



## Sample On-the-Job Development Tips

The sample On-the-Job Development Tips are adapted from the State of Michigan, Department of Human Services.

### Adaptability

- When trying a new task, monitor your performance. Recognize that there is a learning curve for every new task.
- Recall situations in which you were required to change and did so successfully. Identify what helped you to change successfully. Explore ways to replicate these.
- Identify others who seem to be adapting effectively to change. Ask them for suggestions on how you might be able to adapt more effectively.
- Learn as much as you can about the change, the reasons for the change, the way in which the change will be implemented.
- Identify the potential benefits of the change and keep your focus on these.
- Understand that most change involves a period of confusion and uncertainty. Have patience with yourself and others who may be responding to this.
- Understand that most change involves some distress and grieving about what people perceive will be lost because of the change. Accept these feelings and know that they will pass.
- Read articles and books about change and adaptability in order to learn more about managing change and dealing with transitions in the workplace.
- Ask your manager to identify, as specifically as possible, your positive and negative responses to change. With that person's help, identify alternative behaviors for the negative responses you have been exhibiting.
- Indicate to your manager that you would like to be involved in planning for the introduction of a new process or procedure.
- Ask your manager to explain the reasons for change and the expected benefits of planned change.
- Observe how other coworkers react to changes in tasks, deadlines, etc. Make note of effective behavior and seek coaching from your manager on how you can model those behaviors.
- Learn about adaptability from people who adapt well to change. How do they view change? Do they turn the change into an opportunity? Ask them how you can react more positively to change.

## Applied Learning

- Schedule time to review and file new job-related information sent through memos, email messages, announcements of training programs, minutes from organizational meetings.
- Identify individuals who are able quickly to retrieve new job-related information. Ask about the structure of their filing systems. Develop a comparable filing system of your own.
- Develop a list of people that you can contact if you need clarification on information you receive about your job.
- Develop systems that will remind you to use new job-related information, i.e. a note tacked to the front of a stack of forms indicating a new coding system to be used on the forms.
- Schedule time to practice new skills learned in training programs. Make sure these skills are practiced as soon as possible after the training.
- After attending a training program, discuss the new information, knowledge, and/or skills that you learned. Develop a plan for implementing the new information, knowledge and/or skills to your job.
- Suggest that your work team work together to identify valuable information that could be used to enrich oneself or enhance service to the customer. Develop a way to share/distribute this information. Sources of information and strategies for sharing may include: e-mails, memos, newsletters, websites, training programs, TV specials, books, newspaper articles.

## Building Trust

- With the team, determine a way in which the team should handle individuals who break these rules.
- Seek feedback from peers and leaders regarding the ethical standards you should be following, setting, and modeling.
- Ask your supervisor to include trust as a competency in your performance appraisal. Seek feedback on a regular basis from others so it can be used as evidence of developmental progress.
- Think of a person in your life whom you trust very much. Ask yourself why. Write down the reasons and think of examples that illustrate those reasons. Then when dealing with others, ask yourself how this trusted person would react and try to model that behavior.
- Create a list of the commitments you have made in the past week. Review the list and identify which commitments you met and which you did not meet. Identify what is common to those commitments you met and what is common to those commitments you did not meet. Consider changing the commitments you make or look for ways that can help you to keep the commitments you do make.

- In the next week, record the commitments you make to others. Ask others to review your written commitments and see if your perception of the commitments made matches their perception. Ask them what degree of confidence they have in the extent to which these commitments will be kept.
- Make a list of five times when you feel you maintained your integrity in difficult situations. Identify what made it difficult to maintain your integrity in these situations. Describe the consequences of maintaining your integrity. Contrast this with a description of three times when you felt you did not behave with as much integrity as you wish you had. What was different about these situations? What factors made it difficult for you to maintain integrity? Looking back, what would you do differently? What were the consequences of not behaving with integrity for you and for others?
- Describe a sensitive issue or problem that you are facing. Review your description. Is there anything you have omitted? How comfortable would you feel sharing this description with others? Determine how you could "sanitize" your description so that you do not betray confidences and yet still provide a complete and accurate description of the situation to others. Identify your position in regard to the situation. Review your position. Does it really capture all the thoughts and feelings you have about the situation? What are you willing to reveal? What is more difficult for you to reveal? Share your description and position with another person. Ask them to tell you how much they trust your description and feel as though you are giving them a complete and accurate sense of your position on the issue.
- Ask your supervisor about setting up a meeting with your team to establish a team charter that spells out the rules for interaction. For example, your team might decide on the following rules: 1) keep sensitive information confidential, 2) avoid unfair criticism and gossip, 3) give and accept constructive feedback, 4) confront disagreements openly.

## Coaching

- For a week, track the positive performances of your employees. For each employee, identify at least one positive performance in the week. At the end of the week, give each employee reinforcement and acknowledgement of their positive performance. Note the reactions of each. Identify whether employees prefer to have written feedback, personal feedback, public feedback, private feedback, etc.
- Think about three performance problems you have had to manage in the past four months. Describe the problem and your response to the problem, noting as specifically as you can what you said and when you said it. If at all possible, ask the person with the problem to recall what your response to the problem was, again with as much specificity as possible. Rate yourself on the effectiveness which you handled each of these performance problems. If you are not satisfied with the way you handled one or more of these problems, write at least two different responses you might have had to the problem. Ask someone else to review your alternative responses and give you feedback.
- Role-play a coaching session with another peer. Ask the person to provide you feedback on your ability to do the following: establish a goal for the coaching session,

develop a shared agreement of the current situation, generate a wide set of options for achieving their goal, and develop a clear action plan that the person you are coaching is willing and motivated to carry out. Ask the other person to also give you feedback on the extent to which they felt involved and heard in the coaching session.

- Consider the ways in which your supervisor coaches you. Identify what s/he does that motivates you to do your very best. Identify what tends to make you feel confident and capable. Identify what tends to make you feel anxious and uncomfortable. Explore the short-term and long-term consequences of feeling anxious and uncomfortable as a result of being coached.
- Recall the two people who have had the most positive impact on your career. Identify what each did to help promote you in your career goals. Find ways to incorporate these into the coaching you provide.
- Schedule time each week to coach your employees. Keep a log of the people you have coached. Make sure all of your employees receive the opportunity for coaching from you.
- Ask employees if they want more, less or about the same amount of coaching from you.
- Ask your supervisor or another person to observe your coaching behaviors and provide specific feedback, including alternative positive behaviors.
- Ask your supervisor to identify others who provide effective coaching. Discuss their approaches to coaching with them. Listen for new and consistent approaches that always seem to work.

