

# Communication

## Bulletin <sup>TM</sup> for Managers & Supervisors

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

July 14, 2021



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## 3 practical ways you can inspire, influence & engage others at work

*How to use the superpowers successful leaders have*

You're a leader, so you have some power within your organization.

But did you realize you actually have three powers? And you can use each to improve morale, productivity and operations.

Yep, frontline leaders – managers and supervisors like you – can transform workplaces for the better with their superpowers!

“The more power you have, the more able you are to direct, influence, and inspire people to make positive changes,” says Paul Thornton, a speaker, an adjunct professor and the author of *Leadership-Perfecting Your Approach and Style*.

That's the point of each power: Use it for the

greater good at work (and in life, actually).

Here are the three powers, how to get them and how to best use them.

### Position Power

You already own some of this one. You've moved up the chain of command and have power over some employees.

**How to gain it:** You can gain more position power (aka, move up the chain) when you:

- **Reward and recognize people** for good work and deeds. Be genuine and generous with praise and public recognition, and do as much as you possibly can with bonuses, pay

*Please see Inspire ... on Page 2.*

### Sharpen Your Judgment

## Phony excuses or legit FMLA request?

“Where are you going?” Supervisor Brett Adams asked, walking briskly behind Jenna Bradley. “It's only 2:30, and you have customer calls scheduled this afternoon.”

“I have to leave,” Jenna, an employee, said as she pushed open the office door and bolted toward her parked car. “I need to get to my doctor right now.”

“Another excuse, huh?” Brett said, still following. “Last week it was an ‘emergency’ when you had to pick up the neighbor's kid from school.”

“The week before that, your niece ‘needed help’ and you were the only one who could give it.”

“Tell you what, Brett,” Jenna said, sliding into the driver's seat. “I'll get a note from my doctor

today and bring it in next week. Then we can get an intermittent Family and Medical Leave Act request underway.

“That way, you don't have to be breathing down my neck every time I have a medical situation like this, OK?” Jenna didn't wait for answer. She just pulled away.

### Pattern of behavior

And Brett didn't wait for FMLA paperwork. Instead, he chalked this up to another “phony excuse,” further proving a pattern of suspect absences, and fired her.

Jenna sued, claiming it was a violation of the FMLA. 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.

## Inspire ...

(continued from Page 1)

increases and time off.

- **Discipline people** fairly and with compassion, using constructive criticism.
- **Learn from colleagues.** Connect with and support others at and above your level within the company.

**How to use it:** Use your Position Power to get your employees and yourself ahead. Keys:

- Use rewards and consequences fairly and consistently to motivate and reinforce high standards.
- Share relevant information from up the chain of command to help employees see the big picture and make good decisions.
- Gather relevant info from your team to pass along to help higher-ups make good decisions, too.

### Expert Power

This is the power of practice, study and discipline. You have it because you've become an expert in an area or two, and people at work turn to you for the best advice and direction.

**How to gain it:** Research. Ask questions. Watch videos. Take classes. Try new approaches. Talk to other

## TECH CORNER

### Add security to your home office, networks

Whether you work from home some or all of the time, you need to secure company (and personal) devices.

It's vital to keep information and devices safe from cyberattacks.

#### 3 tips to help

Here are three tips for optimal performance and security from Jeff Marston, vice president, Comcast Business in Indiana.

- **Get the latest firmware updates** for all connected devices. That includes the printer, webcam and voice

experts in the field. Focus on a subject or two that you're interested in, and this will come naturally.

**How to use it:** Go for certifications and other kinds of credentials in your expertise. Offer to train others. Invite others to ask you questions about your expertise. And use your reputation as the "go-to" person as a tool to manage bigger projects and advance your career.

### Personal Power

This is a pleasant power. With Personal Power, others see you as charismatic, positive and personable. They often follow your influence because you're likable.

**How to gain it:** Be warm, friendly, sociable and open at work. Share your feelings, values and hopes with employees and colleagues. Ask about and be interested in theirs. Build strong networks in and out of work so you can connect people who can help each other.

**How to use it:** Make people feel comfortable and confident with you by giving them your full, undivided attention. Lean toward optimism, while being realistic, to build a trusting network of employees and colleagues.

**Sources:** [tinyurl.com/powers504](http://tinyurl.com/powers504); [tinyurl.com/thorntonbook504](http://tinyurl.com/thorntonbook504)

assistant. Updates often add new security features or patch holes. Even better, enable "auto updates" on new devices when possible.

