Topic 9 Section 1

Practical Leadership

Contents

The Importance of Leadership

Leadership is vital to every group of people who are working together towards a common goal— whether in the workplace, on the football field or elsewhere. Leadership is equally important to the supervisor of construction works or the general commanding an army.

No organisation can function without leaders of some kind. However, 'leadership' is hard to define. Everyone has a different idea about what makes a good leader.

Leadership is especially important for people working together on a construction site. Without an effective leader, the group may not be able to meet their objectives on a construction site. These should ALWAYS be to complete the job:

- By using the resources that have been allocated
- On time
- Within budget
- At an acceptable quality level
- Safely.

What is Leadership?

For the purposes of this Topic, the 'working definition' of leadership is:

The ability to influence others so that they work towards the group's objectives.

Every person responsible for a group of people is a leader, but this does not always reflect their ability to lead a team of people. A person may hold a leadership position but be a very poor leader.

Why Do We Need Leaders?

A leader needs to do the following in any work situation:

- provide the group with a sense of direction and purpose
- create a climate where people can work towards the organisation goals and objectives
- bring together the resources needed by the work group in order to get the work done
- keep an eye on the group's progress
- make corrections whenever the work group appears to be moving away from its goals and objectives
- act as the 'go-between' for the rest of the organisation
- ensure that the group's activities are meeting the organisation's objectives.

Achieving Results by Motivating People

Every person who is a leader in the workplace does so in a very individual way. However, this 'leadership style' depends on many things:

- Personality
- Past experience
- What the superiors and the organisation expect of the leader
- The type of people being managed
- The job being done
- Company policy
- Expectations and behaviour of other leaders.

There is more than one way of being a leader. However, treating people one way does not work all the time. Instead, the best way to be a leader depends on the situation. The example in the box below shows four ways that a leader might use to respond to a situation.

MAKING THE MOVE TO A NEW WORKS SITE

A construction company is constructing a highway bypass around a small town. The job is a month away from completion, and everyone knows that the next job is 250 km away.

Moving is going to take a few days; however, two trucks, the grader and a roller will need to stay behind to put the finishing touches on the bypass. Other factors that come into the picture include employees are on leave, and machinery due for servicing.

How the project manager deals with this situation depends on his or her leadership style.

Authoritarian leadership

Manager A decides that the move will be completed at a specific date and time, what machinery will be moved and how. He discusses the need for the move with the foremen, then simply gives an order, expecting everyone to carry out instructions and that no-one will question what he has decided.

At worst, authoritarian leadership may involve bullying and threats; at best, it means that the manager depends on the fact that people will do what they are told, or face the possibility of losing their jobs.

Paternalistic leadership

Manager B thinks about the move and how it will affect individual workers, knowing their individual needs (e.g. family responsibilities), as well the company's needs. However, he makes the final decision about an appropriate date for the move, what machinery should be taken and when, etc without any input from the workers. He believes he is acting in the best interests of the workers.

This approach to leadership is based on the belief that the manager knows best. However, it is not the same as authoritarian leadership. The difference is that the workers are considered, even if they are not consulted on the issue at hand.

Democratic leadership

Manager C holds a meeting with workers and invites them to discuss the pros and cons of various ways of making the move, and of different dates. While the manager makes the decision, he does not do so until he has gained some understanding of the feeling amongst the workers and is guided by those feelings.

Democratic leadership differs from paternalistic leadership in that all members of the group are involved in making the decision.

Laissez-Faire leadership

Manager D simply asks the workers to decide when the move will be made and what machinery is to be taken. He or she gives the go-ahead when they make a decision.

This approach differs from democratic leadership, because the manager becomes a consultant to the group and gives the authority to make a decision, and the responsibility of making it, to the group.

Many organizations achieve positive outcomes by using democratic leadership on a day-to-day basis. For example, the foreman on a subdivision project could speak to the crew who are installing the road crossing conduits for services and explain that a group of conduits need to be installed by a target date, to co-incide with the installation of side drains— which will be followed by the laying of concrete kerb and channel. If he explains to them that both of these tasks need to be booked well in advance, they will better understand the importance of meeting the target. The crew would then be more likely to commit to the task or put forward any reasons they might have as to why the target would be missed.

The foreman could then leave it up to the men to install the conduits by a target date, while dropping in occasionally to monitor progress. By leaving the work in the crew's hands, the foreman can better respond to the outcome, by giving appropriate encouragement if the target is met, or altering the program if problems arise.

In the past, people have found that:

The authoritarian style is best in situations where there is no room for negotiation or time to waste; for example, a broken concrete pump in the middle of a pour, or a formwork collapse.

Organisations achieve better results using democratic or laissez-faire styles of leadership when there is a need to tap into people's innate creativity and ingenuity (and time is not critical); or to build a sense of ownership and participation.

Flexible Use of Leadership

The best approach is always to use the kind of leadership that is appropriate for the situation, as discussed above. If the supervisor uses only one type of leadership, their decisions may not be well-liked, or may not give the results the company is looking for.

It is for this reason that supervisors must be prepared to try various leadership styles, and decide which is best for a particular situation. This is a skill that can only be gained by experience, or by watching the leadership styles of others.

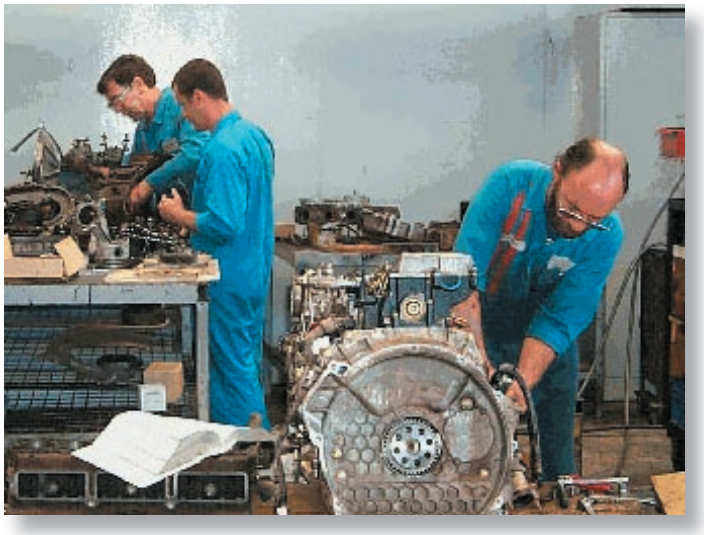
It is important to remember that the outcomes that the leader achieves are the most important thing, not the leadership style used to achieve it. For example, an authoritarian or paternalistic style may have a place when work is limited by rules and regulations, such as the terms of a contract. In contrast, if there is more freedom available in making decisions, then a more democratic type of leadership would be appropriate.

Achieving Results by Working with People

How well a job is done often depends on the attitude of the workers. Supervisors must become very good at observing and understanding the behaviour of workers on the job and deciding on the best ways to treat people. This means understanding:

- how people respond to leadership
- what drives people to perform.

Although these may appear complex at first glance, both rely entirely on common sense. Consider the example on the following page:



A NEW SUPERVISOR IN THE WORKSHOP

A young and inexperienced foreman is replacing someone who managed the workshop for 10 years and was well liked and trusted by the workers. The new supervisor has some ideas on how to manage the shop, but is to approaching his new role with caution.

He decides there are two basic ways he can treat the employees. He can assume that either:

- They need constant supervision, motivation and threats to make them get the job done, and are not looking for responsibility, or
- They like to work, take an interest in their work and are happy to take on responsibilities.

If he decides that the shop workers are all of the first type, we say that the foreman supports Theory X; if he decides that the shop workers are all of the second type, we say that he supports Theory Y. However, it is rarely as clear-cut as this.

In reality, while everyone in the shop has a job because they need the money, some workers will be in the shop because they:

- are happy to just do as they are told so that they can make the money they need (Theory X)
- love working with machinery and want to learn more about it (Theory Y).

The foreman's challenge therefore is understand what drives each individual. Some workers may act more in line with Theory X. These people will tend to:

- Dislike work and attempt to avoid it wherever possible.
- Tend not to do anything unless asked.
- Have little ambition.

However, some workers may act more in line with Theory Y. These people will tend to:

- Accept work as a natural and acceptable part of life.
- Work hard without being 'pushed'.
- Use their initiative (i.e. take on extra responsibility or use\ creativity to do a better job).
- Make extra efforts to get the job done when there is a problem.

The foreman therefore has to decide which approach will work best. If the shop tends to operate along the lines of theory X, then an authoritarian or paternalistic style of leadership may be better.

However, if Theory Y is true, than a democratic style of leadership might work better. If the workers are especially motivated, a laissez-faire style of leadership may be more appropriate.

This is one way of looking at the situation. There is another way, as described in the box below.

After some time, the workshop foreman has found that the workers seem to work best under a democratic style of leadership. He holds a daily meeting to check on the progress of repairs and what machines are due to be in the workshop later on, and invites the workers to make suggestions about doing the job better.

However, he still believes the workers are capable of better performance and wants to find out what changes he could make to improve the shop's production. As far as he can see, everyone is paid well and most people get on well together. He finds it difficult to decide what changes might be worthwhile, but still feels things could be better.

The supervisor now thinks about whether he can change any of the following:

- Salary
- Working conditions
- Job security (i.e. is the worker holding a causal position or about to be made redundant?)
- The type of work being done
- Work hours
- Inter-personal relationships (i.e. how the workers interact with each other)
- How well each person is regarded by other workers.

He then discovered that two of the workers are only casually employed, but do a large amount of the work, and that another is new and has been limited in taking on several jobs by the other workers, who are unsure of the person's ability.

He therefore considered how the following options could be used to improve motivation:

- Recognising achievement
- Assigning extra responsibility
- Giving awards
- Career advancement or promotion
- Giving the worker more challenging jobs.

In this case, the foreman consulted his supervisor and was able to offer full-time positions to the casual employees and give the new worker extra responsibility and more interesting jobs when conditions in the shop allowed.

This example shows that a person responsible for leading others can change two sets of conditions. One set is related to conditions on the job, such as salary, working conditions, job security, and inter-personal relationships. The other set is related to how people feel about their work, and includes achievement, responsibility, recognition, and challenge.

The first set of conditions are called 'dissatisfiers', as changing them does not necessarily improve performance, but people tend to be dissatisfied if problems are not resolved. The second set of conditions are called 'satisfiers', as people who experience achievement, responsibility, recognition, or challenge on the job are more likely to feel satisfied with their work.

It is often easier for a supervisor to change dissatisfiers (e.g. a lack of job security) than it is to create satisfiers. However, people have found that employees who feel a sense of satisfaction in their work are more likely to be strongly motivated.

Job Enrichment

Supervisors can put these ideas to work by:

- removing or reducing causes of dissatisfaction as much as possible (e.g. bad lighting, inconvenient working hours)
- enriching the job by adding 'depth' or challenge, wherever possible.

Enriching the job may involve combining several work activities to give an employee greater independence.

For example, an employee may be given responsibilities such as setting their own work pace, correcting their own errors and deciding on the best way to do a particular task. This contrasts with work that is based on a production-line approach, or uses repetitive tasks following a set procedure. Enriching the job means giving the employee room to be creative or to accept extra responsibilities.

Employees in more enriched jobs may also be involved in making decisions affecting their area of work. As work becomes more challenging and extra responsibilities are accepted, employee motivation will often increase.

Leading by Example

One of the most powerful ways a leader can influence others is by example. If the actions of any leader are less than what is expected by the company, workers tend to reduce work quality and show less motivation. They are less willing to meet the expectations placed on them.

Everything that a leader does and says will set an example for others in the workplace.

Leaders can set an example for others in four ways:

- by showing emotion, energy and edge
- by setting high expectations
- by setting high personal standards
- by thinking carefully before acting.

Emotion, Energy and Edge

Emotion is the ability of the leader to inspire others through their passion and zeal for the work being done.

Energy is the ability to keep going, even when the going gets tough, in a way that inspires others.

Edge is willingness of the leader to tackle every problem they encounter, rather than simply letting matters slide.

Good leaders show the strength to make tough decisions. At the same time, they must be able to encourage others to do the same and give rewards when they do.

An example of a supervisor using these methods is described below.

