

You the Manager

What is your Style?

What are your management characteristics?

General discussion workshop - identify strengths and weaknesses

- Are you autocratic, uncompromising, continually pressuring?
- Are you disorganized? Do you panic? Do you rant and rave?
- Who runs your office? You or your staff? Are you inclined to do as they ask when it is against your grain, because you don't want to lose them? Are you having problems with a dominant sales person, possibly your top producer?
- Do you plan well, set the direction, set goals, obtain understanding of the direction, the reasons why and guide your team to success. Are you fair but firm? Do you allow creativity to breed and grow? Do you keep your team well informed? Do you regularly review your progress?
- Do you spend time training your staff? (Enough time?)
- Are you competitive? Do you sell and compete with your staff?
- Are you strong in control and persuasive?

Management can be related to handing the steering wheel of a car over to another person and teaching them how to drive. All the skills of management are there and it is not until you can stop grabbing the steering wheel are you a good manager. It's not until you can sit in the back seat and enjoy the ride are you a good manager.

Staff - The Team Spirit

- Do you have a good team? Or a team of individuals?
- Does your team have high standards of performance and a driving purpose?
- Do you have an exciting environment?
- Do your staff look forward to coming to work every day?
- Do your staff know, understand and believe in your vision?
- Are there excellent communication levels in your office?
- Do your staff continually attend training to build skill levels?

- Are they proud of their office - are they proud of you?
- Do you have their respect? (You only earn respect - you don't buy it)
- Are your staff competent in what they do, are they confident in their skills because they know what they say and do is for the benefit of their customer?
- Do all your staff know they can rely on efficient, effective backup?

How good teams are developed

- Create the culture and the environment and you will develop the team .
- Top offices, good offices, don't look for staff. Staff looks for good offices.
- Good communication systems
- Comfortable accommodation
- Regular effective meetings (structured)
- Regular counseling performance services, one-on-ones
- Provide incentives to achieve
- Reward the performers
- Well structured training and follow-up
- Fair management decisions explained so all involved accept and understand
- Sensitive management style but strong
- Defined direction and decision making (not to be altered and changed continually) well researched. Good delegation, task setting and follow-up
- When the boss smiles as does all the office smile with him /her
- “*What did I do wrong?*” If more bosses asked this question of themselves when something does go wrong we would have better management skills. It is not always the staff who are wrong. Did they know how to react? Did we make sure they did?
- One of the keys to management is listening, talking with staff and implementing good productive ideas and building on them, be approachable, supportive and always honest and fair. Remember management's enthusiasm is contagious
- Good managers are leaders. They set the tone and direction

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MANAGEMENT

Sensitivity Training Can Strike a Nerve

By David Hornestay
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Efforts to increase diversity in the federal workforce have been crowned with significant success, but now agencies are encountering new challenges in getting multicultural staffs to work together smoothly and effectively.

Agencies are riding national demographic trends while doing their best to build a workforce that "looks more like America." Minority representation in the federal government rose from 26.7 percent in 1988 to 29.4 percent in 1998. That figure exceeded the proportion of minorities in the civilian labor force (26.4 percent), according to a recent Office of Personnel Management report on the Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program. Hispanic representation is increasing but continues to lag behind that of other minority groups.

The trend is expected to continue. The Labor Department's 1999 report, "Future Work: Trends and Challenges for Work in the 21st Century," predicts that by 2050, the number of Americans will increase by 50 percent and minorities will make up nearly half the population.

Immigration will account for almost two-thirds of the nation's growth. The number of older Americans is expected to more than double. One-quarter of all Americans will be Hispanic, and about one in 10 will be Asian or Pacific Islander. More women and people with disabilities will be in the workforce.

Getting more minorities onto the payroll is just a first step. The next challenge is breaking down the cultural and communication barriers to building successful teams from this new blend of employees. Federal managers must "make diversity an organizational advantage," according to the Office of Personnel Management guide, "Building and Maintaining a Diverse and High Quality Workforce." This means tapping the broader experiences and talents of people with more diverse backgrounds in solving problems and fulfilling agency missions. To ensure these capabilities are unleashed, OPM has called upon agencies to:

- Train employees in intercultural communication.
- Provide supervisors and managers with leadership and diversity training.
- Emphasize the benefits and rewards of a diverse workforce, which helps create a supportive work environment.

This emphasis on cultural sensitivity has spawned a cottage industry of diversity trainers who are ready to help agencies eliminate barriers. Bernie Smith, a former Army EEO official who now heads the Federal Facilitators Group of Falls Church, Va., says an ounce of prevention can help

organizations avoid problems rooted in cross-cultural misunderstandings. Careful attention to friction arising from increased diversity is a must, Smith says, "It's not only the traditional irritations [between] black and white or male and female," he says. "We're finding problems within ethnic groups, like Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans upset with each other, or a total ignorance of Islamic customs and practices."

Essential steps, Smith says, include teaching workers about the practices and interests of diverse groups in the workforce. Two-way communications between employees also are critical. Another vital but often overlooked measure is showing no tolerance for racial slurs and ethnic jokes. "They are the cause of much bad feeling and many resulting disputes," Smith cautions. "And high officials need to step in and take visible action when managers at any level are failing to confront such expressions of this type."

Unfortunately, diversity training can sometimes produce unintended consequences. Last spring, for example, the Environmental Protection Agency announced seminars in the Washington area "to create understanding, sensitivity and awareness of diversity issues and provide a forum for exchanging information and ideas." But the agency's plan backfired. Employees complained about condescending and one-sided objectives outlined in course literature, such as teaching "whites to learn how to be better allies with people of color in creating positive change."

The EPA course drew praise from many participants, but the agency has learned that sensitivities work both ways and well-intended ventures in diversity training can have reverse effects. Mauricio Velasquez, who heads the Diversity Training Group, a Reston, Va., consulting firm, laments that too often he has to rescue organizations whose good intentions went awry. "I am hired to come in and clean up" after other diversity trainers have polarized workforces, he says.

Velasquez says old school diversity training should be abandoned in favor of non-confrontational, practical, participant-centered, positive and future-oriented programs. His approach at agencies such as NASA, the Social Security Administration and the National Institute of Standards and Technology features employee input, senior management participation, establishment of diversity learning and resource centers, and development of communications and sensitivity skills. Most important, he says, raising cultural awareness should be part of a holistic, organization-wide approach to making a better workforce.

Is diversity training helping or hurting? The answer is both, which should motivate agency leaders to carefully select outside help and work closely with those consultants to fit diversity training into an overall performance improvement effort.

David Hornestay, a Washington consultant, served in government for more than 30 years, primarily in human resources and institutional management.