



## How Do You Rate as a Leader?

Loren B. Belker and Gary S. Topchik suggest this checklist for you to use to measure your leadership effectiveness. Check off the items that you currently do. Develop an action plan for any items not checked.

- Set clear goals for each team member and the team.
- Give clear directions to those who need them.
- Emphasize the positive rather than the negative in your talks with your team.
- Give feedback to each team member and to the team—both positive and constructive.
- Practice what you say.
- Express your and the organization's appreciation through rewards, if available.
- Make change happen for the better by encouraging creativity and innovation.
- Encourage self-reliance and self-development.
- Have your team see its connection to the larger organization and to customers and/or the community.

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To help you with your list, register for one of AMA's leadership seminars at [www.amanet.org/seminars](http://www.amanet.org/seminars)

## Creating a Culture of Empowerment

If you want to empower your staff, you need to create a culture of support. To that end, you need to do the following:

**Listen to your employees' ideas.** More important, determine how to make them work.

**Demonstrate trust in your employees.** If you behave as if you expect them to do their jobs to the best of their abilities, they will go that extra mile to exceed expectations.

**Keep employees informed.** Give your employees the real picture, not corporatespeak.

**Help employees balance work and personal demands.** Recognize your employees have lives beyond the office. Working long hours may occasionally be called for, but should not be a measure of performance or a requirement.

**Offer opportunities for lifelong learning.** The more trained, the more able empowered employees are to assume greater authority.

**Foster open communication.** Show your employees that you consider yourself and them a part of a team—which means you will share all you hear from senior management when you can do so.

**Don't sugarcoat bad news.** Likely, your employees will know the real scoop. You'll only lose your workers' trust if you deviate from the truth or wimp out on the bad news.

**Encourage reasonable risk.** Let your employees know they will not be penalized for taking calculated chances that fail. If there is a mistake made, analyze it with



the employee so he or she can avoid a similar error in the future.

**Foster autonomy.** Make recommendations instead of issuing commands. Better, when an employee comes to you with a

question, ask the employee how he or she would handle the problem. Getting an employee to think for himself or herself is critical to empowerment.

**Praise successes.** When your employees meet or exceed expectations, recognize that fact in public. Praising builds goodwill and also sends the message to all, within and outside your operation, that your employees are doing well.

**Link rewards to organizational goals.** Ideally, rewards should reinforce the behavior that leads to attainment of organization goals.

To help you empower your employees, register for one of AMA's management seminars at [www.amanet.org/seminars](http://www.amanet.org/seminars)

### AMA Statistics

How do companies implement strategy? Here are the first five methods used by respondents to the AMA/HRI *The Keys to Strategy Execution* study:

1. Create a clear strategy
2. Define clear goals to support strategy
3. Align organizational goals with strategy
4. Ensure clear accountability
5. Align strategy with the corporate vision/mission statement

For more findings from the study, visit [www.amanet.org/research](http://www.amanet.org/research)

# So You Are Mediating a Dispute?

It can happen—you find yourself having to step in as a mediator when a confrontation between two parties in your operation makes it impossible for them to work together and, worse, creates disruption in your department.

Mediation is a six-step process:

**Identify the sources of the conflict.** The more information you have about the disagreement, the more you can help your employees resolve their differences. To get the information you need, ask each person how the argument began. Your intent is to give each party to the conflict an opportunity to share his or her side of the story.

**Look beyond the incident.** It isn't always the situation but the parties' perspective on the situation that causes the anger to fester and ultimately leads to a shouting match or other visible—and disruptive—evidence of a conflict.

As mediator, try to get the two individuals to identify the real cause of their

difficulty. Ask, "What do you think happened here?" Or, "When do you think the problem between you two first began?"

**Look for solutions.** After you have each party's perspective, the next step is to have each individual identify how the



situation could be changed. Your goal, again, is to get the disputants to share their opinions: "How can you make things better between you?"