A truck and a scraper have both broken down on the works site. After talking to the project manager, the workshop foreman realises that the works will fall badly behind schedule if the two similar machines cannot be made available on site as soon as possible. Two machines that could replace the breakdowns are currently being serviced in the workshop. The foreman realises that there is a real need to 'pull out the stops' and get the two machines out of the workshop and back on the job.

The foreman adopted the following methods:

- He told the workers of the problem, and said he was giving them a challenge: to have the machines operational by lunchtime the next day. However, he added that safe workplace practices could not be thrown aside for the sake of speed.
- He joined in servicing the machines with the workers, showing enthusiasm for the work and clearly enjoying the faster pace. This encouraged the others to work faster, and soon there was a competition between people working on different parts of the machine.

- He stayed back after the workshop would normally have closed while keeping up the pace. Some of the workers were encouraged by what the boss was doing and stayed on, but he applied no pressure to anyone to do so.

The machines were made available to the site on time, and work continued to schedule. At the end of the week, the foreman stopped work early and put on a beer for the men, stating his appreciation for their extra efforts.

Setting High Performance Expectations and Personal Standards

It is not reasonable to expect outstanding results from an employee if the leader's performance is only average. The performance of the leader sets the upper limit for what is possible in the organisation. To set high performance expectations, a leader must:

- Think about the consequences of the standard he or she is setting (i.e. how it will affect employees and other people who depend on the work being done)
- Set a reasonable standard that all will follow.

In the example above, the supervisor considered safety before setting the challenge of having the machines operational within 24 hours. By doing this, he considered both the people needing the machines and the safety of the workers.

Foremen and supervisors on a construction site need to be constantly aware of their role and the effects of their behaviour on the people they interact with during the course of the job. A few examples of appropriate behaviours would include:

1. Arriving on site early enough to ensure a smooth start-up of the work force
2. Ensuring that the job is effectively shut down before departing after work
3. Dealing with the various people during the course of day, such as supervisors, client representatives, and local government inspectors, in a positive, professional and friendly manner
4. Maintaining a positive attitude to company policies and the job in general when interacting with workers.

Effective leaders try constantly to show that they are determined to work hard and to be the best that they can be.

Think Before You Act

The old saying 'Look before you leap' applies to leaders as much as to anyone else. A good leader always considers carefully what needs to be done before taking any action. If a problem is considered only briefly, then it is more likely that a mistake will be made or an accident will happen.

Considering all aspects of a problem will help to reduce wastage of materials and effort, and the required outcome will be reached more quickly. Although time will be spent thinking, far less time will be wasted than if there is a serious mistake or accident.

Good leaders are 100% committed to thinking before acting. If a leader does this consistently, he will save time and resources and improve his own abilities as a leader.

For example, the construction supervisor who is trying to get the crew to install the road crossing conduits on time, so that the kerb and channel can be laid (see page 6), needs to think through the various processes leading up to this task, such as:

- Earthworks
- Installation of pipes for sewerage, stormwater, and water reticulation
- Service conduits
- Subgrade preparation
- Local government inspection
- Side drains
- Sub-base gravels.

This means that he needs to assess the plant, materials, manpower and time required for each of these tasks to establish the target date, and then monitor progress as the job proceeds.

Vision

A leader must be able to give people a sense of direction; of heading towards a goal. This is called vision.

Use of Vision in Leadership

A vision is of no value unless a leader can communicate it to his workers and inspire them to follow it. This may require some 'selling' from the leader, but it may also help to unite people in working for a common purpose.

It is not what a vision is, but what it does, that is important; it must represent what the company or organisation wants rather than the personal 'needs' of the supervisor. Simple or more specific visions tend to work the best.

Leaders who have a vision tend to:

- be strong without intimidating co-workers
- teach skills without making others feel inferior
- wield power without controlling others
- relate well to employees and tap into their core motivations
- move groups into action without using fear or humiliation
- involve staff members in the process of creating a clear vision.

Visionary leaders are brave enough to face their own limits and weaknesses, so that they can break free from them.

Front-Line Leadership

It is more efficient to give the people who are on the front line the responsibility of making decisions. This means that people do not need to constantly refer problems to the supervisor for a decision. However, 'front-line' leadership can only work if leaders give workers an opportunity to develop decision-making skills and learn to trust their judgment.

Managers who try to make all the decisions tend to become 'bogged down' in dealing with problems that don't affect the results that the team are producing. In this situation, people tend to deal with front-line problems only when they get out of control or become 'bushfires'. People caught up in this type of leadership often find themselves 'putting out fires' or dealing with problems that have grown unchecked.

However, a visionary leader tries to create a workforce of decision-makers. Employees at all levels have the opportunity to discover and develop their unique skills, and to use those skills to make decisions.

Not all employees will take up this opportunity, but those who do will inspire others with their positive attitudes; the results flow on to good job outcomes and the company's success.

How to be a 'Visionary' Leader

A leader who wants to give people a sense of direction and help them to achieve the organisation's goals will:

- allow people to set priorities at the front line
- ensure company policies support people at the front line
- get rid of 'elementary problems'
- give people a chance to learn.

This contrasts with management-only leadership, where the leader insists on making all the decisions or giving approval to every action. This way of doing business slows down the process of making decisions; it is less efficient.

A visionary leader says 'just do it', while a manager says 'Do not do anything until you have been told what to do'.

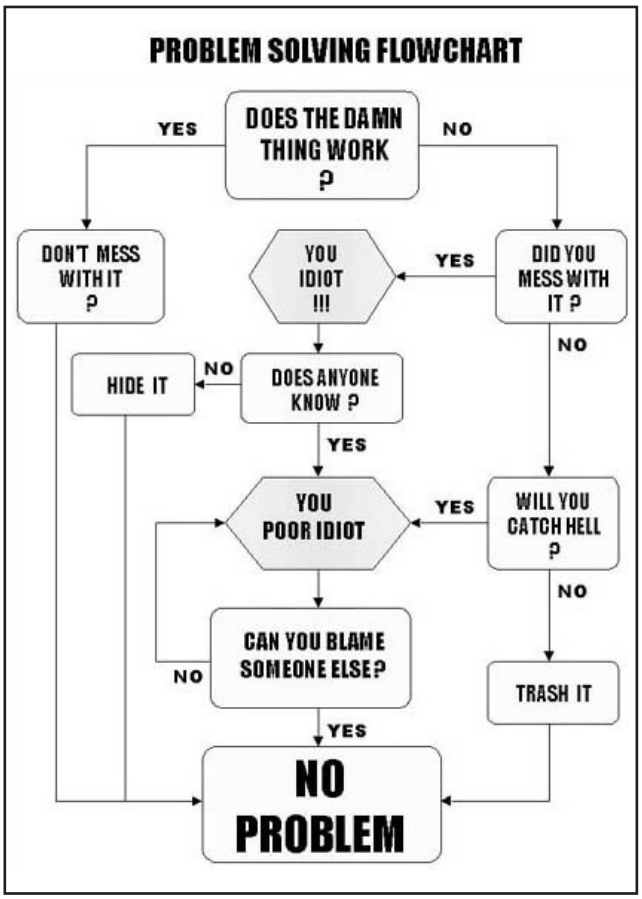
If the company adopts the principles of visionary leadership, its policies are written so that people at the front line are as free as possible to make decisions, and to accept responsibility for the consequences.

Get Rid of 'Elementary Problems'

The people at the front line are often the first to become aware of minor problems. If they have the responsibility for making decisions, then managers will not waste time doing things that the workers are perfectly capable of doing for themselves. Often, an individual worker's knowledge or training makes the difference.

However, if the leaders insist on making decisions about every minor problem, workers will tend to let problems slide, because it becomes too much 'hassle' to describe the problem to a manager every time. The end result will be that problems build up. This, in turn, may lead to a blow-out in costs or a workplace accident.

The adjacent diagram (or something similar) is often found in the workplaces where there are 'elementary problems'.



Employees are more motivated to do a good job where they feel they have some ability to make decisions and that they can make a difference.

Giving People a Chance to Learn

Workers will only gain experience and learn to handle various situations if they have the responsibility for making decisions.

Where employees are learning on the job all the time, they are more motivated to improve their skills and produce work of a higher quality.

Encouraging Achievement

The best type of manager clearly needs to:

- Develop an appropriate vision by communicating it to workers
- Allow workers to take on some extra responsibilities if possible
- Consider using new techniques and allowing input from workers on how they could be used or improved
- Involve everyone in solving a major problem
- Improve worker motivation by challenging workers and making work interesting
- Give encouragement when it is needed
- Be prepared to modify their vision if it is not getting the job done.

Effective supervisors also show that they understand the consequences of encouraging achievement, by:

- Accepting ambition as a desirable trait in employees
- Welcoming subordinates more capable than themselves, because their presence allows more work to be achieved with limited supervision
- Giving appropriate rewards for achievement wherever possible.

Personal Energy

Many successful leaders have energy and drive. A person's energy is not easily measured; it is not like the charge in a car battery that can be measured with a meter. However, we can get some idea from the results a person achieves and the impression they make. The following are good indicators of how much energy someone has and how much they are driven to achieve results:

- A leader who has commitment accepts responsibility for mistakes; he or she does not try to pass the blame on to someone else.
- The ability to take strong action to get a project started; to come across as credible; and to stay committed until it is finished.
- Sharing credit for success: a few words of thanks or congratulations in the right place, or sometimes a presentation and speech-making, shows that a leader is enthusiastic about the team's achievements.

- Getting people to work together, even when this is difficult, shows commitment and energy.
- The ability to organise people, gain their co-operation, and get the best from them.
- Gaining a sense of satisfaction from work shows that a leader is not content with just giving orders and getting the credit; they enjoy sharing the sense of achievement when a job is well done.
- The ability to backtrack, rethink and adopt different approaches to a job when a problem develops.

No person is able to consistently provide an unlimited amount of energy or drive, no matter how committed or 'turned on' they appear. Everyone can become 'burnt out' if their energy is not focused properly. The ability to direct the energy and drive of others is the sign of a good leader.

Communication Skills

Leaders can plan, organise, lead and control the work and the work team only if they have the ability to communicate. Often, this simply means the ability to pass on an instruction to another person.

In the construction industry, leaders spend a lot of time communicating with a large number of people.

Good communication skills help leaders to:

- Control the workplace
- Motivate staff
- Balance needs and goals of employees
- Lead staff instead of pushing.

Controlling the Workplace

As a leader, you can use communication as a means of:

- controlling the procedures people use to do the job
- encouraging employees to conform to the company's objectives and directives
- providing feedback to employees about their work.

Leaders also control employees' activities by:

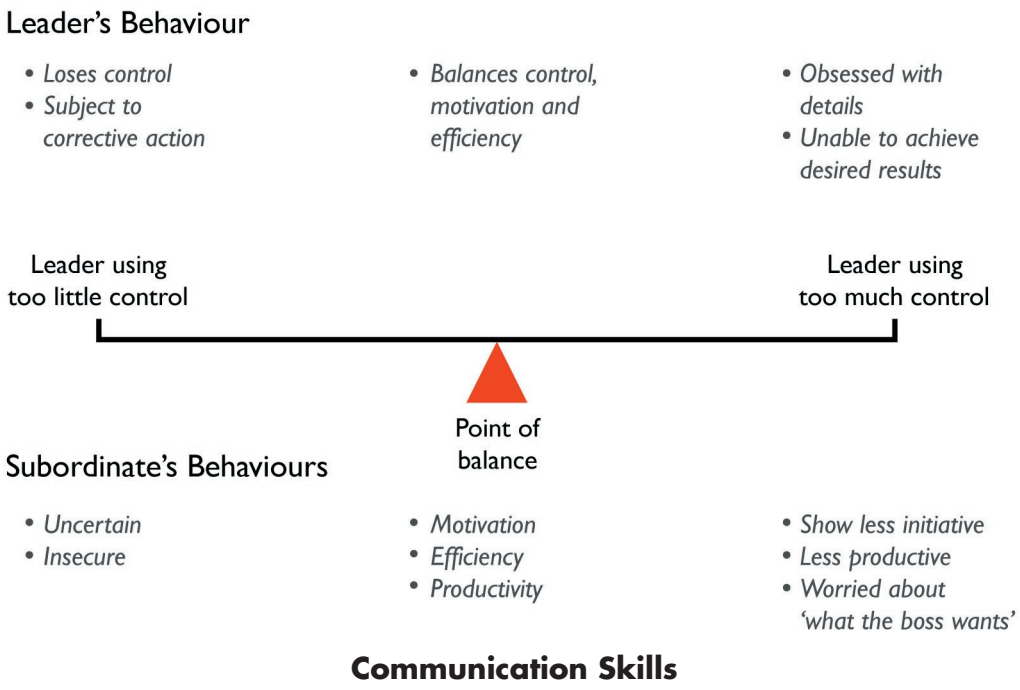
- developing procedural manuals for work tasks
- setting work targets
- drawing up budgets.