## **Collaboration**

- Ask your supervisor to give you feedback about the trust others in your work-related network have in you.
- Ask your supervisor to think about his/her own work-related contacts. Ask what he/she thinks contributes to the development of strong and effective work-related contacts. Ask what can get in the way of developing such relationships.
- Ask your supervisor/mentor what groups, committees, task forces you might join that would help you expand your network of work-related contacts.
- Develop a list of the people with whom you have had work-related contact in the past month. Share this list with other co-workers. Ask them if they have had contact with others not on your list. Determine if your web of contacts is as great as it should or could be. Ask co-workers and others if they would introduce and facilitate the development of a working relationship with others whom you want on your contact list.
- Review your list of work-related contacts in the past month. Describe the nature of your relationship with each of these contacts. In which of these relationships would you go out of your way to accommodate the other person? In which of these relationships would they go out of their way to accommodate you? To what extent

can you rely on each of these contacts to fulfill their commitments to you? To what extent can they rely on you to fulfill your commitments to them?

- Identify two problems or issues that you are facing in your work. For each of these, list all of the people who might be able to help you solve this problem or issue. Then ask co-workers or your supervisor to suggest others who might be added to this list.
- Develop a list of three people with whom you would like to build a good working relationship over the next three months. Learn about the role they play in the organization and their current work objectives. Share your role and work objectives with them. Identify what you can contribute to the relationship and identify what you hope they will contribute to the relationship. At the end of three months, evaluate the progress you have made in establishing a good work relationship with each of these people. Ask them for feedback about the relationship as well.
- Create a list of the five best and the three worst working relationships you have had in the past two years. Identify common characteristics and patterns in the best working relationships. Contrast these with the worst working relationships. Identify obstacles and problems that you encountered in the worst working relationships. Ask if there was a potential for these problems in the best working relationships and how you overcame them in the best working relationships. Apply these lessons to your current working relationships.
- Review the list of people with whom you have had work-related contact in the past month with your supervisor. Ask him/her how the list compares with the kind of network s/he would like you to have. Identify other contacts that need to be added to your list and, if appropriate, ask your supervisor to help you develop these contacts.
- Ask your supervisor to identify two of your co-workers who have developed strong networks of working relationships and use these well. With his/her permission, contact these coworkers and ask questions about how they developed these networks and how they sustain them. Ask if you can observe them interacting with people in their networks. Ask if they will observe you in contact with people in your network and give you feedback
- Review your calendar for the past month. Note how often you were in contact with people outside your office and how much of your time was spent on affairs totally internal to your office. Reflect on the balance.
- Ask your supervisor to identify relationships you could form with others outside your immediate office that would help the organization reach some of its goals.
- Ask your supervisor to give you feedback on the extent to which you are known and the reputation you are building in the community of organizational stakeholders.
- Ask your supervisor about the strategic relationships he/she has built with stakeholders. Compare his/her list with your own.
- Create a chart of the people, teams and organizations with whom you have work-related contact outside your immediate office. Identify the nature of the relationship and the ways in which the relationship helps you to achieve your work goals. Identify the extent of mutual trust and respect within each relationship. Ask yourself if there are others who should be included in your chart.

- Return to this list of contacts outside your immediate office. Describe what each contact does for the organization to which they belong and the primary goals they are pursuing currently. Ask if your knowledge of each is full enough to you to determine the potential benefits to you and them of building a strategic relationship.
- Identify three new contacts outside your office with whom you would like to build a strategic relationship. Identify the benefits might accrue to you from such a relationship and the benefits they might accrue from such a relationship. Set a goal of developing a relationship with each of these contacts in the next three months.
- List all of the collaborative projects in which you and your staff have been engaged in the past year. Identify the benefits for your organization that came from these projects. Identify the benefits that might yet come from these projects. Compare your list with the list of other managers.
- Return to the people with whom you were engaged in a collaborative effort in the last year. Ask them to provide you feedback on the extent to which they felt they understood your reasons for engaging in the collaboration and how they felt about working with you on the collaborative project. Ask specifically about the trust they felt about your ability to meet your commitments on the project.
- Ask your supervisor to identify the most successful collaborative project in which they have ever worked. Determine what made the project successful. Look for factors that contributed to success. Identify potential obstacles to success and what was done to minimize or overcome those. Specify the criteria that your supervisor used to determine the success of the project. Ask them to contrast this with a situation in which a collaborative project was not successful.
- Ask your supervisor to review your list of collaborative projects over the past year. Ask your supervisor to rate the value of each of the projects to your organization. Ask your supervisor if there is any way you might have been able to increase the value of these projects and increase the benefits of these collaborative efforts to your organization.

## **Communication**

- Videotape or audio tape yourself having a discussion with others (coworkers, friends, family). Listen to how you express yourself verbally and watch how you express yourself using body language.
- Practice using different types of questions (open-ended, closed, clarifying, etc.) Note the difference in the kind of responses you receive to each of the types of questions.
- Before observing an effective communicator, make notes of the skills you want to focus on before the event. Afterwards, ask for tips.
- Compare communications you have received that have been clear and concise with those that you have had a difficult time understanding. Analyze the differences in the effective communication and ineffective communications.

