

Communication

Bulletin TM for Managers & Supervisors

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

February 1, 2021



If you haven't been to our website recently, here's exclusive online content you've been missing:

www.CommunicationBulletin.com



Management Skills Center

Improve your skills and manage better



Professional Writing Center

Hundreds of tips to get writing right

Be the best leader you can be! 3 ways to boost your skills

Diminish self-doubt with a self-assessment

You're a great leader. You know it. People have told you it.

But every once in a while, a little self-doubt might creep in. And you wonder, *Am I really that good? Where could I improve?*

Fortunately, that's a healthy attitude – looking for ways to improve and wanting to be better only proves you're a great leader.

But you still need to know what to improve. This can help – self-assessment tools from Dr. Bill Donahue, a leadership consultant, speaker and coach.

Consider past decisions

Most people – and especially managers and supervisors who want to be great leaders –

scrutinize bad decisions. You might even be unnecessarily hard on yourself when things go wrong.

While it's important to review bad decisions and try to learn from them, it's more important to assess good decisions. That way, you equip yourself to do more of the right stuff.

Donahue suggests honestly reviewing these questions regularly:

- What was my process for making a good decision? Did I get input, go off intuition, gather data, etc.?
- How did my decision impact my employees' and colleagues' emotions,

Please see Leader ... on Page 2.

Sharpen Your Judgment

Employee bad-mouths company – and sues

“He said what?!” Manager Deena Roberts asked the customer on the phone.

The customer explained, “Stan told me you took him off my account and demoted him because he's old. Understand, I don't mind. Stan wasn't exactly great at handling my business.”

“It's not the first I've heard a customer unhappy with Stan, and I'm sorry for that,” Deena said. “But it's the first I've heard of his bad-mouthing.”

Agreed to terms

When Deena was done helping the customer, she asked Stan to come to her office.

“What is it?” Stan asked. “Need to tell me how old and awful I am?”

“I moved you back into your old position because you didn't meet goals during the trial period of the promotion,” Deena said. “You agreed to those terms, remember?”

“There you go again, picking on me because of my age. Old guy can't remember,” Stan said. “I bet the new, young guy in the position can. I'll have to tell customers about this one, too.”

“That's it, Stan. If you have a problem with me, OK, take it to HR,” Deena said. “But bad-mouthing to customers is insubordination. You'll need to gather your things and go.”

Stan sued, claiming age bias and freedom of speech violations. The company fought the case. Did it 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.

Leader ...

(continued from Page 1)

- work environment and success?
- How quickly was I able to decide? What influenced the speed of my decision?
- What was the ripple effect of my decision?
- Did I directly contribute to a significant business result?
- What other factor(s) outside my control had an impact?
- Overall, how do I feel about the decision? Would I make it again?

Then, “sift through your answers for themes, insights and wisdom for future decisions,” Donahue says.

Look at relationships

No leader is an island. Other people affect and are impacted by the actions, inactions, successes and failures you experience.

“Every leader leaves a wake. The question is, ‘What kind of wake?’ Is it the kind team members can surf or the kind they’ll get swamped by?” says Donahue.

So you want to look at how you relate to others and the quality of your relationships. Consider these questions and situations regularly:

- What kind of impact do you have on employees, colleagues and your bosses?
 - What do they remember about you when your work together is over?
 - Would others join you in the next step, project, initiative, etc.?
 - How do people feel after you’ve left the room, meeting, conversation?
- And you might even ask a trusted colleague what others say about your demeanor, relationship style and leadership approach.

Watch for transforming moments

The year 2020 presented many transforming moments. Take time to look for and recognize those – and others from the past and in the future.

For instance, consider professional situations such as promotions, necessary layoffs, new hires, strategic wins and losses. Keep in mind personal moments, too, such as deaths, births and moves. Look at communal shifts, such as the pandemic or natural disasters.

- What happened and who was involved?
- How did you feel and respond?
- What were the greatest struggles and best successes?

Source: SmartBriefs on Leadership, tinyurl.com/selfassess493 and drbilldonahue.com

TECH CORNER

Stay charged – no matter where you are

We use so much technology these days, our gadgets are running low on energy more often than we are.

You don’t want a dead battery, weak signal or any compromised tech at an important moment.

3 tips to help

So try these tips for staying charged no matter where you work:

- **Organize your charging.** Use a USB hub in an outlet near your desk. Add 6-foot charging cables and bind them into a single strand with cable

wraps or even a chip clip.