All of these activities take time. For this reason, a leader is constantly using his or her communication skills on the job.

However, a leader must maintain a balance between control, motivation and efficiency. If a leader emphasises control, people may show less initiative and become less productive. Employees will be less concerned about what the client wants and more concerned about what they think the leader wants.

At the other end of the scale, if there is too little control, people may become uncertain and insecure. When this happens, the leader loses control. When this happens, other people in the organisation will become involved.

In every job and every situation, there is a point of balance where a leader is using the right amount of control.



Motivating Staff

People need to feel they are involved and that they have a sense of purpose in the organisation.

Leaders must use therefore their communication skills to motivate employees.

This means:

- acknowledging the achievements of individuals and groups
- providing feedback.

However, leaders need to be careful about how they give these kinds of encouragement. For example, some people or groups might prefer to receive verbal praise, written letters or circulars, or presentations of certificates. These may be given in public or one-on-one. The right words to use, and the right situations in which to use them, depend on the workplace.

Balancing Needs and Goals

A leader within an organisation must also maintain a balance between:

- the needs and expectations of the organisation, and
- the goals and needs of employees.

The leader's am is to translate the organisation's goals into team and individual goals; examples of how the two may be related are shown in the table below.

The Organisation's Goals	The Goals of the Team or the Individual
Profit	Good pay
Return on investment	Job security
Employee efficiency	Fringe benefits
Production of quality goods and services	Scope for initiative and achievement
Competitiveness	Challenge
Low absenteeism and low turnover of employees	Satisfaction

The organisation's goals and the individual's or team's goals can only be brought together by good two-way communication. The team leader is communicating the organisation's point of view to the employees; at the same time, the employees are trying to persuade the leader to appreciate their needs and points of view.

A leader in an organisation must be therefore a skilled communicator who knows how to move information through the organisation's channels of communication efficiently and effectively.

Assertive Communication

Good communication does not happen by accident. Instead, it requires leaders to develop skills. Assertiveness and I-statements, as described below, are two of the communication strategies that manage the interaction and achieve a balance that satisfies both communicator and listener.

The behaviour of people towards others may range from assertiveness (the most desirable behaviour) to either non-assertiveness or aggression, as described below.

Assertiveness

Assertive behaviour acknowledges the rights of an individual, while at the same time accepting and respecting the rights of other people. This is the ideal attitude to have at work and in everyday living.

Assertive people tend to demonstrate open, expressive and relaxed behaviour. They are able to build honest, fulfilling relationships with others.

Assertive leaders are able to manage their working relationships with others without feeling the need to manipulate or to be aggressive. They recognise the rights of other workers.

The assertive follower recognises the rights of the manager or leader to make reasonable requests and to expect the job to be done. Such people feel comfortable with themselves and with others in the organisation. They get on with the job in a manner that satisfies their own needs and the needs of the organisation.

When the occasion demands, assertive people can disagree, stand up for their rights and present alternative points of view without being intimidated or putting the other person down. They understand that anger, shouting and other threatening behaviours will not advance a point of view and that persistence and tact are more profitable courses of action.

Assertive people realise the type of behaviour suited to a particular situation and recognise when their own behaviour is assertive, aggressive or non-assertive.

Non-Assertion or Submission

Submissive people are unable to assert or promote a point of view, even if it is perfectly acceptable to do so in the situation. They find it difficult to lead others, as their style of relating means submission to another's point of view, even to the extent of ignoring their own rights as an individual.

When unpleasant situations arise, a submissive person tends to avoid them, leaving someone else to deal with the problem.

Aggression

An aggressive person adopts the attitude of 'winning at all costs'. This may mean dominating and, on occasions, humiliating others, even to the point of ignoring a suggestion that provides the best solution— simply because it is someone else's solution.

The rights of others to participate, enjoy a sense of satisfaction and receive acknowledgement for their work are ignored. An aggressive person is often in conflict with others. In some individuals, this may become a life-long pattern.

'I' Messages

A useful technique for developing assertion and showing openness to others is an 'I' message.

I-statements are simply a way of sharing emotions, and letting others know both how their behaviour is perceived and how it affects you.

One of the most effective ways to begin to make assertive statements is to say, 'I feel …. when…'. For example, the message may be:

'I feel annoyed when you do not let me know when you are going to be late.'

Anyone can express needs and wants with an 'I' message that shows personal involvement, combined with a willingness to share feelings.

'I' messages are used to express both positive and negative feelings, because they talk about behaviour that is both acceptable and pleasing, or that is unacceptable.

An 'I' message can have two, three or four parts to it, as shown in the following table.

Two Part 'I' Message	Three Part 'I' Message	Four Part 'I' Message
Feelings + Behaviour	Feelings + Behaviour + Effects	Feelings + Behaviour + Effects + Acceptable alternative behaviour

Two-Part I-Message

In a two part 'I' message, a person:

- owns the feeling
- describes in concrete terms the behaviour that is causing the feelings.

Example: I am very annoyed that you did not advise me you would be late.

Three-Part I-Message

In a three part 'I' message, a person:

- owns the feeling
- describes in concrete terms the behaviour that is causing the feelings
- states the tangible effect of the behaviour (e.g. a feeling of frustration or disappointment)

Example: I am very annoyed because your late arrival meant that the excavator was out of production for two hours.

Four-Part I-Message

In a four part 'I' message, a person:

- owns the feeling
- describes in concrete terms the behaviour that is causing the feelings
- states the tangible effect of the behaviour
- offers an alternative, acceptable behaviour.

The fourth part of the message may be used to suggest the alternative acceptable behaviour straight away, or negotiate a behaviour that is acceptable to both parties to the exchange.

As people become more skilled in using I- messages, they tend to frame them in their own words and may even omit the words 'feel', 'when', and 'because'.

Example: This type of expense is not sustainable. If you are late again without good reason, you will be disciplined. *Alternative:* Timely attendance on the job is a key requirement of your position. This is your first and final warning.

Defining Success for Individuals

An effective leader tries to understand what factors make the job a success for the individual, and to work hard at matching the individual's positive attributes and motivators to the needs of the organisation.

One way to gain an understanding of the individual's motivating factors is to first understand the characteristics of an individual who has found it too hard to achieve success and has given up— in other words, a 'quit stay'. These characteristics may then be compared to those of a person who is able to both achieve and maintain a successful career.

Characteristics of a Quit Stay

A quit stay is a person who is achieving little and has almost no energy. It is a person who has mentally quit the job, but still turns up for work every day. Such a person:

- is indifferent to his or her work
- is just 'going through the motions' of doing a job, without any enthusiasm or emotion
- has moved on from whingeing or trying to fix things
- doesn't see the point of doing more than is necessary or of putting any energy into the work
- tries hard to maintain a low profile, preferring to be seen as reliable (if little else)
- turns up five minutes before the boss and leaves five minutes after.

In many cases, the individual has to take the blame for falling into this state. Most supervisors will take disciplinary action when they discover such a situation.

Another approach is to identify factors in the organisation that have contributed to the problem. These may include:

- repetitive work
- no challenge, discretion, or authority to make decisions
- managers who consistently try to 'kill' the person's feelings of enthusiasm for the job
- failure of managers to pick up on the person's feelings of boredom
- multiple changes of manager, but no change in the organisational climate.

The main aim of identifying such factors is to ensure they are not repeated.

Regardless of whether the individual or the organisation is to blame, managers should take the following action when they discover a 'quit stay':

- identify the factors (both personal and organisational) that have contributed to the situation
- take disciplinary action if necessary
- make changes to the organisation, if necessary
- assuming the person stays, decide whether he or she would have potential if transferred to a different role
- offer opportunities for the person to improve him or her self through training and up-skilling.

Characteristics of Successful Individuals

There have been occasions when an individual— such as a politician, athlete or actor— has a burning desire to 'be the best' in their field, struggles for many years to develop skills, and reaches the top, only to develop a fatal flaw and come down like a house of cards. The outward signs that everything has come apart may include drug addiction, marital problems, or arrogant behaviour towards others.

Making all the right moves may not be enough to keep a person at a pinnacle of success. Instead, it is the internal characteristics and motivations of a person that make the difference.

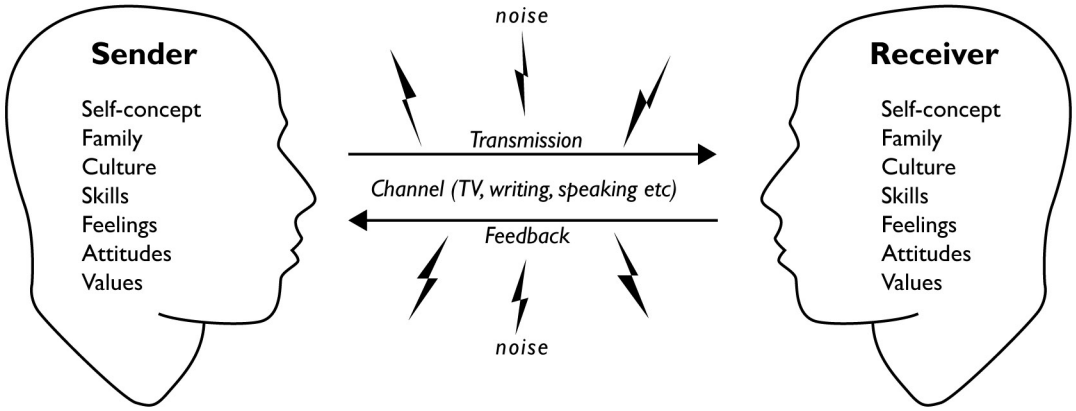
What are the internal drivers of a person who both achieves and maintains success? It is not possible to identify all the factors that make the difference, but people who make successful leaders are more likely to:

- have a sense of mission and their own written set of goals or 'mission statement'
- hold the conviction that individual outcomes and circumstances depend on the actions of the individual and cannot be blamed on others
- be mentally tough, to endure difficult periods that inevitably occur in every person's life
- accept risk and responsibility
- accept the challenge to make things better
- regular do reality checks and a have realistic level of self-analysis
- be honest about themselves, including their limitations and undesirable characteristics
- place winning or losing against others as a secondary consideration to performing at a personal best
- have an ethic of service to others.

The Value of Feedback

What is Feedback?

As shown in the drawing, feedback is the receiver's response to the sender's message. If communication takes place without feedback, the message picks up 'noise' or unintended signals each time it is repeated. The end result is a message that bears little resemblance to the original.



By using feedback, people can help to:

- keep communication open
- show others whether they understand or misunderstand the message
- stimulate further communication and discussion.

How Feedback Works

A message sent in words may be received incorrectly or not be exactly what was originally intended.

For example, there is the following well-known story:

A captain on the front line in World War I sends a message to headquarters:

'Send reinforcements, we're going to advance'.

In an era before radio communication, runners convey the message from the trench to the command post, dodging bullets as they go. Each of the soldiers passing on the message to the next simply repeats what he thought he heard the last man in the chain say, without feedback. The end result is that the message reaching headquarters is:

'Send three-and-fourpence, we're going to a dance'.

Both the sender and receiver need feedback to complete the communications link.

Feedback allows people to receive information about how we affect others and on the way others perceive us.

Using Feedback to Achieve Empathy

Active listening is the key to achieving empathy, i.e. understanding the problem from the other person's point of view.

By listening well, you avoid directing, blaming, judging or evaluating the other person. Rather than feeling the need to be responsible for others or being in confrontation with others, an active listener is accepting of, and accepted by, others. Every person who makes the effort to listen can enjoy the company of others, and listen for pleasure, information, to help others or to interact in a work team.

Feedback Techniques

The following points are important, and are discussed in more detail below.