- Ask people to restate the message you intended to convey to them. Listen carefully for misinterpretations or distortions. Determine what you do that may be contributing to the distortions and misperceptions.
- Restate the messages that people convey to you. Determine how often you experience misinterpretations and distortions when receiving communication from others. Identify what you may be doing that contributes to miscommunication.
- Join organizations that will help develop your speaking skills, such as Dale Carnegie or Toastmasters International.
- Ask your supervisor, mentor or a skilled communicator to provide you detailed feedback about your communication skills. Ask them to provide suggestions about how you can improve your skills.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to provide you with some guidelines about what messages should be sent by email, by hard-copy email or in person.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to suggest guidelines for deciding what information should be shared with others and the time frame in which it should be shared.
- Ask your supervisor, mentor or coworker to edit a piece of your written work. Request feedback on your most common errors and suggestions for ways to improve.
- Practice writing the same informational piece to three different audiences; your coworkers, your boss, and an agency client or client group. Adjust style and language as needed. Ask each group to give you feedback on the piece you designed for them. Determine if they understood your basic message and felt the message was presented in an appropriate way for their needs and capabilities.
- Review the emails you have received over the last week from others in the agency. Identify the kinds of information that tends to be conveyed via email. Compare this with the kind of information that is included in hard-copy memos. Note what messages people choose to deliver personally and whether they tend to do it by phone or in person. Notice the impact of the communication method on your attention to the information and your understanding of messages sent through each method. Then, compare what you have learned about the kinds of messages that are sent through each communication method with the kinds of messages you send through each medium.
- Ask others with whom you work whether you share too much information, too little information or just about the right amount of information. Ask them for any other feedback they might be able to provide you that would help you to improve your communications.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to tell you how easy it is to give you difficult feedback. Ask them about what you do that makes it easy or difficult to give you such feedback. Be prepared to simply listen to their response. Do not attempt to defend yourself. After a week, meet with your supervisor or mentor and discuss with them what you want to do to make it easier for them to give you feedback. Ask for their suggestions. Practice active listening with your supervisor or mentor. Ask them for feedback on your use of active listening

- Pick a subordinate who you believe would benefit from careful listening (e.g., someone who is dealing with a stressful/challenging situation). Then do the following: (1) Create an opportunity to have them discuss a situation with you (if they wish). (2) In conversation, indicate your interest in his/her ideas or thoughts to keep the discussion going. (3) Use active listening to reflect both their thoughts and their feelings.
- Identify three people with whom you feel comfortable talking about sensitive or difficult experiences. Explore what each person does that makes you feel comfortable talking with him or her. Ask them to give you feedback on what you can do to create the same sense when you talk with others.
- Keep a log of situations where you felt you demonstrated effective and ineffective listening, understanding and responding. Then think about the following: How did you feel at the time you were approached by the other person? How do you think you made the other person feel? How do you think this person will feel about approaching you in the future? What adjustments did you make to your interaction style based on the individual and his/her style of interacting? Even if you felt you were effective, what could you have done to improve?
- Track the number of questions versus statements you make when talking with others. Similarly, track the amount of time you speak and the amount of time the other person speaks. If you find that you speak most of the time or tend to make a great many more statements than you ask questions, explore what happens when you change these ratios. In particular, note how much you learn about the other person and the quality of your relationship when you allow them more space to speak and when you ask more questions.
- Ask others for feedback after discussing a sensitive or difficult situation. Ask them if there were words or things that you did that made them uncomfortable. Ask them what others might do during a similar conversation that might make them uncomfortable. Ask them what could be done to make them more comfortable in such conversations.
- Increase the number of open-ended questions that you use to discover the needs, feelings, and capabilities of others. Do the following to help you make this improvement: (1) Monitor the number of open-ended questions or probes you use with others over a one-day period. (2) Consciously increase the number of open-ended questions and probes you use in conversations for the next month.
- If your manager or mentor is good at listening, understanding, and responding to others. Then do the following:(1) Arrange to spend time observing what that person says and does during interactions. (2) After you have observed him/her in an interaction, ask what he or she was thinking during the interaction. (3) Ask what tips or techniques he or she can offer to help you in your interactions with others. (4) Practice applying the new tips or techniques that you learn.
- Role play difficult situations or conversations about sensitive subjects with coworkers. Determine what words or actions are likely to inflame situations. Determine alternatives that will build connection between those involved in the conversation.
- Practice active listening techniques with coworkers. Note how active listening encourages others to tell you more of their feelings and thoughts.

- Ask your supervisor or mentor to suggest ways to effectively handle sensitive issues.

## **Continuous Learning and Professional Development**

- Get practice in receiving and using feedback. Identify some specific aspect of your performance that you are willing and want to change. Ask at least three coworkers and your manager for feedback on this particular aspect of your performance. You might experiment with how it feels to get written feedback and face-to-face feedback. Compare their responses and your own perceptions of your performance on this particular aspect of your performance. Develop a specific goal about the extent to which you will change this behavior in a specified period of time. Share your goal with those who gave you feedback and ask for their help in achieving this goal. When you achieve your goal, ask them to celebrate your success with you. At the end, think about what you learned about getting feedback, developing a goal and enlisting the help of others to reach your goal.
- Ask a trusted co-worker to share descriptions of recent encounters with customers that did not go well. Each of you describe a separate encounter. Then, identify at least two lessons you learned from the encounter that can help you provide better customer service in the future. As you listen to the lessons learned by the other person, see if you would have drawn the same lessons. Then ask them to listen to the lessons you drew from your experience. Ask them if they would have drawn lessons similar to those you learned. Continue this as a regular practice until you become comfortable viewing your experiences as learning opportunities.
- Identify one task that you do on a regular basis that you find tedious and boring. Develop a different way to do the task and experiment with the new process until you can complete the task at least as easily and in as little time as using the old process.
- Ask your manager or mentor to help you identify and select an area in which to focus your development. Develop a goal for improved performance that is specific, measurable, realistic and identify a deadline for achieving the improved performance. Ask your manager or mentor to help you develop a list of options for ways that you can learn new behaviors that will result in the improved performance. Develop a plan that identifies when you will do what, who will help you and any other resources you may need to make the changes you want to make. Ask your manager or mentor to review your plan and help you monitor your progress toward the goal. Celebrate with your manager or mentor when you achieve your goal.
- Mentors are a valuable resource for professional development. If you do not have a mentor, consider people that you would like to be your mentor. Determine what you would like your mentor to do for you. Meet with the person you have selected as your mentor and ask if they would agree to serve as your mentor for a specified period of time. Then, talk about what each of you expects from the other.
- Create a list of personal, departmental, and organizational opportunities for fostering professional and self-development. Present this list to your manager. Ask what opportunities you have not included that might be included. Ask your manager which of these opportunities he/she would suggest as being high priority opportunities for you at this time.

