

Communication

Bulletin *for Managers & Supervisors*™

A fast-read source of information to help managers communicate better within and between departments, twice a month.

January 4, 2021



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4 management rules COVID-19 made obsolete – and how to adjust

Tips on how to adapt your leadership style

We work – and you lead – differently than we did before the coronavirus.

In these new conditions, many old workplace rules look and feel outdated.

Formal or informal, they don't work because they fit circumstances that don't exist anymore.

"It's critical to take a hard look at how things used to be, what's changed since then, and most important, how we must respond to those changes," says attorney Rosanna Berardi, who is also the CEO of the consultancy firm High Wire Woman.

Now's the time to review, adapt or overhaul rules as your leadership evolves in the coming months and years.

Here are the top four rules that quickly are becoming outdated.

Rule 1: Keep 'office hours'

Traditional office hours worked when businesses were open, customers visited and employees actually separated work from life.

Now, many people work from home – so there's no separation – and no one visits the business. Work gets done along with homeschooling and life's concerns.

That's why Berardi suggests "predefined active hours."

Pick times that are essential for all team

Please see Rules ... on Page 2.

Sharpen Your Judgment

ADA: Can worker pick accommodation?

"Hi, Daisy, got a minute?" employee Buddy Rick asked HR Manager Daisy Notes.

"Sure," Daisy replied. "What's up?"

"So, you might not know this," Buddy started, "but I have severe allergies. Dust or strong smells can make it hard for me to breathe."

"OK," Daisy said with a nod, grabbing a pen to take notes. "Have you been having issues lately?"

"The past few days," Buddy confirmed. "Regina has been wearing this really strong perfume that sends me into bad coughing fits. I've had to exit the office several times."

Daisy paused. She could try to ask Regina to cut back on the perfume, but that could cause more problems.

"If I had my own office with a door, that would solve the issue," Buddy continued.

Doesn't want remote option

Daisy frowned. "We don't have the space to do that," she said. "Besides, if we gave you an office, everyone else would want one, too."

"But I can let you work remotely," Daisy continued. "That would be a more practical solution."

"I don't want to work from home!" Buddy insisted. "If you can't give me my own office, I'll have to sue for an ADA violation."

When Buddy filed a suit, the company fought to get it dismissed. Did the company win?

This regular feature sharpens your thinking and helps keep both you and your firm out of trouble. It describes a real legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

Make your decision, then please turn to Page 4 for the court's ruling.

The Purpose of Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors

Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors provides relevant and actionable business ideas to help managers and supervisors improve communication and increase effectiveness.

The *Bulletin* helps improve communication within and between departments, a major goal for most businesses seeking better performance.

All in a fast-read format, twice a month.

Rules ...

(continued from Page 1)

members to work and be available for meetings and collaboration.

Beyond that, give more leeway to employees to get their work done, and meet deadlines and expectations.

Rule 2: Work 40 hours, 9-5

Similarly, the traditional workweek – 40 hours, which Berardi points out was coined more than 200 years ago as *eight hours labor, eight hours recreation and eight hours rest* – may not be the best formula now.

An eight-hour workday and 40-hour week might be more than enough. And shorter or fewer days might help improve employees' quality of work and life.

Researchers have found employees work better in concentrated periods and when they're in control of their own schedules. Try to back down from a rigid work schedule, and monitor if employees remain productive, to determine if it works for your team.

Rule 3: Maintain constant oversight

If employees don't work on-site all the time, leaders can't oversee them and their work. So any leader who believed in micromanaging can't do it

going forward.

And a hands-off leader might lose control of a remote work team.

Instead, Berardi suggests amping up accountability on both sides. Managers will want to set clear expectations and become a touch point, not a bottleneck.

Then establish key metrics, so both you and employees know when they're on target or not. Schedule weekly check-ins where employees share their top three priorities and you make sure they have the resources to achieve them.

Rule 4: Be a boss

Many managers consider their main role to be managing people, work and the workplace.

Now, more than ever, employees and companies need leaders, not just managers. A few keys to becoming more of a leader and less of a manager:

- **Avoid pointing fingers** at people and/or the current work circumstances for issues and challenges you all face.
- **Be proactive.** Regularly ask employees about their concerns and challenges handling their responsibilities and working in a new environment.
- **Empower employees** to create the best working situations for themselves, so they can continue to be productive and engaged.

Source: Entrepreneur, tinyurl.com/rules491

TECH CORNER

Keep customers' trust by bolstering your cybersecurity

Don't allow customers to lose trust in your company.