- In the work setting, feedback may be negative or positive.
- In either case, feedback is more desirable if it is informative, immediate and specific.
- Leaders or co-workers, or self-evaluation, can be sources of feedback.
- Messages may contain undercurrents or hidden information, but these are susceptible to feedback.

Negative and Positive Feedback

Negative feedback is sometimes necessary, but must be given with care. Identify the unwanted condition or behaviour— do not use negative feedback for personal attacks.

Positive feedback from leaders and co-workers encourages people to repeat desired conditions and behaviours.

Informative Feedback

In informative feedback, the sender asks the receiver to rephrase the message, and then acknowledges agreement or disagreement with the feedback. This type of feedback, i.e. confirming the content of the message with the person who gave it, depends on effective listening.

As you give feedback, consider why the speaker has expressed an idea. Try to keep judgement out of the picture.

Instead, hear and empathise with the speaker's unexpressed feelings. Give your perceptions and feelings about the message instead of falling into the traps of giving advice or always feeling that there is a need to pass judgement on statements.

It is important to develop the habit of confirming the content of the message with the person who gave it. This puts you in a better position to understand the speaker's purpose and main ideas, and respond to the speaker's message.

Immediate and Specific Feedback

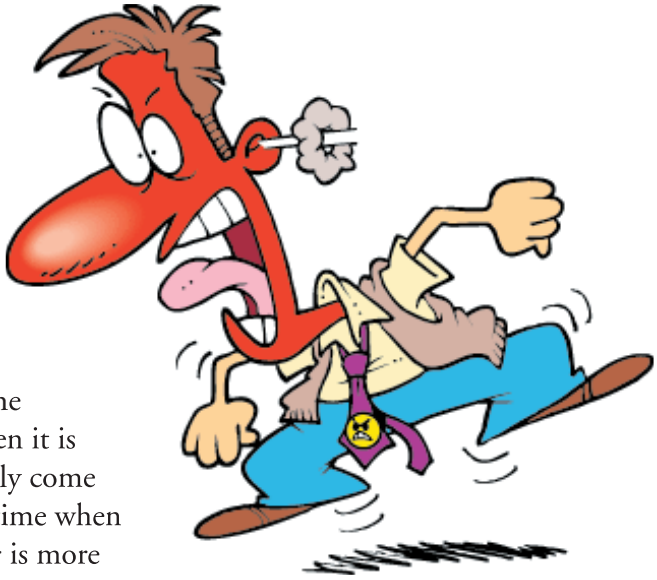
Feedback achieves more positive outcomes if it is specific rather than general, with clear and specific examples of recent behaviour.

For example, if the supervisor is talking to the grader driver about the final trim on a stretch of road he has just completed, it is better to say:

'The final trim on that last stretch needs to be reduced by 10 mm over the full length'.

rather than;

'You're always leaving the final trim too high'.



In the first of the two statements, the supervisor is describing what needs to be done, rather than judging or threatening the other person. The focus is on behaviour and factual information.

Good feedback depends on timing. It may be of no use if the person is not ready to receive it. If a receiver is upset or defensive, he may be less likely to accept suggestions or new ideas. Part of the art of leadership is the ability to judge when it is appropriate to give feedback. This can only come with experience. By giving feedback at a time when the receiver is more open to ideas, a leader is more likely to change an unsatisfactory situation.

Content of feedback is important. It is better to include behaviour that the receiver is capable of changing, if it can be identified as such, and that the receiver can handle at the particular time.

It is unproductive at best, and destructive at worst, to revisit past behaviour and grievances. It is always better to deal with the current situation. Never 'dump' onto an employee the frustrations you may feel about the employee's past behaviour. Pay-backs are unacceptable behaviour in a leader.

Immediate and specific feedback can only work if the person giving the feedback respects the other person's right to respond and gives him or her the courtesy of listening. Acknowledge the response. Sometimes it may indicate the need for you to change your behaviour.

Self-Evaluation as a Source of Feedback

Always try to see ideas, opinions or attitudes from the other person's point of view. If you do this, you have stopped evaluating and making judgements, and are far more likely to gain an understanding of other person's message.

The only way to overcome the tendency to introduce judgements and evaluations to feedback is to be aware of it.

By acknowledging, owning and expressing your feelings as you give and receive feedback, you create a relationship based on trust and openness.

Undercurrents in Messages

People may give messages in a way that hides an important fact or their feelings about a subject, or both; these are known as undercurrents. The hidden part of a message can be sensed but not understood. It gets in the way of open and direct communication. However, you can come closer to understanding verbal, non-verbal and undercurrent messages by practising and effectively using feedback skills. This experience, in turn, helps individuals to become more aware of their own communication methods and of how to improve them.

Giving Feedback as a Leadership Role

Because so much employer–employee communication is face-to-face, effective feedback is an important method of creating trust and openness between employer and the employee. Leaders are well advised to give effective feedback that focuses on behaviour, in accordance with the guidelines discussed above. If you do so, you will:

- encourage others to be more open in their communications
- help people to become less reticent or hesitant about communicating or offering ideas
- develop a feeling of teamwork and of belonging to the group.

The use of feedback to improve employee performance is covered in more detail later this Topic.

Awareness of Cultural Differences

'Culture' means the distinctive customs, achievements, products, or outlook adopted by a society or group within society. It becomes more important for leaders who must deal in an international business environment.

Doing Business across Cultures

The ability to successfully conduct international business depends on understanding:

- the business culture of the home country
- the business culture of the country in which business is transacted.

The following discussion looks at how the business culture in Australia compares on various scales to those of other countries.

Business Culture of the Home Country

Various people have studied the way Australians tend to do business and have compared it to the ways adopted by others.

One study showed that Australian business people are more likely to:

- accept equality between people as a normal part of life. However, in some countries people may accept dramatic and very visible differences between the richest and poorest citizens. Also, some members of a population (e.g. tribal leaders) may automatically have greater authority, or have the right to speak first in a conversation.
- act as individuals rather than as members of a group. However, in some cultures, publicly maintaining solidarity with the point of view adopted by a group (such as a company or family) may be more important than the right to express an individual opinion. In such cultures, 'saving face' is important.
- display 'tough' values like assertiveness, performance, success and competition. In some countries, people may lean towards ego, money and possessions and the importance of work (known as 'masculine' values); in another country they may be more oriented towards relationships, quality of life rather than possessions, and working as much as is necessary to live ('feminine' values).
- take calculated risks in business dealings.
- think more in terms of the past and present, and show this by respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations. In other cultures, people may tend to think more in terms of the future, by emphasising thrift and persistence.

Business Culture of the Country in which Business is Transacted

Anyone planning to do business in another country is advised to carry out research into the habits and customs people adopt in the workplace, before visiting the country concerned. For example—

In Middle Eastern countries, intentionally showing the soles of the feet, even if shod, is considered an insult and may be unacceptable in a business context. In Australia, adopting a posture that allows the feet to lift off the floor is most often interpreted as a sign that a person is relaxed.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website is a recommended and much-used starting point:

www.dfat.gov.au

However, another valuable form of preparation is to become more aware of the different cultural groups already present in Australian society.

Everyday Cultural Awareness

Australia now includes a diverse range of cultural, racial, religious and ethnic groups.

Because of different cultural backgrounds, two individuals who live in the same country may witness the same event, yet have different perceptions of it. A person's cultural background consists of:

- values
- attitudes
- life concerns
- cultural conditioning
- skills.

Companies that wish to improve their business and create more market opportunities are finding there are benefits in effective communication across cultures. Leaders are finding they need to be more aware of their own cultural background, and understand how their actions may affect people of other cultural backgrounds. In this setting, each of us can benefit from learning new ways to communicate with others.

The other benefit of using culturally aware communication methods is that it makes a greater range of people available for the workforce. It means many more skilled people may be able to take part in the industry. This approach can benefit the civil engineering and road construction industries as much as any other.

Rules on Patterns of Behaviour

Leaders of an organisation must realise that common rules and patterns of behaviour in one country are often very different from those in another country. As business becomes more internationalised, leaders and organisations will need to learn cultural sensitivity. This allows them to communicate business intentions effectively across cultures.

For example, a group that has firm rules about who speaks first or last in conversation, or a belief that to look down when someone speaks to you is courteous, would give an impression of discourtesy in Australia. This may cause some people to exclude others from a conversation, without knowing why it has occurred.

Different cultural groups may have different rules for:

- use of humour and irony
- courtesies in speech, such as when to 'please', 'thank you', or 'excuse me'.
- the meaning of yes and no
- rules of politeness — who can speak to whom, and who can begin a conversation
- dress
- deference to others
- drinking alcohol
- use of time.

Discriminatory Language

Awareness of the different customs, rules and social behaviour in different cultures reduces the barriers caused by prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination.

As a minimum, the language used when communicating must not be discriminatory to people of different cultures. Examples of discriminatory communications techniques are shown in the table. By avoiding these practices, we help more people to take part in business and social communication.

Discriminatory Communication Techniques	Purpose	Inclusive Communication Techniques
Derogatory labelling	To 'put down' people from another culture or group	Refuse to use derogatory labels (e.g. ragheads, dagoes, niggers)
Stereotyping people who belong to a particular group	To isolate or exaggerate certain factors and generalise them to all people in the group	Recognise and avoid the use of language that applies fixed images or stereotypes to groups of people.

Discriminatory Communication Techniques	Purpose	Inclusive Communication Techniques
Invisibility	To subsume one group into another by label, name or term.	Use inclusive language and language preferred by the minority group.
Imposed labelling	To reinforce the majority group's view because the minority lacks the power to define themselves.	Avoid the use of one single generic name for a number of different groups of people.
Extra visibility	To place emphasis on a difference such as sex, race or ethnic background.	Avoid emphasis on obvious signs of difference (e.g. Islamic headscarves; Indian saris; Sikh turbans).

Characteristics and Habits of Effective Leaders

What makes a person an effective leader? Leadership is mostly about behaviour, especially towards others. People who strive for these things generally come to be regarded and respected as a leader by their people:

- Integrity — the most important requirement of a good leader. Without integrity everything else is for nothing.
- Maturity — avoidance of excessive behaviour (e.g. shouting, ranting) and keeping the expression of emotional feelings to reasonable levels. This means keeping an even temperament even if feeling very upset or angry.
- Leading by example — always be seen to be working harder and more determinedly than anyone else.
- Help alongside your people when they need it.
- Fairness — treat everyone equally and on their merit.
- Be firm and clear in dealing with unacceptable or unethical behaviour.
- Listen to and really understand people, and show them that you understand. This does not mean that you have to agree with everyone. Understanding is different to agreeing.
- Always take the responsibility and blame for the mistakes of the team members.
- Always give team members the credit for the leader's successes.
- Never self-promote.
- Back up and support your people.
- Be decisive, but be seen to be making fair and balanced decisions.
- Ask for people's views, but remain neutral and objective.
- Be honest but sensitive in the way that you give bad news or criticism.
- Always do what you say you will do— keep your promises.

- Work hard to become expert at what you do technically, and at understanding your people's technical abilities and challenges.
- Encourage your people to grow, learn and take on as much as they want to, at a pace they can handle.
- Always emphasise the positive (say 'Do it like this', not 'Don't do it like that').
- Smile and encourage others to be happy and enjoy themselves.
- Relax, and give your people and yourself time to get to know and respect each other.
- Take notes and keep good records.
- Plan and prioritise.
- Manage your time well and help others to do so too.
- Involve your people in your thinking and especially in managing change.
- Achieve the company tasks and objectives, but never at the cost of your integrity or the trust of your people.

Effective leaders are energetic, determined, highly motivated, action-oriented and committed to excellence, and gain real enjoyment from working with people and seeing their achievements.

Leadership Behaviour

Most people change the way they deal with others in the workplace according to the situation. For example, people at work tend:

- not to get angry with a co-worker who is nervous on his or her first day (i.e. they are trying to support the new worker)
- deliver more reminders to some co-workers than to others, because they are known to be forgetful (i.e. they are giving directions, in a subtle way).