- List the training experiences you have taken in the past two years. Compare this with the training experiences of your peers.
- Periodically review materials received during learning opportunities (workshops, seminars, on-the-job training). Look for new and fresh ways to use the information.
- Think about the areas that you have targeted for development in the past two years. Have they been a challenging learning experience? What have you learned? What have you mastered? What areas do you still need to work on?
- The next time a coworker or your manager suggests a new way to do something, think of at least three possible reasons it might be more effective or efficient. Force yourself to imagine the positive possibilities of a suggested change.
- Talk with fellow employees who seem to be particularly effective at learning new skills and see what tips they might share.
- Explore with your manager the possibility of formalizing the role of technical coach so that the coworkers who provide assistance to you receive acknowledgement of their efforts. Determine if there is some way you also can contribute to their performance by performing a similar centralized function.
- Before starting a new project, task or assignment, ask yourself the following questions: What have I learned recently that will help me complete this project, task or assignment? What new information has been made available to me that pertains to this project, task or assignment? How can I complete this project, task or assignment efficiently? What can I share with others about the results of completing the project, task or assignment that will help my department to better and more efficiently complete work?
- Subscribe to a professional journal in your field or join a professional association. Ask other professionals in your field to suggest journals and associations which they would recommend. Go to a library or the web and identify journals or websites maintained by professional associations in your field to determine what new developments are occurring in your profession. Expand your personal network of connections with professional in your field. Include professionals in other organizations to learn about what developments are occurring in your field and to share your own developments.
- Find peers who display a high level of technical knowledge and skill. Then do the following: (1) Talk with them about your desire to improve your technical knowledge and skill. (2) Ask them how they improve their technical knowledge and skill. (3) Ask them to provide you with feedback on your use of technical knowledge and skill. (4) Ask them to keep you informed of publications, training programs, books, etc. that might help to increase your technical knowledge and skill.
- Explore with your manager the possibility of formalizing the role of technical coach so that the coworkers who provide assistance to you receive acknowledgement of their efforts. Determine if there is some way you also can contribute to their performance by performing a similar centralized function.
- After attending a training program or seminar, review the key information, actions and behaviors. Then do the following: (1) Develop an action plan to perform or implement

the key information, actions and behaviors learned during the training. (2) Describe how you, your department, your organization and your customers will benefit from your action plan. (3) Discuss your action plan with your manager or supervisor. (4) Consider making your action plan part of your Performance Plan for the year.

- Track the amount of time you spend asking coworkers for information about updates regarding policies and procedures and/or technical information that you should know. Double this to account for the time spent by co-workers answering your questions. Now, consider the amount of time it would take you to track this information yourself.
- Schedule time to experiment with skills and knowledge you gain from either formal or informal training as close to the time of the training as possible. Practice the new skills until you are comfortable with them. Do not wait to practice and become comfortable with them.
- Review the goals and objectives you have set for yourself. Identify which of these are "stretch" goals or objectives. Compare them with the goals and objectives you developed for yourself in the past year. Do you continually raise the bar for your own performance? How clear are these goals and objectives? Will it be clear when you have achieved these goals and objectives?
- Ask the people to whom you go for information about updates on policies and procedures to explain how they track and organize this information. Implement similar systems for yourself.
- Build a network of professionals in your organization who meet on a regular basis to discuss developments in your profession and to share thoughts and experiences of applying these new developments.
- Explore with your manager the possibility of creating a central file for information about updates to policies and procedures that can be shared by all who need access to this information.
- Provide your manager with information about developments in your professional field and identify the pros and cons of incorporating these developments in your work.
- Explore with your manager the possibility of creating a series of meetings for professionals within the organization to share information and experiences with new developments in your area of expertise.

### **Customer/Client Focus**

- Consider how you have felt when you have been the customer. Then do the following: (1) Record behaviors or actions that impress you. (2) Develop a plan around how to implement these or similar behaviors and actions to impress your customers.
- Gather feedback from customers on the extent to which they believe you will meet their needs. If they doubt that you can fully meet their needs, determine why they hold this belief?

- Develop a list of all the kinds of customers you serve. Share this list with your supervisor or mentor. Ask them if there are other groups of customers that you have not included in your list.
- Obtain feedback from your supervisor or mentor on how effectively you promote and engage in behaviors that strengthen the focus on customers in the work that you do.
- Describe what you believe to be the needs of your customers. Ask customers about their needs. Compare your description with your description. Note when and where there are discrepancies. Are there needs you tend to overlook? Do you see needs that they do not see themselves as having? Do you tend to have more discrepancies with some customers than others? What contributes to these discrepancies? What questions did you ask to uncover the needs of customers? Which questions were particularly helpful?
- After each encounter with a customer, ask if their needs have been fully met. Ask what else they need in order to be completely satisfied. Ask them the following questions: How well have I meet your needs? How will have I addressed your problem, issue or concern? What can I do better the next time that I need to service you?
- Ask co-workers about the information they provide to customers about policies, procedures, issues and updates and how they convey this information to customers. Compare this with the information you provide customers. If necessary, change the way and amount of information you provide customers.
- Discuss the needs that you believe your customers have with your work group and manager. Then do the following: (1) Reach agreement on needs with work group and manager. (2) Verify that the needs have been correctly identified by informally asking the customer. (3) Document the needs of the customer. (4) Develop a job aid that gives you some tips on how to focus on their needs. (5) Post the job aid in your work area to remind yourself of their needs and how to focus on them.(6) Distribute the job aid to your entire work group so that you can all benefit from this analysis.

### **Decision Making/Problem Solving**

- List criteria that you think should be considered before making a decision (i.e. costs, benefits, probability for success, short-term consequences, long-term consequences, possibility of unanticipated consequences, impact on those close to the problem, impact on others, alignment with policy and guidelines, etc.) Reflect on the last major decision you made. Rank it against the criteria you have listed. Consider whether another decision might have been more appropriate.
- Recall a situation in which you took responsibility for a decision and contrast this with a situation in which you did not take responsibility for a decision you made or delegated to someone else. Reflect on the consequences and the impact it had on relationships with others.
- Identify an issue requiring a decision. Then do the following: (1) Clarify information needed. (2) Identify sources of this information. (3) Collect the information.(4) Draw a conclusion based on the information gathered. (5) Ask your supervisor and/or mentor

to review the information you have gathered and ask them what conclusions they would have drawn from the information. (6) Compare their conclusion with your conclusion.