Cybersecurity is more important than ever, especially for those firms that can't afford the latest and greatest security technology.

5 tips for smaller businesses

- **Train employees in security principles, protocols and policies.** It's vital. And don't forget to remind workers there are consequences for violating them.
- **Protect mobile devices.** Many

companies forget about this, but they're a major risk because they often contain confidential data and access to your networks.

- **Remind remote workers to change their Wi-Fi password** to the strength of ones they use at work. QWERTY and children's names and birthdays won't cut it.
- **Supply VPNs to remote workers** and don't use the free ones, which often sell data to third parties.
- **Limit software installations by workers.** Employees should have to request permission to install something not required by work.

Source: tinyurl.com/10cybertips491

COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

■ To stop work bureaucracy, stop being a bureaucrat!

Many leaders want to stop workplace bureaucracy for a lot of reasons.

Yet they don't see they're part of the problem.

Make sure you don't feed into bureaucracy by reviewing your actions weekly and asking yourself:

- Did I hold on to power when I should've shared it?
- Did I fail to challenge a counterproductive policy?
- Did I fake enthusiasm for one of my boss's ideas?
- Did I play it safe when I should've been bold?

If you answered yes to any, it might be time to start making bolder moves to beat bureaucracy.

Source: The Pink Cast, tinyurl.com/bureaucracy490

■ Quiet well-intentioned, big talkers in meetings

In some unfortunate ways, Zoom meetings are no different than on-site, in-person meetings.

Big talkers will monopolize the event.

Managers might need to handle this situation differently.

Here's how:

- **Set expectations.** Send a message before you meet, "Please email an idea or two on X subject. I'll combine them, and we can talk through everybody's ideas to come up with our strategy."
- **Encourage "chat."** Pose a proactive question to employees on the public chat feature in your Zoom call. When ideas pop up, you can call on people who are less likely to speak out – instead of your big talkers – to share.
- **Rotate facilitation.** Ask different employees to facilitate regular meetings. They can monitor the chat, set agendas and pick topics.

Source: tinyurl.com/quiet491

Real Problems, Real Solutions

Our subscribers come from a broad range of organizations, large and small. In this regular networking feature, three of them share their successes in improving workplace communication.

1 Daily recognition drives employee engagement

We wanted to drive a culture of recognition. Every job – no matter how small – is important in helping us operate effectively and efficiently.

In order to impact engagement for our 3,700 employees, we wanted to drive daily recognition. So we built a recognition and rewards platform called Driven, powered by Achievers, where all staff could recognize each other in real time.

We put a lot of effort into the program's roll out including passing out stickers for employees to wear. It was fun seeing them walk around wearing Driven stickers and scrolling

through recognitions on the newsfeed.

75% active users

Since launching in 2015, the program has seen a 95% activation rate and 82% monthly active usage. We're able to give a sense of belonging, which is more important than ever before.

Recognition doesn't have to be associated with dollars, as it should bring joy to employees, motivate them and show they're valued.

(Lauren Brittingham, Director of Organizational Development, Bayhealth Medical Center, Dover, DE)

2 Treating staff like family retains talent

It was tough for smaller employers like us to compete with national chains to find and retain employees. But we found a way to differentiate ourselves.

We received inspiration from an unlikely place – students. We found a course at a local college that partnered with a company to create a marketing project for others. They helped us formulate a new slogan: "Our Culture. Your Family."

Flexible scheduling

One strategy for creating our family atmosphere was allowing flexible scheduling. We made it possible because many of our employees were students and/or worked another job.

We also asked our general managers to be "recognition detectives" and give out "WOW cards" to employees for going above and beyond.

There are other day-to-day actions that maintain the family culture and most aren't expensive. It's about being purposeful and making it happen.

(Alan Lundeen, Senior Director of Talent Management, Cousins Subs, Menononee Falls, WI)

3 How we help staff avoid video burnout

Video conferencing was a great tool to help us stay connected and productive when the majority of employees started working from home.

Then it wasn't so great. We were meeting online more often than we got together when we worked on-site.

Employees – and managers – started to suffer from video fatigue. Many lost interest and made excuses to skip.

Take a break

To help employees avoid burnout, we encouraged a couple different approaches to meetings.

For smaller meetings, we told people to make audio calls and try to walk around while they talked.

For larger meetings, we asked leaders to set up shorter meetings or find different ways to cover the meeting. Perhaps an email or exchange over an app channel would do.

This has helped us all stay engaged and productive in meetings.