Combining Direction and Support to Create a Leadership Style

Most people in leadership positions use both directing and supporting behaviour towards their subordinates, but use more or less of each depending on the situation. From this information, we can identify four types of leadership behaviour:

- A Directing leader shows little supportive behaviour in a situation. He defines the roles and the tasks of the follower, and supervises them closely. The leader acting in this way makes and announces decisions. The communication tends to be one-way.
- A Coaching leader is both highly directive and ready to provide support. He or she defines roles and tasks and makes decisions, but seek ideas and suggestions from the follower. There is much more two-way communication flow.

- A Supporting leader emphasises support but gives little direction. He or she makes day-to-day decisions, such as task allocation and processes. The leader facilitates and takes part in the decision-making process, but hands the control of the project over to the follower.
- Delegating leaders give little in the way of either direction or support. They are still involved in the decision-making and problem-solving process, but hand the control of the project to the follower. The follower decides when and how to involve the leader.

The important thing about the various types of leadership behaviour is that effective leaders are able to adopt the appropriate type according to the situation. No one style is always 'right'. However, each leader tends to have a preferred style. People should be aware of both the style that suits them as individuals, and of the situation.

Finding the Right Style for the Situation (Situational Leadership)

The right leadership style depends very much on the person being led.

For example, a new person joins the team at the construction site and the supervisor is asked to help him or her through the first few days. The supervisor takes the person out into the field and shows him or her the task that needs to be completed by the end of the working day— then heads off to a meeting.

In this situation, the new person has not had any opportunity to develop either competence in or commitment to the work. However, the supervisor has acted as though the person has already developed both high competence and a high level of commitment, even though this is obviously not true. Everyone loses in this situation, because the new person feels helpless and demoralised, and the job will probably not be completed.

Another example might be the situation where the project manager hands the job over to another person before leaving for a holiday. The manager in this situation might adopt two approaches:

- List all tasks that must be completed and at the same time, provide a detailed set of instructions on how to carry out each task.
- Have a quick chat with the other person and make a few notes before leaving, and accept that everything will be fine.

If the person replacing the manager is in fact highly experienced, then he or she is probably has both high competence in and commitment to the work. If the manager:

- provides detailed information, the manager is being using the Directive style of leadership, and in this situation it would be inappropriate. (The work will probably get done, but not the way it was expected, and the colleague is likely to despise the manager for behaving in this manner).
- has the quick chat and gives the replacement a tour of the site, this is (in the situation) a Delegating style of leadership, and would be appropriate.

If the person replacing the manager is in fact inexperienced (or has never acted in a higher position), leaving the detailed instructions and a checklist will be welcome behaviour. In this situation, the replacement will probably 'learn by experience', and possibly develop higher levels of competence and commitment. This outcome benefits everybody.

By adopting the right leadership style for the person being led, the leader increases the chances that the company's goals will be achieved, and helps to build relationships.

Identifying the Individual's Needs and Putting Them to Good Use

The following discussion is about one method of identifying the needs of an individual and using them to advance the company's objectives. Other methods are discussed in Topic 10 in this series.

Achievement, Power and Affiliation

Pro-active leaders take a positive role in identifying the needs of employees. For example, a leader may find that a particular person responds well to opportunities to gain experience, training or personal development. The challenge is therefore to learn how to 'harness' the individual's motivations to achieve better outcomes for the company.

When studying how people behave in organisations, one scientist found that three different needs may be present in the same individual:

- a need for achievement
- a need for power
- a need for affiliation.

Need for Achievement

Some people have a greater need for achievement. It is hard to generalise to include all such individuals, but if achievement is important to people, they may:

- have a drive to excel
- set a standard and then try to achieve
- seek personal achievement rather than the rewards of success
- place great importance on making a distinction between themselves and others
- desire to do something better and more efficiently than it has been done before.

In addition, they may prefer to:

- take personal responsibility for finding solutions to problems
- receive rapid feedback on their performance (so that they can easily tell whether they are improving or not)
- set moderately challenging goals (i.e. avoid situations where the risks are very high or very low).

Need for Power

The need for power is the drive to have an impact, be influential, and control others. People in this category are likely to:

- enjoy being 'in charge'
- strive for influence over others
- prefer competitive and status-oriented positions
- be more interested in prestige and influence than effective performance.

Need for Affiliation

The need for affiliation is the desire to be liked and accepted by others. People in this category are likely to:

- strive for friendship
- prefer co-operative situations to competitive ones
- desire relationships involving a high degree of mutual understanding.

Finding the Best Motivating Factors for People with Different Needs

Any of the needs may exist to varying degrees in the same individual; people mostly can not be neatly categorised into one of the three types. However, leaders can use traits such as those described to evaluate which type of fulfilment is more likely to prove motivating to an employee.

An employee with a high need for achievement is likely to perform best and feel motivated where the job involves:

- freedom
- personal responsibility for outcomes
- immediate feedback on performance
- the opportunity to take on moderate risks.

These characteristics point to the strong possibility that people with a high need for achievement will do well in jobs that involve:

- selling
- running their own business
- running a charity drive
- managing a self-contained unit within a large organisation.

Further studies have shown that:

- Just because a person has a high need for achievement does not make him or her a good manager, as they are less interested in influencing others to do well. For example, a good salesman doesn't necessarily make a good sales manager; and a good manager in a large organisation doesn't necessarily have a high need for achievement.
- People who are successful as managers are more likely to be strong on need for power or need for affiliation
- It is possible to stimulate employees to increase their need for achievement, through training to think in terms of accomplishment, winning and success. This provides managers with the choices of either selecting an individual with a high need for achievement, or developing a candidate for the job through training.

The question of whether a person has a high need for power first and becomes a manager later, or rises to a position first and then develops a need for power, is yet to be conclusively decided. It is possible that the person selected for a leadership position may develop his or her own power motive.

Motivating Personnel

It is important that leaders have the ability to take positive actions that lead to motivation in others. Regardless of their role in the workplace, motivated workers tend to be more productive, have higher levels of self-esteem and gain a sense of achievement and satisfaction from the work. The leader's challenge is to promote these qualities.

Many leaders have found that placing subordinates in situations that challenge them to move outside their comfort zones (but not too much) can achieve these objectives. This means allocating jobs that are slightly beyond the known capabilities of individuals. However, a good knowledge of the skills and knowledge of the individual person is needed, as well as an ability to assess how far is 'too far'.

Some of the areas where the overall outcomes will be enhanced by encouraging people are:

- consciousness
- self-acceptance
- self-responsibility
- self-assertiveness
- purposefulness
- integrity.

Encouraging Consciousness

Each person must have the information required to carry out the work safely and efficiently. This means that leaders do not hold back information, but instead make sure information is easily available to the team. As well as this, it is important to keep the team informed about the effects their work has on the goals and progress of the organisation.

Another important step in promoting consciousness is to offer team members the opportunity to learn and upgrade their skills.

If someone does superior work or makes an excellent decision, invite him or her to explore how and why it happened. This does not simply mean praise, but asking questions to help raise the person's consciousness about what made the achievement possible. This can help the person to do the same again in the future.

If someone does unacceptable work or makes a bad decision, apply the same principle. Give feedback and discuss with the person how the problem occurred. This approach can make the employee more conscious of the consequences of their actions; they will be less likely to make the same mistake again.

It is important to avoid over-directing, over-observing, and over-reporting. Excessive managing works against the individual's desire for autonomy and creativity.

Encouraging Self-Acceptance

When talking to team members, a leader must give all the signs of being interested and involved in the discussion. This means making eye contact, listening actively, and offering appropriate feedback, to give the speaker the experience of being heard and accepted.

Always use a tone of voice that indicates respect. A person in a leadership position should never permit him or herself to speak in a superior, sarcastic, or blaming tone.

An important part of being a leader is to never permit a dispute to deteriorate into a conflict of personalities. Instead, focus the needs of the situation, with questions like— 'What is the situation?' 'What does the work require?' 'What needs to be done?'

It is good leadership behaviour to avoid becoming involved in undesirable behaviour by others and, when dealing with undesirable behaviour, to describe it by its effects on others. Leave blaming out of the picture. Let someone know if his or her behaviour is unacceptable. Point out the consequences of bad behaviour, describe the kind of behaviour that is required, and don't assassinate a person's character.

Team members feel positive about a leader who is seen to talk honestly about his or her feelings. This means that a leader who feels hurt or angry or offended should say so in a straightforward manner and with dignity. In other words, give everyone a lesson in the strength of self-acceptance.

Encouraging Self-Responsibility

A good leader creates opportunities for people to take responsibility for their actions, giving people room to take the initiative, volunteer ideas, and expand their range of experience.

Set clear, but definite, performance standards. Make sure people understand what parts of the work are non-negotiable (e.g. quality).

Discuss these standards with the team and seek to find out what they believe they are accountable for. This will ensure their understanding is the same as the leader's.

Publicise and celebrate unusual instances of self-responsibility by team members.

Encouraging Self-Assertiveness

Ensure that the work team understands that errors and mistakes are opportunities for learning. 'What can you learn from what happened?' is a question that builds self-esteem, encourages self-assertiveness, expands consciousness, and encourages people not to repeat mistakes.

Let each person in the team see that it is safe to make mistakes or say 'I don't know, but I will find out.'

Good leadership also involves letting people see that it is safe to disagree with the leader's point of view. It is better to convey respect for differences of opinion and not to punish dissent— provided that it remains within the limits of opinion and open discussion. Never allow people to promote Differences of opinion should never become personal attacks.

Encouraging Purposefulness

An important question is to ask people what they would need in order to feel more in control of their work; if possible, give it to them. This approach can help people to find a greater sense of purpose in their work.

Giving people the resources, information, and authority to do the work they have been asked to do is the best way to encourage purposeful behaviour. There can be no responsibility without power.

It is a leader's role to help people to understand how their work relates to the overall mission of the organisation, so that they always operate with a grasp of the wider context. In the absence of this grasp of context, it is difficult to sustain purposeful behaviour.

Encourage everyone to keep measuring results against stated goals and objectives — and spread this information widely.

Encouraging Integrity

Always tell the truth, keep promises and honour your commitments. Let people see that the things you say you will do and what you actually do are close to being the same thing. This applies not only to insiders, but with everyone you deal with — contractors, suppliers, customers, etc.

If you make a mistake in your dealings with someone, if you are unfair or short-tempered, admit it and apologise. Do not imagine that it would demean your dignity or position to admit taking an action you regret.

Invite your people to give you feedback on the kind of boss you are. Remember that you are the kind of manager your people say you are. Let your people see that you honestly want to know how you affect them, and that you are open to learning and self-correction. Set an example of non-defensiveness.

Convey in every way possible that your commitment is to operate as a thoroughly moral company, and look for opportunities to reward and publicise unusual instances of ethical behaviour in your people.

Understanding the Strengths and Weaknesses of Individuals

Good leadership means understanding the strengths and weaknesses of individuals, and responding appropriately.

Using an Individual's Strengths

Discovering the central interests of each individual in the team is a worthwhile use of a manager's time. This knowledge helps a manager to match tasks and objectives with the needs of individuals, wherever possible. This approach to motivating people gives them the opportunity to do what they enjoy most; it means developing people on the basis of what they do best, and building on people's strengths.

There are many strategies a manger can use to promote and achieve these outcomes, including the following:

- First and foremost, treat people as individuals with particular abilities, needs and desires
- Make reasonable allowance for different approaches to the job (but never tolerate disruptive, unproductive or unacceptable behaviour)
- Help people to develop their own strategies for overcoming problems (but don't hand them ready-made solutions)
- If the situation warrants it, take time to talk to a person individually to resolve problems or offer positive suggestions

- Provide timely feedback, particularly where a person achieves positive results
- Provide feedback in an appropriate way. For example, constructive criticism focused on the behaviour of an individual would best be given to that person as an individual, rather than to the group as a whole.

Reducing an Individual's Weaknesses

Every person, including a leader, has weaknesses. A weakness does not mean a lack of knowledge that can be improved by training or coaching, but a personal trait that tends to reduce a person's work performance. For example, a particular member of the team may not cope when placed in a fast-paced or high-stress situation.

It is important to realise that, when it comes to personality traits, people don't change much. It may be better to spend time building up the strengths people already have, instead of trying to 'fix' weaker talents and abilities.

This contrasts with the traditional performance improvement process, which often is about weaknesses, i.e. average or below-average performance. A performance appraisal often ends with suggestions for improvement, either verbally or in writing.