- Review your options and decision criteria with experienced decision makers before finalizing a decision. Once a decision is made discuss with your supervisor or mentor how the decision should be implemented. Ask who should be involved in the implementation of the decision? How should they be involved?
- Discuss with your manager situations in which a decision was not made within the allotted time frame. What were the reasons for the tardiness? What impact did the tardiness have on the situation? What could be done to prevent this from occurring in the future?
- Note areas of your job in which you can make decisions independently without need for approval. Practice making decisions in these areas.
- Study literature to identify decision-making process models. Experiment with the models in low-risk situations.
- Identify sources of information that might be helpful in making recurring decisions.
- Review situations when you did not inform a key player in a decision that you made. What were the reasons for not informing that individual? What were the consequences of not involving that individual?
- Recall a time when you were not involved in a decision that affected you. Explore your reactions.
- Check with your supervisor for feedback on the adequacy and accuracy of information upon which you base your decision making.
- Ask your supervisor for examples of times when you made a decision that was not in your area of responsibility and times when you did not make a decision that you should have made because it was in your area of responsibility.
- Talk to others about the decision making process they favor on particular complex or high-impact issues.
- Keep a journal of routine problems. Note the problem, the date, the time of occurrence, consequences of not handling it immediately, and date and time the problem was resolved. Assess your journal entry every two weeks; ask your supervisor for feedback.

### **Delegating Responsibility**

- Request feedback from peers and direct reports regarding the skill and clarity of your delegation and the effectiveness of your follow-up procedures. Seek input to identify possible improvements or additions. Make appropriate behavior changes.
- Check for barriers to task accomplishment with the people working on the project; ask their advice as to how barriers might be eliminated.

- Volunteer to organize activities for community, charitable, cultural, or political organizations. Look for activities that encompass numerous tasks and provide delegation opportunities.
- Identify tasks you are currently doing that could enhance the skills of one or more individuals. Delegate the tasks to the appropriate people, while considering the characteristics of the tasks and the people's skills, knowledge, experience, and motivation.
- Seek project assignments that will require you to appropriately delegate a number of tasks for timely and successful project completion.
- Prepare an agenda or tickler file each week, recognizing and identifying appropriate tasks for delegation.
- Maintain a workload-distribution tracking chart to identify those staff members who can spend time on the delegated task or project.
- Meet with the appropriate individuals to define objectives and identify specific roles and responsibilities at the beginning of a project.
- Review previous projects to assess where more appropriate delegation might have led to a better outcome.
- Identify an assignment that you are unlikely to complete on your own and share all or a portion of the tasks.
- Maintain a log of previous delegations to identify those that have been productive and successful.
- Define parameters by establishing several "mini deadlines" over the course of a project when specific tasks must be completed.
- Set regular update meetings during the course of a project to review progress on assigned tasks and to ensure that objectives are being met.
- With the help of a manager, analyze an assignment that you delegated. Determine what was effective and what could have been done differently. Request coaching to identify how behaviors should be modified in the future.
- Involve direct reports and team members in development planning. Discuss opportunities where they could expand their knowledge and skills.

### **Facilitating Change**

- Try to imagine yourself in the situation of those people who will be affected by the change. What will their reactions be? What can you do to minimize their fear? Identify the benefits they are likely to enjoy the change. Find ways to communicate these benefits. Identify also what they are likely to lose because of the change and what they might worry about losing because of the change. Be clear about what they realistically can expect to gain and lose from the change.

- Formulate a simple and clear way to communicate the purpose and process of change. Develop a system for keeping others informed about the change. Periodically conduct informal surveys to determine what people "really believe" about the change. Identify which perceptions, if any, need to be corrected. Ask them for ways the change can be made to be more bearable.
- List proposals for change that members of your staff have suggested in the past year. Reflect on your reactions to these proposals. Identify what happened to each of these proposals. Ask your staff how they feel about proposing changes to you. Ask them what you can do to encourage them to generate ideas for process improvements.
- Brainstorm with others to identify 10-15 things that could be done differently to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of your office. As a group, review the suggestions after the list has been developed. Select one of the ideas and use it as a test model for introducing change in your office.
- Review and assess your own reactions to past change. Evaluate what you did to successfully manage the change.
- Establish informal and formal ways to reward people for embracing change.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to describe your usual reaction to change.
- Request that your supervisor include you in committees and task forces considering and planning change.
- Explore with your supervisor how information about the change can be distributed to those who will be affected by the change.
- Express your own feelings about the change to your mentor or a trusted coworker. Understand that people experience a range of emotions when undergoing change. Allow them to help you manage these emotions in a productive way.

### **Guiding and Developing Staff**

- Review the developmental plan of each of your employees. Develop a list of the kinds of experiences and training each employee needs to grow. Use this list when assigning tasks in your office and approving training requests.
- If you do not already have a developmental plan of your own, create one. Identify the kinds of experiences and training you need for your own professional growth.
- Ask other managers how they track the performance of their employees. Identify best practices and incorporate them into your management practices.
- Ask your employees about the level of feedback you provide. Would they like more, less or about the same?
- Think about the feedback you have given in the last three months. Is feedback provided equitably to different individuals? Is the ratio of praise to criticism appropriate?

- Look for opportunities to reward employees for good performance. Catch coworkers doing things right.
- Jot notes about the feedback you plan to give an employee. Review the feedback to determine if it is specific and behavioral. Ask another manager to role play giving feedback. Ask them for feedback about how you give feedback.
- Read books about performance management, goal setting and coaching
- Ask a manager or coworker who is known for effective performance discussions to discuss his or her approaches and "secrets."
- Share the performance goals of your employees with your manager. Ask which are the strongest and which are the weakest. Ask your manager to identify what distinguishes the strong performance goals from the weak ones. Rewrite the weak ones.
- Have a manager or peer role-play, coach, rehearse, or practice with you before a performance discussion or appraisal.
- For a specific performance problem of one of your employees, describe the problem briefly and develop three alternative responses to the problem. Ask your manager to give you feedback on each of the alternatives.
- Identify the link between the performance goals of several of your employees and the overall goals of the organization. Ask your manager to describe the link as s/he sees it. Consider how each might inspire an employee.
- Ask your manager for ideas about how to reinforce the importance of the goals of the organization and the link between your office and the goals of the organization.
- Gather information about how the ways in which your organization suggests employees create developmental plans for individual employees. Look for samples of developmental plans. Determine what kind of support your human resources office can provide in the creation and implementation of development plans for individual employees.
- Review the performance goals of each of your employees. What is each employee expected to achieve, by when? Check with each employee. How do they describe their performance goals? How close is their description to your description? How clear have you been in articulating the performance goals of each of your employees? To what extent did employees participate in the development of these goals? Do they think the goals are reasonable?
- Rate each of your employees in terms of progress toward their performance goals. If you have trouble doing this, ask yourself the following questions: Does each employee have a set of clear and specific performance goals? Can progress toward the goals be measured? Do I know enough about what the employee is doing to determine if they are making progress toward their performance goals?
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication during performance discussions. Is the individual uncomfortable, nervous, motivated, inspired? Explore the reactions of people to the ways in which you give feedback. Pay attention to your own non-verbal communication in performance discussions.