- **Use multifactor authentication.** It allows websites to confirm your identity with a combo of distinct factors – such as a password or challenging question and a unique, time-sensitive code sent to your mobile phone.
- **Maintain network protection.** Check with your internet provider. You may find a free or value-added application that will help.

**Source:** [tinyurl.com/security504](http://tinyurl.com/security504)

## COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

### 8 ultimate questions for great 1-on-1s

HR experts have long pushed for more informal one-on-one meetings and no more annual reviews.

Then the pandemic hit, increasing the need and desire for one-on-ones. But with so many employees to meet, managers and supervisors want to make each chat as effective as possible. How?

Ask better questions. Here are eight of the best from the experts at SmartBrief on Leadership:

- What's weighing on your mind?
- How happy are you?
- How productive have you been?
- What feedback do you have for me?
- What do you need to talk about?
- What are you proud of?
- What's blocking you from success?
- What are the most important things we should discuss now?

**Source:** [tinyurl.com/questions504](http://tinyurl.com/questions504)

### 2 communication mistakes leaders want to avoid

Here are two communication mistakes every leader wants to avoid:

#### 1. Selling past the close

It's when someone agrees, and you had more prepared to say, so you keep going on. It might sound like this: "Great. Glad you agree. Game on. Here's what I recommend we do next."

Instead, say, "Great. Thank you." And move on to doing it.

#### 2. Hedging

You present a perfectly good idea. Then, before people can respond, you waffle and offer alternatives or even shoot down your own idea. It might sound like this: "If that doesn't sound like a good idea, we could always ..." Or, "I have some other ideas we might want to consider, too."

Instead, make your case and stand your ground. Say, "I carefully considered three alternatives. And this is why I recommend we go this way."

**Source:** [tinyurl.com/mistakes504](http://tinyurl.com/mistakes504)

# 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 New way to train: Partner with community college

As the workforce became increasingly hybrid or fully remote, it got more difficult to train employees.

Plus, employees working under new conditions needed to boost current skills and learn some different skills.

We had a decent handle on training employees when they were all together.

But we wanted to find another element to help with gaps the new working conditions created.

### Benefits for both sides

What helped was partnering with local community colleges.

We identified the gaps, and school leaders and professors helped us design opportunities for employees to upskill, reskill or explore new interests.

We also did all we could to make training flexible, so employees could fit it in at convenient times.

Even better, it provided benefits for both of us. We could train employees. And we became an outlet for the school to place interns and new graduates, who came to us with strong skills the school already taught them.

*(Balraj Kalsi, General Manager of Online Skills Learning, Cengage, Independence, KY)*

## 2 Cut stress, increased job satisfaction

Before and throughout the pandemic, employees were stressed. The levels fluctuated, but most employees felt pressure at one time or another.

When employees are stressed, they don't like their jobs as much and aren't as productive. It only makes sense we hoped to help cut stress.

### Talking is a start

To help, we wanted to create an environment where employees felt comfortable talking about work-related stress. Just talking helps reduce it. Getting it out in the open also leads to idea sharing on how to cut stress. So we encouraged front-line managers to talk one on one with employees often about:

- goals, duties and workloads
- availability of time and resources to do it all
- how they felt about their ability to handle their workload, and
- ideas to better handle the workload.

It's helped cut stress and boost performance.

*(Kevin Harrington, CEO, Joblist, San Francisco)*

## 3 Reversal of event to rebuild culture

When we decided to become a hybrid workplace as the pandemic settled, we knew we had to do something to maintain culture.

Up until then, we always felt we had a great company culture.

Employees collaborated toward the company mission and collective goals. On a personal level, they also socialized in and out of the workplace.

Then they weren't working together – side-by-side in the same location – for quite some time. It's tougher to maintain a company culture when employees aren't sharing mutual, real-time experiences.

### From 'off-site' to 'on-site'

So, instead of what used to be "off-sites" – when the team trained and socialized at another place – we started "on-sites." Those are days when everyone comes to the office to train, collaborate and have some fun.

So far, it's helped us bring the team back together, boost morale and maintain culture.