It may also be better to work around a person's weaknesses. For example, if a member of the team lacks people skills and the work group is dealing with the public, make sure that at least one team member has excellent people skills. However, there are times when managers should help people to improve their inadequate skills, knowledge, or methods.

It is often productive to assess each individual's talents and skills, and then provide training, coaching and development to help the person increase these skills.

Help people to become 'more of who they already are'. This means finding out what motivates each staff member and trying to provide more of it in his or her work environment. As an example, if challenge is what a person craves, make sure he or she often gets challenging assignments.

One of the most valuable assets a person in a leadership position can have is the ability to realistically assess the personal capabilities of team members. This ability is the first step in reducing weaknesses in individuals— the ability to identify personal traits that tend to reduce work performance.

A manager's job is not to help every individual he employs to grow. His job is improving performance. He needs to work with each person to find out what this means for the individual. For some people, it may mean reaching for a promotion; for others, it means expanding the scope of the job they are currently doing. However, it is finally up to individuals to use these opportunities and take an active role in their own development.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the degree to which individuals like or dislike themselves. As an individual trait, self-esteem is simply rated as 'high' or 'low'.

High Self-esteem

Generally, people with high self-esteem:

- believe they have more of the ability they need to succeed at work than those with low self-esteem
- take more risks when it comes to trying new jobs
- are more likely to choose unconventional jobs.

High self-esteem means that the person has confidence in his or her own ability to learn, make appropriate choices and decisions, and manage change. High self-esteem is also the experience of feeling that success, achievement, fulfilment—happiness — are appropriate to the person. The survival-value of such confidence is obvious; so is the danger when it is missing.

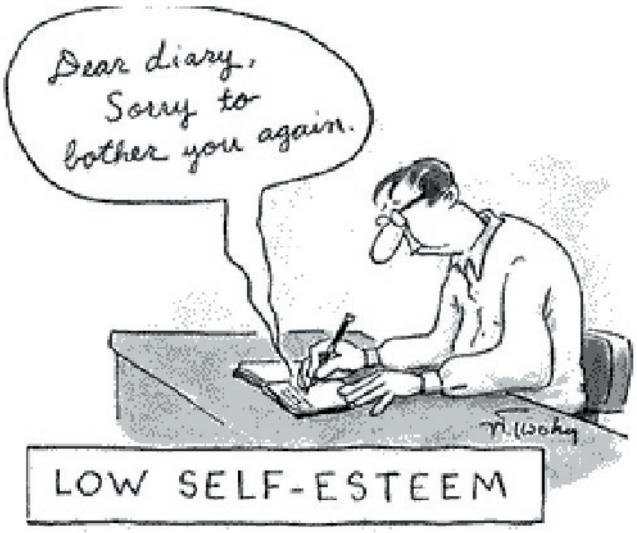
These are essential qualities for leaders, so that they are capable of motivating and instilling a high degree of self-esteem in others.

Low Self-esteem

Low self-esteem results from poor self-image. People with low self-esteem are likely to react badly to adverse or challenging situations. They may:

- tend to seek approval from others
- be more likely to conform to the beliefs and behaviours of those whom they respect
- feel less job satisfaction.

When a person with low self-esteem occupies a managerial position, he or she may become concerned with pleasing others and avoid taking an unpopular stand on a subject. Unfortunately, people with low self-esteem may end up with a poor employment record. If they have a long history of low self-esteem, they may end up with the feeling that they have no purpose in life.



Building Self-Esteem

There are six essential practices used for building self-esteem. All are relevant to civil construction organisations. The essential practices include:

- living consciously
- self-acceptance
- self-responsibility
- self-assertiveness
- living purposefully
- personal integrity.

Living Consciously

Living consciously means:

- respecting the facts that are before you
- being aware of what you are doing while you are doing it. For example if a customer, supervisor, employee, supplier, colleague is talking to you, listen and be aware of the encounter.
- involving yourself in any information, knowledge, or feedback that affects your interests
- having values, goals, and projects
- seeking to understand not only the world external to yourself but also your inner world as well, so that you do not act out of self-blindness.

The essence of living consciously is to have self confidence, speak plainly and to the point, and to always be ready to face reality, even when it is painful.

Self-Acceptance

Self-acceptance is the willingness to own, experience, and take responsibility for your thoughts, feelings, and actions. At the same time you must do it without evasion, denial, or disowning your actions.

If you are self-accepting, you do not always put your self 'on trial'. This allows you to hear critical feedback or different ideas, without becoming hostile and defensive.

Self-Responsibility

When you practice self-responsibility you realise that you are the owner of your choices and actions— no-one else is. You are responsible for your own life and well-being, and for attaining your goals.

If you need the co-operation of other people to achieve your goals, you must offer them values in exchange for this assistance.

Self-Assertiveness

When you practice self-assertiveness you must show that you are straight in your dealings with people. You must treat your values, as well as the values of others, with decent respect in all social interactions. You should never fake the reality of who you are in order to avoid someone's disapproval.

Self-assertiveness is the willingness to stand up for yourself and your ideas in appropriate ways and in appropriate situations.

Living Purposefully

The practice of living purposefully means that you must identify both your short-term goals and your long-term goals and the actions needed to reach them. As well as this, you must organise your behaviour in order to attain these goals and at the same time monitor the actions that you take to ensure you stay on track.

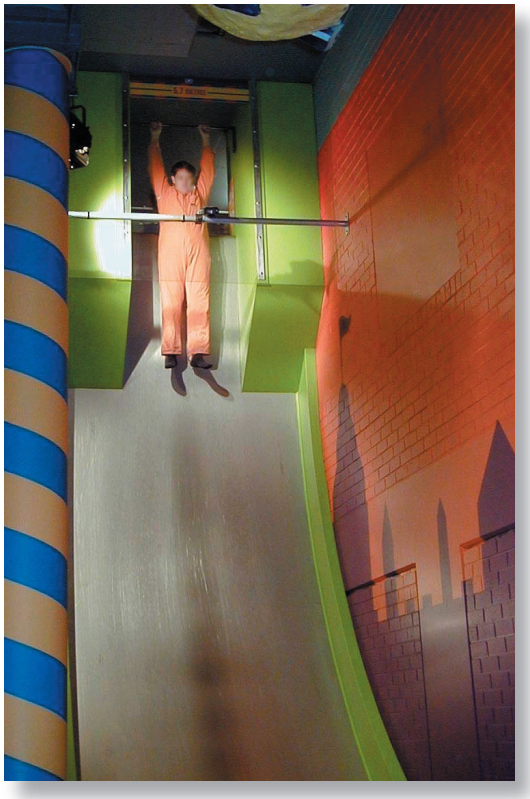
Always pay attention to outcomes. Sometimes it is painful to face up to reality when things don't work out. The ability to recognise when you need to go 'back to the drawing-board' is important.

Personal Integrity

The practice of personal integrity involves living according to what we know, what we profess, and what we do. Personal integrity means always telling the truth, honouring commitments, and putting in action the values you profess to admire. It means always dealing with others fairly and generously.

When we betray our values, we betray our mind, and self-esteem is an inevitable casualty.

The slippery slope



The Importance of Self-Esteem in a Leader

As a supervisor or leader in any civil engineering organisation you must recognise that 'who you are' as a person affects virtually every aspect of your organisation. You must understand that you are a role model. Every aspect of your behaviour is noted by those around you and it is reflected by those that you influence throughout the entire organisation.

If you maintain your integrity as a leader, you set a standard that others may feel drawn to follow. If a leader treats people with respect, it tends to work its way into company culture.

The higher the self-esteem that you have as a leader, the more likely it is that you can inspire the best in others. You cannot inspire others if your primary need is to prove yourself right and others wrong.

If you wish to create an organisation where there is high self-esteem and high performance, whether at the level of the road gang or the company as a whole, the first step is to work on yourself and raise the level of the six essential practices identified above. These principles apply to all levels of leadership.

Working on the Self-Esteem of the Individual

If you operate consciously, you grow in self-esteem. If you have a decent level of self-esteem, the impulse to operate consciously feels natural.

If you operate self-responsibly, you strengthen self-esteem. If you have self-esteem, you tend to operate self-responsibly.

If you integrate the six practices into your daily existence, you develop high self-esteem. If you enjoy high self-esteem, you tend to show the six practices in your daily activities.

If you want to learn to operate more consciously, you need to ask yourself, 'What would I do (or do differently) if I brought five percent more consciousness to my dealings with other people?'

Or again, if you operated five percent more self-acceptingly, or self-responsibly, or self-assertively, or purposefully, or with greater integrity, what would you do differently?

The important question is to ask yourself: Are you willing to experiment with those behaviours?

For example you might recognise that, if you brought five percent more self-esteem to your dealings with people, you would treat them more generously— so why not do so now? If you know that with more self-esteem you would do a better job, why not do so now? If you understand that with higher self-esteem you would face unpleasant facts more directly, why not choose to do so from now on?

When we do what we know is right, we build self-esteem. And when we betray that knowledge, we turn self-esteem upside down.

Team Building

A team is a group of people working towards a common goal. 'Team building' is the process of enabling the group to reach their goal.

In its simplest terms, the way to build a team is to:

- clarify the team's goals
- identify the issues that stop the team from reaching the goals or that slow them down
- address the issues, remove the inhibitors and achieve the goals.

The kind of work needed to build a team varies according to the numbers of people, as shown in the table:

Team size	Number in team	What is changed
Individual	1 person	Individual skills and perceptions
Small team	2–12 people	Relationships between people
Team islands	2 or more teams	Relationships between teams
Organisation	15+ people	The culture of the organisation

In a team-oriented environment, each person contributes to the overall success. Everyone has to get used to working with fellow team members to produce the required results. Each individual may have a specific job function and belong to a specific work group; nevertheless, each person must take into account the roles and needs of other members before he or she can accomplish the overall objectives.

It is important for team leaders to communicate clearly, so that all team members know the priorities. In order to communicate effectively with the team, the team leader should:

- give honest feedback
- regularly give people the information they need to do the job
- ensure the team understands how their work fits in with that of other teams
- ensure team members communicate clearly and honestly with each other
- encourage team members to discuss a variety of opinions
- ensure that any conflicts are discussed openly and are addressed effectively.

In a commercial organisation, leaders are constantly on the lookout for ways to improve business results and profitability. No matter how leaders approach the task of improving the team's performance, ultimately they are striving to improve results for customers. No-one on the team should forget this.

Problem Solving

Much of what supervisors and leaders do is about solving problems and making decisions. New supervisors, in particular, often solve problems and make decisions by simply 'reacting' to the situation.

Supervisors are often 'under the gun', stressed and short for time. Consequently, when they encounter a new problem or decision they must make, they tend to react with a decision that has worked before.

Using this approach, it is easy to get stuck in a cycle of solving the same problem over and over again. Supervisors need to become more organised in their problem-solving and decision-making.

The following are useful steps for solving problems:

- Define the problem
- Look at possible causes
- Identify alternatives approaches to resolving the problem
- Select a best approach
- Plan how you will put the best alternative into action
- Carefully check on progress
- When the job is finished, verify that the problem really has been resolved.

Define the Problem

'Problem definition' means trying to understand more about why there is a problem. Ask the following questions:

a. What is the evidence that there is a problem?

b. Where is it happening?

c. How is it happening?

d. When is it happening?

e. With whom is it happening? (This is not the same question as: 'Who is causing the problem?' When we're stressed, blaming is often one of our first reactions. To be an effective manager, you need to address issues first.)

f. Why is it happening?

g. Write down a short description of the problem; for example:

– 'The following should be happening, but isn't ...' or

– 'The following is happening but shouldn't be ...'

h. Clearly state what is happening, where, how, with whom and why.

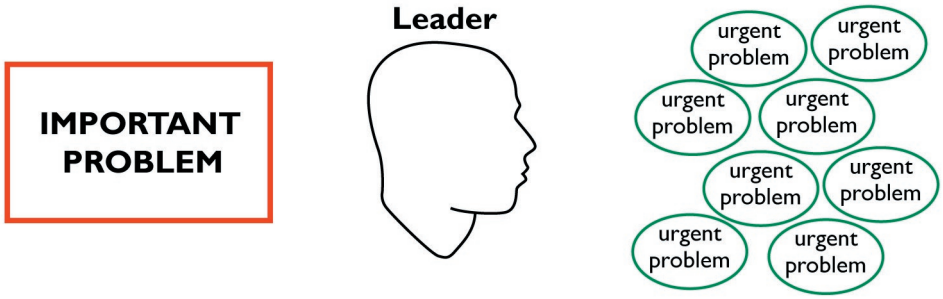
If the problem still seems to be 'to big to handle', break it down by repeating steps (a) to (h).