- Make a list of performance problems in your group over the past three months. Identify what you did in response to each of these problems and in what time frame. Rate the effectiveness of each of your responses in terms of the consequences for the individual, yourself, and others in your office. Identify from this review of data your strengths and weaknesses in managing performance problems.
- Ask each employee in the group to identify the key goals of the organization and to describe how they contribute to these goals. Based on their responses, think about how you can or should reinforce the goals of the organization and the link between their individual performance goals and the goals of the organization.
- Review the developmental plans of your employees with your manager. Ask your manager to select the best plan and tell you what makes it a good developmental plan. Ask your manager to select the weakest plan and tell you what makes it a weaker developmental plan. For one of the developmental plans, ask your manager to identify the kinds of work opportunities and training s/he would try to provide for the employee. Check it against what opportunities and training you have planned for the same employee.

### **Initiative**

- Select one of your work objectives that you find particularly interesting. Review your plans for achieving this objective. Now, consider what would be required to achieve this objective at a higher level or before you originally completed it. Design a plan for meeting this objective at a level that would "knock the socks off" others without considering the time, cost and energy required to implement the plan. (This purpose is to create the "ideal" plan.) Now, review the "ideal plan." Play devil's advocate and challenge the assumptions you hold about the possibility of fulfilling each element of the "ideal" plan. Ask someone else who is a positive person who regularly exceeds their performance objectives to review your "ideal" plan. Ask them to tell you what parts of the "ideal" plan might be possible to do. Incorporate whatever elements of your "ideal" plan into your actual plan. At the end of the plan, note how much success you had in achieving your objective. Think about your feeling of success and accomplishment.
- The next time you find yourself thinking or saying "it's not my job" add the following phrase, "but I'm going to do it anyway because that's the kind of person I am." Recall other times when you have gone above and beyond what was required of you and people expressed gratitude to you for your extra effort. Remember how you felt at those times. Reflect on the stories you might be telling yourself about how people will not appreciate your extra efforts in the current situation. Experiment with your predictions about how they will respond and give them the opportunity to prove you wrong.
- Have a frank conversation with your supervisor. Ask them for honest feedback about the amount of supervision they feel you need.. Ask if this is more or less than they feel others in your position need. Make two or three agreements about what you can do to alleviate their need to supervise you.

- The next time your supervisor assigns you a task prepare a plan of action for completing the task. Develop a schedule with milestones, statements of what you will accomplish by what time to make sure the task is completed by the deadline. Present the plan to your supervisor and make agreements on your need to share the milestones with him/her.
- Seek opportunities to solve problems affecting your department that others might normally address.
- Look for reoccurring problems that have been ignored in the past and work on generating solutions. Set aside time to experiment with your ideas, record the results, and then share them with others.
- Discuss with your supervisor about the barriers (policies, bureaucracy, etc.) you encounter when trying to initiate action. Find ways to eliminate these barriers.

### **Innovation**

- Enroll in creative adult education courses (pottery, dance, writing, poetry, painting, etc.).
- Take courses not directly related to your field or personal style/approach. If you are logical and mathematical (left brain) take creative courses; if you are intuitive (right brain), take technical, scientific, or mathematical courses.
- Keep a list or note card file of new ideas, processes, and products you encounter, whether they are related to your job or not.
- Look for similarities between seemingly unrelated problems. Generate solutions that improve underlying issues.
- Gather information, techniques, and approaches from seemingly unrelated to disparate areas of disciplines.
- Write down ideas as they occur, even if you are in the middle of another task. Keep the list handy and refer to it when you have time to consider the ideas further.
- Identify barriers to innovation (barriers imposed by you, the department, the organization, or the "system") and seek ways to remove them.
- Observe how creative departments (advertising, TV studio, etc.) and people (artists, writers, actors, etc.) go about their work.
- Set aside "quite time" to generate solutions/improvements for current situations.
- Explore ways to perform your routine job responsibilities more effectively and efficiently. Request input and feedback from others (customers, coworkers, manager).
- Defer emotional commitment to a solution until after you have explored alternatives.
- Choose a noncritical situation to test a risky innovative idea.

- Expand your point of view by reading a book or journal not in your field or area of interest.
- "Schedule" creativity: Set aside time in meetings for sharing innovative ideas and solutions, participate in scheduled brainstorming sessions, etc.
- Talk to a variety of people when trying to develop solutions. Include people who are familiar with the situation as well as those who are not but who might be able to provide you with a unique idea or perspective.
- Interview people who have implemented successful and creative ideas, products, processes, etc. Ask them how they approached the situation, generated ideas, and selected the idea that was implemented. Analyze what made them successful.
- Ask people from different departments or disciplines how they address similar situations or problems.
- Ask internal and external customers about their needs and requirements; talk to "lost customers" to find out why they no longer use your products or services.
- Put together a team of people with whom you don't usually work to brainstorm some potential solutions to an existing problem.
- Look for ways in which you might inadvertently discourage others' ideas (e.g., not listening, criticizing ideas, playing one-upmanship). Seek feedback from others and work on eliminating these behaviors.
- Ask for feedback on your openness to new or different ideas. Solicit suggestions that could help develop your skills.
- Observe a work associate who is skilled in participating in or leading brainstorming or creative-thinking sessions.
- Afterward, ask the person to share "secrets" of creativity.
- Participate in a workshop designed to build creativity and innovation skills.