*(Tim Rowley, COO & CTO, PeopleCaddie, Chicago)*



## YOUR LEGAL COACH

### ■ They'll work from home: Can we pay accordingly?

**Question:** We decided to let employees work from home. Can we adjust their salaries based on where they live?

**Answer:** Think twice before actually doing it, says Tauseef Rahman, an HR consultant and partner at Mercer.

Sure, some may move where the cost of living is much lower than where your office is located. So you might be inclined to pay them a rate that's competitive for *that* area.

But consider this: Aren't you already paying employees to do a *job*? Do you really want to risk upsetting employees who were fit for their jobs before they were forced to work from home by lowering their salary?

The cost of labor, not the cost of living, should be the main driver of pay, says Rahman. So employee location shouldn't impact pay.

**Source:** [tinyurl.com/cutpay504](https://tinyurl.com/cutpay504); HRMorning.com

## LIGHTER SIDE

### ■ Together again: 6 jokes to break the ice

Now that teams are getting back together in the workplace, you might need an icebreaker.

Here are six work-appropriate jokes to get everyone laughing again:

- What days are strongest? Saturday and Sunday. The rest are weakdays.
- What can ruin a Friday? Realizing today is Tuesday.
- Why did my buddy get fired from the calendar factory? He took a day off.
- How does NASA organize a party? They planet.
- Why couldn't the bike stand up by itself? It was two tired.
- What do you call a joke that isn't funny? A sentence.

**Source:** [tinypulse.com](https://tinypulse.com)

## COMMUNICATION NEWS

# Rebuilding company culture post-COVID-19

Company culture suffered through the pandemic.

It was hard to maintain, and 25% of employees say it's downright worse now, according to research from Stoneside.

## No matter where you are, 3 tips help

Here are three tips to rebuild (or tweak) company culture as your teams come back together full-time, part-time or remotely.

- **Be prepared to start over.** Things changed and you might need to revisit your culture. Does it align with where you are now? If not, invite employees to be part of making changes for the times.

## Workplace trust compromised: How to restore it now

Employees are suspicious of each other, as trust eroded in the workplace.

Some feel their colleagues working from home aren't doing as much as them. Others feel the colleagues in the office are working against them. And everyone still has some anxiety about safety and stability.

"Once trust is lost, it's very hard to regain," say Mark Mortensen and Heidi Gardner in their research in the *Harvard Business Review*.

To rebuild trust, they suggest:

- **Recognize trust isn't a one-size-fits-all**

- **Focus on team culture first.** Researchers found employees often care more about their team than the company. Consider creating a "team charter" – a roadmap for how your team will meet, share work, make decisions, give feedback and interact. You can build team culture from the ground up.
- **Remember the legacy.** Even if you're adapting your culture, don't let your legacy be forgotten. Weave traditions and important values into where your company culture is going.

*Note: For another tip on culture, see Page 3.*

*Source: [tinyurl.com/culture504](http://tinyurl.com/culture504)*

**virtue.** Some people automatically give it. Others need to see evidence. And some just need reassurance. Rebuild accordingly.

- **Remember the status quo.** Change disturbs trust. When you talk about changes, explain what stays the same to reduce anxiety.
- **Build a staircase.** Trust won't happen in an instance. You want to get people to work together on low-risk tasks to regain trust with each other slowly. Then move to bigger projects that require reliability and trust.

*Source: [tinyurl.com/trust504](http://tinyurl.com/trust504)*

## Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

Yes, the company won when an appellate court tossed it.

The employee's attorney claimed she had an illness that fell under FMLA guidelines. She needed intermittent leave to take care of it. Instead of getting an accommodation, she was fired for taking a few hours leave when she needed it.

The company's attorney agreed the employee may have had a condition that's eligible for intermittent FMLA leave. However, she didn't submit necessary paperwork or pursue the appropriate leave in a timely manner. She had chalked up too many unexcused absences, and she was let go because of those.

The court agreed: Even though the employee

said she'd get the required information (a doctor's note) and initiate an FMLA claim, she didn't do any of it in a timely manner. She was let go fairly.

### Help employees do what they need to do

This wasn't ideal for either the employer or employee – and it's a situation managers want to avoid.

If employees bring up a need for FMLA leave, take the lead. Refer them to HR for direction on how to proceed and then follow through to be sure both sides are aligned.

(Based on *Stringfield v. Cosentino's Food Stores*. Dramatized for effect.)

## Quotes

**W**hat you do has far greater impact than what you say.

– Stephen Covey

**M**anagement is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.

– Peter Drucker

**A** leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be.

– Rosalynn Carter

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