You may find that there are not just one, but several problems.

Discuss your findings with others.

If you still feel there are several problems, decide which one you will tackle first.

There is a difference between an 'important' and an 'urgent' problem. Often, what we think are 'important' problems are really just urgent problems. Important problems deserve more attention.



For example, a person who is continually answering 'urgent' phone calls probably has a more important problem— to cut down the number of incoming phone calls.

Look at Possible Causes of the Problem

When trying to find possible causes of a problem, it's very important to talk to other people who notice the problem and are affected by it.

Collect the input from other people in the work group, one at a time if possible. If you do not do it one at a time, people may tend to feel inhibited about offering their opinions.

Write down all opinions and ideas from others in the work group. Remember the key words:

- what is happening
- where
- when
- how
- with whom, and
- why.

Identify Alternative Approaches to Resolving the Problem

At this point, it is still useful to keep others involved in the problem-solving process, unless it is a personal and/or employee performance problem. It may be useful to brainstorm for solutions to the problem (see later).

Select a 'Best Approach'

When selecting the best approach, consider:

- Which approach is more likely to solve the problem in the long term?
- Which approach is the most realistic way to go for now? Are there enough resources? Are they affordable? Is there enough time to implement the approach?
- What risks are associated with each alternative? (see later)

Plan How You Will Put the Best Alternative into Action

The next step is to write an action plan. Consider:

- What will the situation look like when the problem is solved?
- What steps will you take to implement the best alternative? What else needs to change— for example, is there a need for a new method, policy or procedure?

Note!
To simply propose a solution where someone is 'just going to try harder' is not a solution.

- How will you know if the steps are being followed or not? (These will become the indicators of the success of your plan).
- What people, money and resources will be needed?
- How much time will be needed? When will you start and stop? How will you know when your efforts are starting to take effect?
- Who will take most of the responsibility?

The answers to the above questions become the action plan.

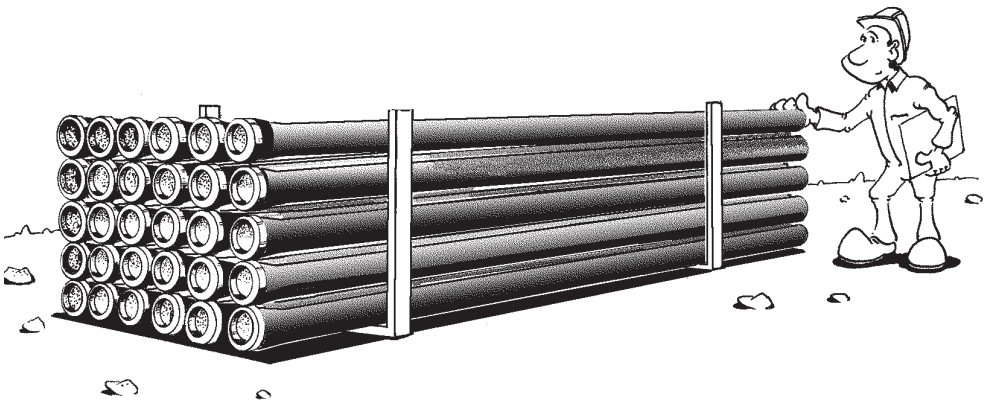
However, an action plan is of no value unless those who will be involved in implementing it, and the immediate supervisor, know about it.

An important aspect of this step in the problem-solving process is continual observation and feedback.

Carefully Check on Progress

Once people have accepted the action plan and put it into effect, it is important to continually check the results you are achieving:

1. Are you seeing what you would expect to happen?
2. Will the plan be completed according to schedule?



3. If people are not following the plan as expected, then consider:
   a. Was the plan realistic?
   b. Are there sufficient resources to complete the plan on schedule?
   c. Are some aspects being neglected?
   d. Should the plan be changed?

When the Job is Finished, Verify That the Problem Really has been Resolved

One of the best ways to verify whether a problem has been solved is to resume normal operations. However, you may still need to consider:

- How might we prevent this type of problem from occurring in the future? (e.g. through changes to policies and procedures, or training).
- What have we learned from solving this problem? (e.g. new knowledge, understanding or skills).

If the team's efforts are successful, write a report or memo about what you did and the results you achieved. This information is more valuable when shared with others in the organisation.

Performance Management

One of the most important and most difficult activities for supervisors is providing meaningful and open feedback to subordinates. This becomes more difficult when a supervisor is meeting face-to-face with a subordinate who is underperforming.

It is hard to predict how people will react to negative feedback. Some employees may realise the need for improvement, while others may blame someone else for the problem; a few will become angry when they hear that their job performance is considered to be unsatisfactory.

The aims of carrying out a performance appraisal are to improve a person's job performance and reward good performance. A supervisor who wants to achieve results from the time spent in performance appraisal has two choices: negotiate or confront. The experience of many people is that negotiation achieves better results.

Benefits of Negotiation

The aims of negotiating a performance appraisal are to:

- promote two-way communication between the supervisor and the person being appraised
- encourage the person being appraised to take more responsibility for improving performance.

In the traditional method of appraisal, the supervisor acts more as a judge of an employee's performance than as a coach. When using this method, the supervisor focuses on blame for things that went wrong, rather than on helping the employee to improve his or her performance.

However, there is still a place for the traditional method of appraisal. It is ideal for making pay-rise decisions. However, it is through the negotiated approach that employees make the most progress in improving their performance, career potential and earnings.

Why Use Performance Appraisals?

Performance appraisals are necessary in any organisation. They assist managers to:

- make changes within the organisation
- provide feedback to employees.

Making Changes Within the Organisation

By carrying out performance appraisals, managers often gain new ideas. As a result of what they hear employees saying, they may change existing procedures or introduce new ones.

For example, during employee appraisals a manager may hear from several people that a road construction supervisor is in conflict with other managers and employees. There are several ways he may respond to this information:

- Pay more attention to interpersonal skills when selecting new supervisors
- Encourage present supervisors to attend communication or conflict-management classes at the local TAFE college
- Provide the supervisor one-on-one counselling.

Knowledge gained from the performance appraisals can also help road construction supervisors to:

- plan for future staffing and assist workers to develop their skills and abilities
- make decisions about pay raises or other rewards
- set up an employee counselling session
- make decisions about disciplining or discharging a worker.

Employee's Need for Feedback

All workers want to know how well they are doing on the job. In most cases, positive feedback on a regular basis leads to better work performance by employees.

In general, supervisors who look for positive behaviours in their workers will have less difficulty giving constructive feedback or suggestions.

However, in the end, the supervisor making a performance appraisal still needs to make judgments about employees' performance, even when appraisal is negotiated.

Performance Appraisal Methods

Performance appraisals may be either objective or subjective.

Objective Appraisal

In this approach, the supervisor uses definite, measurable amounts to judge the employee's performance. These might include:

- unit output per hour (number of units)
- scraper cycles per day Insert photo/graphic here: Scraper/truck on roadworks
- number of errors per day.

This type of feed back is particularly useful when site records are available to provide the figures needed for the appraisal.

Subjective Appraisal

Subjective appraisal may include:

- comments describing the employee's attitude or performance (e.g. his/her ability to work well in a team setting)
- numbers on a scale, for example, 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent).

The disadvantage of this type of appraisal is that people often make errors. It is possible for a supervisor doing this type of appraisal to:

- give all or most employees high performance ratings, regardless of their actual job performance
- give all employees, even the best performers, a low rating
- give a person a high rating for all items on the list, simply because he or she has an outstanding performance in one area.

The first type of error (leniency) happens when a supervisor has not taken the time to think carefully about each aspect of a person's performance, or because they want to avoid any uneasiness between themselves and the employee.

The second type of error (strictness) happens because some supervisors simply tend to give most employees moderate to low ratings.

An example of the third kind of error (known as the halo effect) would be where a foreman rates a labourer very highly on co-operation, and then goes on to rate this person highly on knowledge of concreting work— even though the employee's knowledge in this area could use some improvement.

The 'bottom line' is that supervisors need to think carefully about all aspects of an employee's performance before making a subjective appraisal.

Effects of Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals may have an on-going effect on employees' lives. For example, an employee may be given a promotion and greater responsibility after a performance appraisal.

Because of this, employees take note of whether or not the appraisal was fair. If employees feel that have been unfairly treated during a performance appraisal, it will affect the motivation they feel and commitment they give to the job in the future.

It is therefore essential to appraise every employee's performance in the same way.

Negotiated Performance Appraisal

Many supervisors do not look forward to doing performance appraisal interviews. In a traditional performance appraisal, the supervisor is the 'expert' on the employee's performance. The worker may react with either passive resistance or by becoming defensive. However, the leader must not put off or ignore the delivery of bad news to a subordinate.

Putting more responsibility on the worker makes it easier for the supervisor to do the performance appraisal. In the negotiated approach, the supervisor asks the worker being appraised to bring three lists to the interview. These are:

- areas where the worker performs well
- areas where the worker has shown recent improvement
- areas where the worker feels his or her performance has been weak.

The important point is for the supervisor to tell the worker that he is also going to complete the list and present it at the meeting.

This will encourage the person to bring open and straight-forward responses to the meeting. It is just as important for the person to hear about good performance as it is know about areas where there is room for improvement.

The Appraisal Meeting

When you discuss the person's performance, ensure there is a relaxed, positive atmosphere before getting on with the discussion. It is essential to hold the meeting in a place where there are no distractions (e.g. telephone calls), where the discussion can be confidential, and drop-ins are unlikely.

Employee's Lists

Ask the employee to read each list starting with the first list (areas where the worker performs well).

You should listen intently and take notes if needed, but do not interrupt the employee—except to ask questions that help to clarify an issue.

It is good to ask the employee to amplify or explain a point. People seldom mind being interrupted when it means having a chance to offer clarification.

Note!
Never ask questions that are going to place the person on the defensive.

First List

The main purpose of the first list is to:

- recognise the employee's strong points
- honestly build up employees so that they ready to hear constructive criticism
- get a clear picture of what the employee has been doing.

As the employee reads out the first list, the manager adds to his or her first list any extra points suggested by the employee's points. Acknowledge what is being said by careful listening.

After the employee finishes reading his or her list, the manager reads the list back to them. This should include praise of the employee's good points, even if the employee has already mentioned them.

The first list is the key step. Time spent discussing what employees do well is never wasted.

Employees who feel that they are performing well in at least one area of responsibility, and also feel validated by their supervisors, are more likely to feel motivated to improve their performance in other areas as well.

If the worker mentions, as one of his or her good points, a performance issue that the manager consider a weak point, the manager should attempt to understand the employee's perspective. Never disagree with the employee at this point.

While you may disagree with the person, this is not the time to discuss it. The opportunity to do so will come later in the discussion.

Second List

The function of the second list (areas where the worker has shown recent improvement) is to permit employees to discuss weak points that they were identified during the previous year. Even though an employee believes he or she has improved in an area, it does not mean that they have overcome the problem. The second list therefore provides an opportunity to discuss progress.

As before, the manager must listen and ask for clarification, without interrupting the employee.

The manager must then acknowledge the comments of the employee, and then read his or her own list.

Third List

The basic reason for the third list (areas where the worker feels his or her performance has been weak) is to help make good employees better and to help those who are performing poorly to improve. (Everyone has areas in which they can improve).

Permit the employee to read his/her complete list uninterrupted, except to ask for clarification when needed. When an employee speaks of something as being a problem, challenge or weak area, it is important for the manager not to 'jump in' and agree with the person.

When it comes time to read the manager's list, there is no reason to repeat what the employee has said.

Instead, it is an opportunity to mention any issues that have NOT been raised. A key point to remember is that when employees acknowledge something as a weak point, they have taken ownership of that problem.

Feedback on Below-Standard Performances

When providing feedback on below-standard performance, the manager needs to clearly identify the specific area of performance needing improvement, as a separate issue. Otherwise, there is a strong risk that the manager will fail to communicate with the person.