- **Save bandwidth.** Check the settings in the video apps you use – Zoom, Google Meet, etc. – for HD video calling. If you’re really pressed for bandwidth (ahem, sharing with kids and spouses), get off video and join with a telephone.
- **Boost your WiFi and spirits.** If you’d love to work outside but the WiFi is sketchy, try this: Use your phone’s mobile hotspot to get a better connection. Many wireless carriers have recently added bonus hotspot data for this reason.

Source: Wall Street Journal, tinyurl.com/techsaves493

COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

■ Highlight your successes without bragging

Even humble leaders need to talk about successes to establish credibility and experience.

It’s key to getting people to follow and believe in your leadership.

Here’s how to share your accomplishments without bragging:

- **Highlight the success in the context of the difference** it made to others or your organization.
- **Lift up others.** Recognize others for their hard work involved in any success you were responsible for.
- **Tie your action to a larger initiative.** Your contribution may have been the greatest, but focus on how it benefited the group goal.

Source: Lisa Earle McLeod, mcleodandmore.com

■ How to put 2020 into perspective for 2021

Nearly everyone was ready to say, “Good riddance” to 2020.

But, as a leader, now’s a good time to get a perspective check on last year. Then you can take on 2021 with a positive attitude – and help your employees do the same.

“Don’t overlook the opportunity to discover meaning from a year that no one anticipated, and not many want to repeat,” says Jon Lokhorst, a leadership coach, speaker and author of *Mission-Critical Leadership: How Smart Managers Lead Well in All Directions*.

One way is to ask yourself, “**What did 2020 make possible?**”

Consider the things you got time to focus on – for instance, training, connecting with employees more, practicing empathy.

Then consider the things you might not like as much and you got to step away from – perhaps paperwork, meaningless meetings, etc.

Source: Lead Change Group, tinyurl.com/perspective494

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 We had control on tech, customers didn't

We used a lot of different technology to get our work done, even before the pandemic. What company doesn't?!

From software to share documents to apps for interacting in real time through video, we kept communicating and working efficiently.

But we ran into glitches when the people outside our organization – customers, partners, vendors – weren't as adept with our technology. That slowed or stopped progress.

Get flexible

Many employees got tired of losing time trying work to with others outside

the company who didn't use the same technology as us. So they started to ask customers what technology they used to keep up with their families or work.

Once customers identified preferred ways to communicate, we switched to that. For instance, rather than Zoom, many were quick and at ease with FaceTime.

Being adaptable has helped us to keep working and communicating with others.

(Gabby Piloto, Marketing Director, Hancock Injury Attorneys, Tampa, FL, shared this success on Bloomberg Business)

2 Build, maintain culture with distanced staff

Even before the pandemic, many of our employees only worked in the office part time.

We didn't see each other every day, which could wreak havoc on productivity and culture.

But we found a way to maintain both in our offices.

See you all on 'Super Friday'

We had a designated monthly "Super Friday" when everyone was expected to physically be in the office.

Then, to make the most of the together time, we arranged special lunches with town hall meetings to ask for and get feedback.

We added focused work sessions for teams to move toward accomplishing major project goals.

And we'd try to end the day with a happy hour.

(Nicholas C. Lovegrove, former Senior Partner, McKinsey & Company, and Professor of the Practice of Management at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business, shared this success with the Harvard Business Review)

3 Oops! 9-5 not a good idea for remote work

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we quickly moved almost all of our employees to working from home.

Like most companies that did this, we navigated the new situation day by day. Some days, hour by hour!

We tried to keep things as normal as possible to help employees transition into the new work situation.

For one, we made it a rule to have no meetings before 9 a.m., between 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. or after 5 p.m.

We didn't want to tread on employees' personal time.

Early and late work better

What a mistake! Many employees had to care for other family members or help children with virtual school during those hours.

They told us they preferred working and meeting at odd hours.

We listened, of course, and most teams or groups that had to meet found times that worked best – sometimes early in the morning, sometimes late at night.

(Jeff Cates, CEO, Achievers, Toronto, ON, Canada)



YOUR LEGAL COACH

■ Do we have to give hazard pay to employees on-site?

Question: We have a mix of employees these days – some work remotely, some are on-site and some are doing both. An employee who's on-site says we need to give her hazard pay since she's in the facility in the middle of pandemic. Do we?

Answer: No, says Jennifer Merrigan Fay, an employment law attorney and partner at Goodwin Procter LLP.

Under current law, employers may offer hazard pay for people in high-risk jobs, but you aren't obligated to do so, Fay says.

However, you may want to consider offering it as goodwill and a way to boost morale, recruitment and retention efforts, other experts say.