**Listen to their responses.** Look for solutions that would steer the discussion

away from finger pointing and toward a resolution of the differences between the disputants.

**Identify answers that both parties can support.** You want to identify the course of action that is most acceptable to both parties and, as important, truly doable. You want an answer to the following questions: "What action plan can you both put in place to prevent a similar conflict from arising between you? What will you do if a problem arises in the future?" You want to reach the kind of accord where the answer to the latter question is, "Discuss it."

**Reach agreement.** As mediator, you want to reach the point where your employees are able to shake hands and agree to one of the solutions that was identified in the discussions. To be sure that the two understand each other, it might be wise for each to paraphrase what the other has agreed to, in your presence.

Critical to your success in mediating any dispute is your ability to remain neutral.

## What's a Manager to Do About Rewards?

Short of mind reading, how is a manager supposed to figure out what reward will please a person and what might do harm? In her book *How to Recognize & Reward Employees: 150 Ways to Inspire Peak Performance*, Donna Deeprose offers the following suggestions to keep you out of trouble:

**Ask.** That is the most obvious solution, she observes. "Privately tell the person you are very pleased with his or her work and explain the reward you had in mind, making it clear your idea is not yet cast in stone. Let the person know that what you really want is to give something he or she values. Then ask for a reaction to your proposal."

Deeprose points out one potential drawback to this: the person may not be willing to answer honestly to your request. "What you mean as an offer may be perceived as an edict, something the person must endure. Some workers find

it better never to say no to the boss."

**Give options.** Deeprose notes how offering a few suggestions enables an employee to pick one without fear of offending you.

**Observe.** This takes awareness on your part. What makes the person smile? What does he or she seem to take pleasure in during the workday? What does the person talk about enjoying during free time? Use your knowledge of the employee to come up with a suitable reward.

**Confirm your observations.** If you don't trust your own judgment, ask a good friend of the employee or even call up a close family member.

**Avoid anything that might embarrass the person.** Deeprose writes, "You should know an individual very well before presenting a joke award, staging a ceremonial 'roast,' putting the person on the spot with a call for a speech, or even asking the person to describe his or her accomplish-

ments to upper management."

**Don't misinterpret a negative response to the reward.** Don't assume it means lack of gratitude or commitment to the organization. How the employee reacts to your reward doesn't change the fact that he or she did a good job and is capable of doing so again.

**If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.** Ask, "How can I show my appreciation in a way that is more meaningful to you than last time when I put you on the spot in front of everybody?"

Excerpted, with permission of the publisher, from *How to Recognize & Reward Employees: 150 Ways to Inspire Peak Performance (Second Edition)* by Donna Deeprose. Copyright 2007, American Management Association. For more information about this book and other AMA titles, visit [www.amanet.org/amabooks](http://www.amanet.org/amabooks)

For help in recognizing and rewarding your staff members, attend AMA's seminar "Fundamentals of Human Resources Management." Visit [www.amanet.org/seminar](http://www.amanet.org/seminar)

# Time Management Tips

We all have the same amount of time—168 hours per week. What you do with this time makes the difference. Here are some suggestions from authors Loren B. Belker and Gary S. Topchick, authors of *The First-Time Manager*.

- Set specific goals for each day or for each week. Do not try to keep these goals in your head. Write them down. Put them on your screensaver or have them written on a bulletin board in your office where you can read them daily.

- Set deadlines for your projects. This especially helps if you are the procrastinator type. Avoid last-minute rush jobs.

- Remember the difference between something being urgent versus important. We all have urgent things to do but ask how important they are. It is best to focus on what is important.

- Try keeping a record for a week or two on how you spend your time. Write everything down. You may be very surprised where a lot of your time is going. If you don't analyze your use of time, you won't be able to manage it better.

- Plan your day. The best time to do this is the afternoon or the evening before. This way you already know what you are going to focus on at the beginning of the next day.

- Practice the 70/30 rule. Only schedule about 70 percent of your day. Leave the rest of your time for unplanned assignments, the urgencies of others, or



emergencies. If you plan every minute of your day, you will be frustrated when you don't accomplish all of it.