Putting labels on people usually gets a negative response. For example:

- 'You are lazy'.
- 'People say you are too stubborn'.
- 'You are not considerate of how others are feeling'.
- 'You don't take the initiative'.

If a manager has feelings like this about an employee's performance, it is better to discuss the incidents that have led to these conclusions, rather than the conclusions themselves.

Other Aids to Performance Appraisals

It may also be useful to look at how the worker is 'getting on' with others on the job. For example, if you are appraising Employee A and Employee B, who often have to work together or co-ordinate their work on site, the best question to ask is:

- Ask Employee A: Is there any way you feel you could help Employee B do the job better?
- Ask Employee B: Is there any way you feel you could help Employee A do the job better?

Follow-Up to Negotiated Approach

If the employee's performance is substandard, it is often worthwhile to hold a follow-up meeting a month or two after the initial performance appraisal. At this meeting, the manager discusses where the employee has improved, as well as areas that require special attention.

In many ways, the follow up meeting is similar to the original meeting. Give the employee who was appraised the opportunity to come prepared; this will allow effective discussion of what has worked and what has not worked.

The supervisor also prepares in the same way. As in the original meeting, focus on the positive. Keep blame and critical comment out of the picture.

While the negotiated approach to performance appraisal does not guarantee success, it does assist both parties to obtain a clear picture of what each has to do to achieve improvement.

When introducing a sensitive topic, the supervisor may wish to remind employees of their good points and potential with the company. The discussion can then focus on specific points that are standing in the way of the employee reaching his or her full potential.

Decision-Making Techniques

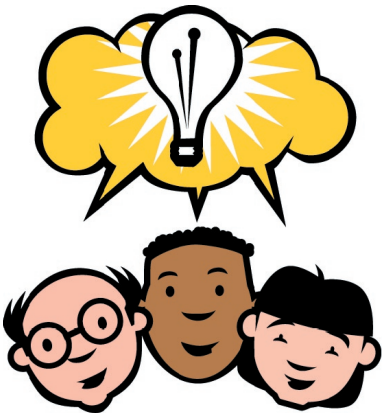
An effective leader makes use of the skills, knowledge and creativity already available in the work group. This applies not only in day-to-day operations, but also in decision-making processes. The following discussion identifies two techniques that assist groups to make decisions:

- brainstorming
- selecting the best solution from a number of proposals.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a technique that brings members of the work group together to combine their skills, knowledge and creativity. It is one of the most effective tools that teams can use, and can lead to the generation of lots of ideas in a short time. It would be used when there is a need to:

- determine possible causes of (or solutions to) problems
- plan the steps for a project
- decide which problem (or improvement opportunity) to work on
- include all of the available options.



Starting a Brainstorming Session

To begin the session, the team must:

- decide on a time limit
- appoint one person to act as facilitator
- decide whether to start with a freewheeling or
- a round-robin session.

(However, it is an option to switch to either type once you have started).

Ground Rules for Brainstorming Sessions

Typical ground rules for brainstorming sessions include:

- Don't edit what is said and remember not to criticise any ideas
- Go for quantity of ideas; you can narrow down the list later
- Encourage wild or exaggerated ideas
- Build on the ideas of others (e.g. one member of the group may say something that sparks another member's idea).

In a brainstorming session, every idea is valid. Every idea is recorded, no matter how crazy or outrageous it seems at the time.

Creative Thinking

Because brain-storming encourages people to think 'outside the square', it is a great opportunity for creative thinking.

Your team should welcome people who look at existing problems in new ways. They may be people who ask silly or even naïve questions, but these questions have a habit of making others stop and think about the all-important question:

- Why do we do things the way we do?

During a brainstorming session, you should welcome ideas that ask the questions 'why?' or 'why not?'. Be suspicious of ideas that provide answers.

In other words, don't confuse 'what is' with 'what should be'. For this reason, it is vital to accept, without criticism, every idea that comes from a brainstorming session.

Types of Brainstorming Sessions

The session may be held as either a freewheeling session or a round robin.

In a freewheeling session:

- there are no turns (i.e. everyone is free to contribute at any moment)
- ideas are allowed to 'pop out'
- the facilitator writes down each idea as it occurs.

In a round robin:

- everyone takes a turn in offering an idea
- anyone can pass on any turn
- the round continues until there are no more ideas
- the facilitator writes down each idea as it occurs.

Role of the Facilitator

The facilitator is the person who conducts the brainstorming session. To do so successfully, the facilitator needs to:

- understand the topic
- give people time to think
- give each person a chance to speak
- stay well clear of criticising, judging or challenging ideas
- record precisely what is said
- keep the session going until people are running out of ideas

- combine similar or duplicate ideas (when all ideas are out)
- help the team to decide on which ideas are the priority for action.

At the end of the session, the facilitator should thank the participants.

When to Stop a Brainstorming Session

It is time to stop a brainstorming session when:

- everyone has had a chance to participate
- no more ideas are being offered
- the facilitator has made a 'last call' for ideas
- the time limit has expired.

Displaying Brainstormed Ideas— Affinity Diagram

If, at the end of a brainstorming session, the team have come up with many ideas, the affinity diagram makes it easier to deal with them, or to break down a complex issue into easy-to-understand categories. It can also help the team members to reach agreement on an issue or situation.

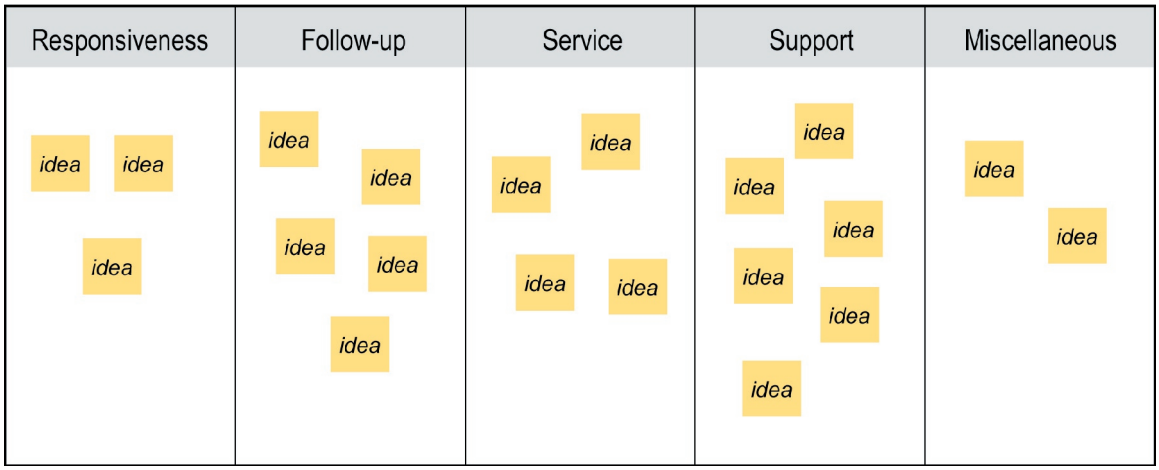
To use an affinity diagram:

- State each issue or problem clearly and simply, and in a way that everyone agrees on.
- Each participant thinks of ideas and writes them on index cards or sticky notes as short, concise statements.
- The facilitator collects the cards or sticky notes, mixes them up and then spreads them out on a flat surface.
- The participants pick out cards or notes that list related ideas and set them aside, repeating this process until all have been placed into a group. (This works best when there is no conversation between participants; otherwise, the process is delayed as members argue over which group a card should be placed in).
- The participants then work through each group and develop a title or heading that best describes the theme of each group.

Once the participants start to generate titles for the groups of ideas, it is best to:

- keep the heading short
- place groups that are similar next to each other
- combine groups if they are very similar, under a new heading if necessary
- continue until the team agrees on the grouping of all notes or cards.

A typical affinity diagram resulting from this process is shown below.



Teams usually gain more value from affinity diagrams by seeking comment from others in the organisation who may be affected by the proposals. The next step is to hold another meeting again to incorporate the changes people have suggested. The affinity diagram can then become the starting point for an action plan.

Killer Phrases

One of the important jobs for the facilitator in brainstorming sessions is to recognise and cancel out 'killer phrases'— the idea assassinators, or words that discourage people from freely contributing ideas.

The following list provides some examples of killer phrases.

A great idea, but…	Don't be ridiculous...
…We've never done it that way.	…Let's not step on their toes.
…It won't work.	…Somebody would have suggested it before if it were any good.
…We haven't the time.	…Too modern.
…It's not in the budget.	…Too old-fashioned.
…Too expensive.	…Let's discuss it at some other time.
…We've tried that before.	…You don't understand our problem.
…Not ready for it yet.	…Why start anything now?
…Good idea, but our school is different.	…We're too big for that.
…All right in theory, but can you put it in practice?	…The experienced people won't use it.
…Too academic.	…We have too many projects now.
…Too hard to administer.	…What you are really saying is...
…Too much paperwork.	…Has anyone else ever tried it?
…Too early.	…It has been the same for 20 years so it must be good.
…It's not good enough.	

Selecting the Best Solution from a Number of Proposals

During the processes of brainstorming and using an affinity diagram, we may have generated not one or two, but a larger number of ideas for potential solutions. If so, the next steps are to analyse all of the solutions and decide which proposal to adopt. A simple but effective technique for this is a Criterion Rating Form, as described below.

Criterion Rating Process

Note!
'Criterion' is singular; 'criteria' is plural.

The steps for using the criterion rating form, as shown below, are:

- give each criterion a weight
- remove 'show stoppers'
- decide whether any of the proposals will not 'fit' well within the organisation's business
- use the criterion rating form to give each proposal a rating.

Solution	Quality impact 2	Time impact 1	Cost–benefit impact 1	Other impacts 1	Total (out of 50)	Rank
A	6 x 2 = 12	7 x 1 = 7	8 x 1 = 8	6 x 1 = 6	33	1
B	7	5	7	4	30	2
C	6	6	4	4	26	3
D	5	4	3	8	25	4
~~E~~						
~~F~~						

Give Each Evaluation Criterion a Weight

As shown in the rating form, the team members have chosen four criteria for evaluating proposals A, B, C, D, E, and F:

- quality impact
- time impact
- cost–benefit impact
- other impacts.

The team give each of these criteria a number or 'weight' between one and five. However, the weights must ADD UP TO five. In the example, they have weighted 'quality impact' as 2 and other impacts as 1, so that:

(2 +1 +1+ 1 =5).

Remove 'Show Stoppers'

The team members then consider whether any of the proposals can be rejected outright. Usually this applies if the proposal is likely to be undesirable for, or unacceptable to, the customer.

They then list the remaining solutions in the left-hand column, as shown.

Consider How the Various Proposals Will 'Fit' Within the Organisation's Business

The team members then consider whether any of the proposals can be rejected outright, because of some feature that is likely to make them undesirable for, or unacceptable to, the organisation.

They then use the criterion rating form on the remaining solutions; in this case, A, B, C, and D.

Using the Criterion Rating Form

The team members then decide how many points each solution scores against each of the criteria. However, they must use the same system of scoring for all criteria.

An easy scale to use is 1 to 10, with 10 being high and 1 being low. This means that the most any proposal can score is 50 points in total, as the criterion weights must add up to five.

An example of the scoring system is shown in the first line of the table above (i.e. for Solution A).

The team members:

- gave a score of 6 out of 10 for the quality impact of Solution A
- multiplied this number by the weight for quality impact (i.e. score 6 x weight 2 = 12)
- calculated a rating of 7 for time impact (score 7 x weight 1 = 7); 8 for cost–benefit impact (score 8 x weight 1 = 8); and 6 for other impacts (score 6 x weight 1 = 6)
- added up the ratings horizontally across the row (i.e. 12 + 7 + 8+ 6 = 33).

The team members then list the proposals in order, from highest to lowest. In the example, proposal A had the highest rating and proposal D the lowest. (They had already eliminated Proposals E and F as 'show stoppers' or for not fitting well within the organisation's business).

On Completion of Decision-Making

Once the team members have been through the decision-making process, as outlined above, it is time to:

- accept the group's choice
- give people time to 'think through' the likely effects of the decision
- stop worrying about whether or not it was the 'right' decision (unless some obvious problem arises)
- obtain approval for the decision
- make a commitment
- put the decision into effect.