For instance, many grocers upped wages by \$1 to \$3 in the early days of the coronavirus – and have continued it as a way to reward and retain employees.

Sources: tinyurl.com/pau493 and tinyurl.com/y7a7y9m8

LIGHTER SIDE

■ Name-calling for the brave

Name-calling is never appropriate in the workplace.

But you can still get a kick out of these insults straight out of the dictionary. Only the brave would dare try to pronounce or understand them:

- **Lickspittle** – a fawning subordinate; a suck-up
- **Smellfungus** – an excessively faultfinding person
- **Ninnyhammer** – simpleton; fool
- **Mumpsimus** – a stubborn person who insists on making an error in spite of being shown that it is wrong
- **Mooncalf** – a foolish or absentminded person, and
- **Pillock** – a very stupid or foolish person.

Source: Merriam Webster, tinyurl.com/names493

COMMUNICATION NEWS

Why capable employees shy from leadership

Most managers have faced it: You have a great employee who would be a strong leader, and she's reluctant to take on the role.

Why?

Researchers say they don't want to take one of these leadership risks:

- **Relationships.** They're afraid they'll damage established work relationships – for instance, they don't want to lose friends or upset trusted colleagues.
- **Image.** Some people fear others will think of them as a “know-it-all” or too aggressive.
- **Reputation.** Many are worried if they step into leadership, they'll also step into fault.

Everyone will blame them when things go wrong or completely fail.

Encourage leadership

To encourage leadership, researchers suggested:

- **Ease in.** Before you offer leadership roles, publicly ask for input on key decisions at meetings – and praise what you receive.
- **Manage conflict.** You don't have to mitigate every argument, but make sure they're work-related, not personal.
- **Offer low-stakes opportunities to lead.**

Source: HBR, tinyurl.com/leadership493

Here's the one word that'll help build a better workplace

One word can help improve the work environment, whether you're on site or remote, researchers found.

Thanks.

Employees behaved better and mistreated co-workers less at companies where gratitude was more abundant.

Researchers didn't find a workplace that was panacea, but they found when employees took note of things they're grateful for, positivity increased.

So help leaders spread genuine gratitude

at work.

Researchers suggested a few ways:

- Add a gratitude wall – physical or virtual – where employees can write messages to thank others.
- Start meetings with “gratitude check-ins,” inviting people to share stories of help and appreciation.
- Regularly share comments from customers or clients who thank your organization or employees.

Source: tinyurl.com/thanks493

Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

Yes. The company won the case when the court tossed it out.

Stan's attorney claimed he was first a victim of age discrimination after he was demoted and replaced by a younger person.

Then, the attorney claimed, he was improperly fired for telling customers what had happened, which should be protected by freedom of speech laws.

The company's attorney argued Stan was demoted for poor performance. More than one customer had told his supervisor that Stan wasn't doing a good job servicing their accounts.

Furthermore, the attorney argued, Stan was let go for insubordination – disparaging the

company to valued customers isn't OK.

The court agreed: Stan was demoted because he didn't perform up to standards. Bad-mouthing the company wasn't protected speech.

Documentation wins

This could've been a double-whammy for the company, being sued for bias and denying free speech. But the manager and company documented his poor performance and insubordination to prove they were grounds for termination. This serves as more proof that documentation is critical to management.

(Based on *Fox v. Eagle Distributing Co.* Dramatized for effect.)

Quotes

Nothing is a waste of time if you use the experience wisely.

– Auguste Rodin

You are not your circumstances. You are your possibilities. If you know that, you can do anything.

– Oprah Winfrey

Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things.

– Robert Brault

EDITOR
MICHELE MCGOVERN
mmcgovern@pbp.com

MANAGING EDITOR:
RENEE COCCHI
rcocchi@pbp.com

PRODUCTION EDITOR:
P.J. FRONZEO

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR:
CURT BROWN

Subscriptions: 800-220-5000

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting or other professional services. If legal or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought. — From a declaration of principles jointly adopted by a committee of the American Bar Association and a committee of publishers.

♻️ Printed on recycled paper.

Copyright © 2021 Progressive Business Publications. Please respect our copyright: Reproduction of this material is prohibited without prior permission. All rights reserved in all countries.

Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors (ISSN 1523-4290), issue date February 1, 2021, Vol. 23 No. 493, is published semi-monthly, (24 times a year) by Progressive Business Publications, 370 Technology Drive, Malvern, PA 19355; PHONE: 800-220-5000. FAX: 610-647-8089. Periodicals Postage Paid at West Chester, PA 19380. Postmaster: Send address changes to Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors, 370 Technology Drive, Malvern, PA 19355.