### **Managing Work**

- Schedule follow-up meetings at the completion of each project to determine whether acceptable time commitments and quality standards were met. Identify problem points in the process and determine what can be done to avoid these problems in the future.
- Volunteer to work on an assignment with another person who is a good planner and organizer. Ask for feedback on your methods.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to suggest systems that will help you track assignments to your staff. Investigate possible software programs that may assist you in this.
- Review the current distribution of tasks to your staff. Does the distribution reflect the best use of staff resources? Does the distribution reflect the needs of staff? Is the

distribution equitable? Are you building a strong team with highly capable individuals who are motivated to complete the work you assign?

- Meet with your staff to discuss the current load of demands on your office. Provide a clear statement of the relative priority of tasks and the resources you estimate are needed for these tasks. Ask for their feedback on the accuracy of your estimates and for suggestions on how this work could best be distributed among them. Use your team to help you plan and organize the demands on your office.
- When assigning work, commit to making clear statements about desired results, anticipated timelines, priority weighting on the tasks, required resources and established deadlines. Ask staff members to summarize these points and then help them develop an action plan for completing the work. Determine jointly when and how you will monitor progress on these action plans.
- Develop a resource usage chart to track assigned work, avoid overloads, and alert you to bottlenecks in the work process. Use the data in these charts to review the utilization of staff and resources. Determine where efficiencies might be possible. Identify consistent problem points. Take action to resolve the problem points and leverage the opportunities for increased efficiency.
- With the assistance of a manager, analyze an assignment that was very effective or ineffective. Request coaching to pinpoint behaviors that should be modified or used in the future; set appropriate controls/follow-up systems that will eliminate ineffective procedures.
- As a basis for setting priorities, review values, vision and mission statements, as well as, organizational, departmental, and individual objectives. Discuss them with your manager. Ask for their input on the prioritization of current demands on your staff. When assigned work from your supervisor, clarify the relative priority of the tasks.
- After completing a major project, meet with your supervisor or mentor and review the ways in which you planned and organized the project. Request feedback on your planning and organizing skills. When a major project is assigned to your office, develop an action plan for completing the project and meet with your supervisor or mentor and ask for feedback on your plans. Be prepared to provide rationales for the time and resources you have estimated are necessary and the ways in which you distributed work among your staff members.

## **Planning and Organizing**

- Develop a list of opportunities for improving your organizational skills, and then, develop a plan for improvement.
- Discuss a “planning and organizing” improvement plan with your manager, and add it to your performance plan for the year.
- Assess your current organizational skills. Ask yourself the following questions: Do I take initiative to receive new assignments and complete current assignments? How committed am I to completing assignments on time? How often do I develop a

schedule for myself that ensures I will complete tasks and not allow any tasks to fall off my plate? How often do I go to management for direction and assistance?

- Discuss your organizational skills with a manager or supervisor. During the discussion ask the manager or supervisor for feedback on the following: What is my level of initiative? What examples can you provide to help me understand your perception of my current level of initiative? What level of effort do you feel that I use to accomplish assignments on time? What examples can you provide? What is my level of commitment to accomplishing assignments? What examples can you provide? What is my current ability to act with minimal supervision? What examples can you provide? What areas need improvement? What suggestions can be given to help me improve?
- Observe rhythms in your energy over the course of the day. Plan to work on complex tasks during times of the day when you are most energized. Schedule simple tasks for times when you are at energy ebbs.
- Ask those who have worked on a project with you to give you feedback about your use of time. Ask them for suggestions about how you can work more efficiently.
- Ask your supervisor to identify the priority of various assignments. Jointly identify decision rules for the priority of assignments.
- When assigned work, ask your supervisor or others to indicate the amount of time they estimate will be required to complete the assignment.
- When assigned work, ask specifically about the deadline for completing the work. Determine if the deadline is firm or can be negotiated in the event you need to revise your work schedule based on unexpected events.
- Ask your supervisor for suggestions about how to complete tasks in more efficient ways.
- For one week, keep a log of the way in which you spend your time. At the end of the week, review your log. Note points in which you became inefficient. Identify ways in which you can avoid these periods of inefficiency. Note the number of unexpected demands. Recognize that part of your work may involve responding to unexpected but critical demands. Rather than resenting these, acknowledge that you may need to plan time in your schedule for responding to these unexpected events.
- Use a calendar, task plan, a to-do list, work log, and similar planning tools to note events, action plans, deadlines, etc. Recognize that it might be necessary to develop schedules at various levels; a monthly, weekly and daily schedule. Develop an appreciation for leaving space in your schedule for unexpected events and delays.
- Ask others to share systems that they use for organizing work and systems that they use for filing documents. Develop a filing system that works for you. It should be one that minimizes the amount of time you spend retrieving documents and filing documents.
- Assess task, requests, and issues as they happen, determine if they will interfere with completing an important assignment, and act accordingly.

- Organize your use of the telephone and email. Make calls and respond to email early or late in the day in batches.
- Before retuning phone calls, determine how much time can be allocated to the phone call. Monitor your time on each call and note when conversations exceed the time limit you set. Find ways to close conversations tactfully.
- Respond to phone messages and emails in a timely manner, usually within 24 hours. Know that at the least you can acknowledge the message and inform the person when you can respond fully to the message.

### **Quality Orientation**

- Compose you own personal "commitment to quality" pledge. Keep it in a place where it is visible in your office to serve as a reminder to keep quality a top priority.
- Schedule time to check work before submitting it. Ensure that it is complete, accurate, well organized and reflects all current policies.
- Regularly communicate with other people who do similar work. How do they ensure quality outputs? Are their quality issues similar to yours, or are they different?
- Identify a coworker or supervisor who is recognized as a "quality conscious" person. Ask for advice about how to bring the same focus to your work.
- Develop a system for tracking changes in policies so that you can easily determine whether your work reflects the most current policies.
- Write down key steps to a complicated procedure. Put them in a visible place and refer to them whenever you need to use the procedure.
- Write or draw the key steps in a procedure that you feel could be streamlined or changed to produce fewer errors. Identify which steps could be changed, eliminated, added to streamline the procedure or reduce the number of errors in the outcome.
- Clarify criteria of quality for your work with you supervisor. Document these criteria and regularly assess your work against these criteria.
- Ask your supervisor or coworkers to explain the rationale behind procedures that seem a waste of time or that are complicated to perform. The urge to take shortcuts is often eliminated when giving an explanation.
- Review with your supervisor the possibility of developing a partnership with a coworker to do regular quality checks on each other's work. A fresh pair of eyes will sometime catch an error or defect that might have gone unnoticed.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to review your work and identify any problems with the quality of your work. Review the problems and identify why you had these problems. Determine what can be done to avoid these problems in the future. Employ your solutions and, after an appropriate amount of time, ask your supervisor or mentor to review your work again. Compare the number of problems from the second batch of work with the first batch of work. Note your progress.