(Sameer Chowdhri, Global Head, Workplace for HR at Facebook, Menlo Park, CA)



YOUR LEGAL COACH

Do we have to provide masks for employees?

Question: Do we have to provide masks for employees at work?

Answer: No, according to OSHA, but for a specific reason: Cloth face coverings aren't considered personal protective equipment (PPE), which is only required when workers need protection against exposure to occupational hazards.

But you may want to provide them to "ensure that cloth face coverings are worn as a feasible means" to keep employees safe and stop the spread of the coronavirus, OSHA recommends.

Many employers choose to use cloth face coverings, along with other safe practices such as social distancing, staggered work schedules, new air filtration systems and regular disinfecting cleans.

To help keep employees safe, it's a good idea to have masks, gloves and hand sanitizer on-site and available.

Source: Department of Labor, [tinyurl.com/masks491](https://www.tinyurl.com/masks491)

LIGHTER SIDE

For the days when the idea of working is tough

Even when our work is rewarding, the *idea of working* can be daunting some days.

When you feel that way, smile and think about these insights:

- "When I got to work this morning, my boss stormed up to me and said, 'You missed work yesterday, didn't you?' I said, 'No, not particularly.'"
- "Our computers went down at work today, so we had to do everything manually. It took me 20 minutes to shuffle the cards for Solitaire."
- "When my boss said to have a good day, I went home."
- "I often feel the first five days after the weekend are the hardest."

Source: *Fatherly.com*

COMMUNICATION NEWS

Drafting a return-to-work plan

Return to work doesn't equate with return to normal. Most companies will need to adapt their workplaces and work practices.

If you haven't already started a return-to-work policy, you might want to follow these steps from Attorney Max Muller of Max Muller & Associates.

Expert action plan

1. Pull together a planning team from across functions to get diverse perspectives and a network to disperse info. Choose one trusted leader to disseminate the info. And seek advice from outside experts.

2. Develop a flexible plan, especially

within the confines of government regs for employment, workplace safety, and wage and hour issues.

3. Return to work in phases. Consider what can be done where. Work on workplace safety prep. Create safety policies that address tests, masks, contact tracing, social distancing, etc.

4. Make sure expectations, personnel and established guidelines are in place to:

- stay on top of government regs and mandates
- test, trace, report and isolate infections
- respond safely and quickly to reported infections, and
- continually communicate info to employees.

All employees are essential! How to thank them now

All of your employees are essential, and many don't feel it.

Nearly a third of employees – regardless of where they work now – are tired and stressed. And a quarter are discouraged, according to research in Human Resource Executive.

“Your employees are struggling,” says Deb Boelkes, author of *Heartfelt Leadership*. “You may not be able to change their day-to-day reality, but you can change the way they experience their work life.”

The best way to improve that is by showing

them more appreciation. Boelkes suggests:

- **Write it.** Skip email and Slack. Send a handwritten, heartfelt note, thanking them for extra efforts or just doing a good job.
- **Name accomplishments.** Recognize great work and personal bests in group meetings. Ask employees to share personal stories on their accomplishments. These opportunities to blow one's own horn boost morale.
- **Be generous with time.** When possible, give flex time to ease burdens.

Source: *businessworldrising.com*

Quotes

I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do.

– Leonardo da Vinci

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

– Anne Frank

If you're offered a seat on a rocket ship, don't ask what seat! Just get on.

– Sheryl Sandberg

EDITORS:
RENEE COCCHI
rcocchi@pbp.com

MICHELE MCGOVERN
mmcgovern@pbp.com

PRODUCTION EDITOR:
AMY JACOBY

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR:
CURT BROWN

Subscriptions: 800-220-5000

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Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

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Yes. The company won when a judge dismissed Buddy's lawsuit.

Buddy's attorney argued the company didn't engage in the ADA interactive process because it refused to grant Buddy's preferred accommodation.

But a court disagreed. It said the company did engage in the interactive process – Buddy was the one who brought the process to an end.

The court said Buddy had no good reason that working from home wouldn't be feasible for him.

“The plaintiff's unwillingness to explain the rejection was inconsistent with the flexible

give-and-take necessary for finding an effective accommodation,” the court said.

Employees don't pick accommodations

This case offers an important reminder that employers don't have to give employees their preferred accommodation. The ADA only requires an accommodation that's effective for both parties.

Employers have to show a good-faith effort to accommodate the employee. So make a point to request more info about the worker's condition and take all requests seriously.

(Based on *Ali v. Scott Pruitt*. Dramatized for effect.)