- Schedule set times for sending and returning telephone calls, reading and sending e-mails, office hours, and so forth. This does two things for you. You save time by doing similar items together and you have others eventually learn what your schedule is.

- Recognize that interruptions are part of the job and allow time for handling them in your daily schedule.

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## The Cost of a Meeting

Before you call your next meeting, can you justify it in terms of costs versus benefits?

To answer that question,

1. Determine the number of individuals you plan to invite to the event, including yourself.

2. Estimate how much time the meeting will take.

3. Make an assumption about the average salary of everyone at the meeting, then compute the daily pay and finally the hourly figure. This will tell you how much it will cost to take each meeting participant away from his or her day-to-day job to attend your meeting.

4. Don't forget to multiply the cost per person by the number of individuals you plan to have at the meeting.

5. What about additional costs? If you hold the meeting in your office, you won't have to pay room fees at some meeting center, but you may want to provide coffee and danishes for a morning meeting and maybe lunch if you plan to hold the session around meal time.

Assuming that everyone is located in the same facility, you won't have to include any travel costs. If someone is off site and needs to come to the office, add that to your sum so far. Now, compare the costs of the meeting to the benefits you anticipate. If you can justify the meeting in terms of costs, send out that meeting announcement. If not, ask yourself if there is some other way to achieve your results. At the very least, rethink your list of attendees. Who do you *really* need to come?

Courtesy of Loren B. Belker and Gary S. Topchick, authors of *The First-Time Manager (Fifth Edition)*, published by AMACOM.

# Maximizing Exit Interviews

Some exit interviews are nothing more than formal partings. Done well, however, exit interviews can provide valuable insights to help find and keep a talented replacement.

Here are some sample questions to trigger discussions:

1. How would the departing employee describe your company's culture? Will his new employer's culture be similar?

2. What are the opportunities for advancement with his new employer? How does this compare with your company, in the departing employee's opinion?

3. What did the employee like most about his former job? What is it about the new job that interests him?

4. Are there opportunities for training with the new employer? How could your company offer similar learning experiences?

Ask, too, about how the work could be done more efficiently or effectively, in the opinion of the departing employee. The employee may have been reluctant to raise some of these issues if he or she thought they were a threat to continued employment or might lead to a significant

increase in workload. Use the departing employee's experience in the position to gain insights into how to facilitate the work in the future.

Here are three questions along these lines:

1. Are there redundancies in the current job that we should consider eliminating?

2. Are there operating obstacles that we should investigate to smooth the flow of work?

3. What skills are most critical to the departing employee's past job?



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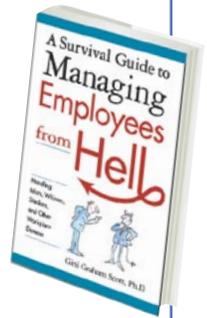
**Should Your Office Manager Also Handle HR Duties?** An office manager who handles HR would be considered multitasked. But if the person isn't properly trained, you could be in for some big problems. Here are some criteria that will help you decide.

**SALES & MARKETING**

**Calming the "Customonsters."** If your business has fallen prey to "customonsters"—those high-maintenance clients who over time may be more work than they're worth—here are some tools that will help you tame the savage beast.

**Book of the Month:**

*A Survival Guide to Managing Employees from Hell*, by Gini Graham Scott, Ph.D. Sure, you've got a terrific team of dedicated, honest, talented employees. Well, except for that one—you know who. Here's how to deal with that proverbial "bad apple" who threatens to spoil the rest.



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**MARCH 28 FREE WEBCAST • Leadership Smarts—Hardwired for Success!** Maximize potential in yourself and others! This Webcast will introduce a new assessment that will help you identify any individual's top strengths and weaknesses in key management areas. Then discover how those innate strengths can be utilized and leveraged across jobs, tasks, and projects

to produce highly effective teams and organizations.

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