all employees, make your objectives clear and specific. Once this is done, employees will feel more comfortable acting on their own. Think of this plan as a road map—and your employees will too.

Develop reporting systems. Get your feedback from reporting systems: monthly reports, statistical data, or samplings. Or consider weekly meetings with employees.

Give strict and realistic deadlines. If you don't give clear deadlines, employees won't feel accountable for the completion of their tasks.

Keep a delegation log. When you delegate an assignment, jot it down. You'll be able to monitor the progress, and correct employees when necessary.

Recognize the talents and personalities of your employees. Being a good delegator is like being a good coach of a baseball team. You have to know what projects each employee can handle, and what projects they can't.

Managers Intelligence Report
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1 minute solutions…

Dealing with gossip

Some employees struggle with an addiction to gossip. Next time someone pulls you aside to share a juicy tidbit, try this trick: *Point out something that impressed you about the individual.*

Example: When Tom says, "You know Cara in Accounting?" say, "Yes, she gave a great presentation last month." That'll make the person think twice about continuing.

Avoid this phrase when dealing with difficult staffers

If people think you're trying to change how they feel, they can get defensive. That's why it's better to focus on behavior rather than attitudes.

To do that, avoid the phrase: "I hope you feel differently."

Instead, *emphasize concrete actions* you hope the person will take.