## **Safety Awareness**

- Review safety training materials and guidelines periodically to refresh memory on safety concerns, tips and processes to avoid injury.
- Demonstrate or explain safety concerns with others who are not familiar with them.
- Identify safety concerns in your workplace that require attention. Think about ways to address them.
- Identify any procedures in your work that create safety concerns. Identify alternative procedures or changes in procedures that would reduce these concerns.
- Ask others to observe your actions and provide feedback on any safety concerns they observed.
- Ask your manager if s/he has any safety concerns that s/he has not expressed recently. Make a note of these concerns and address them.
- Take list of identified safety concerns to the individual in the organization who is responsible for workplace safety. Discuss with him or her ways that the safety concerns can be addressed and resolved.

## **Strategic Focus**

- Identify successful and unsuccessful strategies within your organization and investigate what went right and wrong with them.
- Review strategies from your organization's competition to determine why they were or were not effective.
- Test each new plan you develop against the vision. If these strategies or actions are successfully accomplished, how will they contribute to the vision? If one should fail, what are the consequences?
- If you are responsible for strategy development in your area, write out the plan or approach and test it with individuals who have been successful in similar areas.
- Use opportunities to try multiple approaches (e.g., aggressive vs. conservative) and test the assumptions of the approaches. This reinforces the fact that there is usually more than one way to accomplish something.
- Assume the client's perspective and ask yourself whether the strategy will ultimately meet the client's needs.
- Try alternative strategic planning models to determine how they fit your needs.
- Review case studies that outline how successful people have approached strategic planning.

- Develop best and worst case scenarios when you have opportunities to develop strategies and make a habit of considering them before implementation.
- Read strategic plans, business plans, and annual reports for your organization.
- Practice “stretch thinking” when considering alternatives. Try not to restrict yourself to the ways things have been done in the past. No one ever went wrong by considering all the alternatives (i.e., asking yourself and others, “What if . . .?”).
- Meet with people who have successfully put together and implemented a long-range goal or vision. Ask them questions to gain a better understanding of what was done.
- Involve team members early and often in the process of establishing long-range goals.
- When you establish a long-range goal, make a presentation to a safe audience instructing them to challenge your ideas and thinking.
- Use the sounding board concept by finding people who have successfully implemented long-range goals and bounce your ideas off them before selecting final strategies.
- Identify reliable information resources within your organization that you can count on during the early stages of gathering information.
- Work with your business partners to identify opportunities to review their strategic plans.
- Pursue opportunities to work with business partners as a team member to establish long-range goals.
- Look for opportunities to work with senior management during annual planning periods when there will be opportunities to make strategic decision.
- Ask your manager for a role in the strategic-planning process (or a similar process) that is conducted in your organization.
- Participate in start-up or new product development opportunities in which business partners will be involved in creating strategic plans.
- Volunteer to lead nonprofit fund-raising efforts.
- Become involved in political campaigns. They are one of the most challenging areas for short-term application of strategic planning skills.
- Apply strategic planning skills to your personal finances.
- Talk with people who have faced the challenge of meeting a long-term goal in their department or team. Ask them about their approach to encouraging and motivating others, how they reinforced the importance of meeting the goal, and any systems or processes that were helpful in meeting the goal.

## Stress Tolerance

- Experiment with different stress-reducing techniques, such as reading, exercising, listening to music, using aromatherapy, taking time out for yourself, etc.
- Find acceptable ways to reduce stress on the job, such as taking a walk, deep breathing, stretching, using mental images, etc.
- List the five most frequent stress-producing situations you face in your job. Rank these from most to least stressful. Think about ways to eliminate or cope with each situation.
- Ask your coworkers to tell you when they notice you becoming tense. Note the place, situation, time, and people involved. Look for trends and identify ways to react differently.
- Identify people who are known for their calmness and stability in stressful situations. Observe them and make notes of how they manage stress.
- Seek clarification from your manager on how you or your manager can, within your areas of responsibility and authority, eliminate or reduce the stress of unclear areas of responsibility or authority.
- Review situations in which your response to stress has had a negative impact on your performance. Reflect on these situations and determine what you could have done to respond more effectively. What might help you to engage in these responses? What might make it difficult for you to engage in these responses? Identify ways to remove the barriers to these responses and leverage any naturally occurring supports. Select a symbol or word that you can use to trigger these responses. Keep this symbol or word posted in your workplace and use it as a way to remind yourself of the responses you want to make in future stressful situations.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to help you identify ways or instances in which you respond negatively to stressful situations. Also ask them to identify times when you have responded effectively in stressful situations. Note the differences in your responses and the situations. Determine if there are stressful situations that you handle well. Explore what distinguishes the stressful situations you handle well from other stressful situations you in which you do not handle well. With the help of your manager or mentor, identify alternative behaviors that could produce more positive results in the situations you do not handle well.
- Identify two examples when you overreacted to a crisis situation with the help of your supervisor. Ask your supervisor to help you see each situation from a larger perspective. Recall what you worried might happen in each situation. Ask your supervisor to assess the likelihood of these outcomes. Explore what your reaction to these situations might have been if you had known this information at the time of the situation. Now, consider what actions you might have taken in the situation if you had this information at the time. Share these reactions with your supervisor and ask for additional feedback. What would they have liked to see you have done in these situations?

## Team Leadership

- Identify the supporters of and barriers to the organizational vision that are existing systems (selection, training, compensation/rewards, communication, performance management, etc.) and prepare action strategies.
- Incorporate organizational, departmental, and team goals into individual work expectations. For example, if an organizational goal is “100 percent customer satisfaction,” ask associates to be accountable for the same goal.
- Observe how others leaders develop successful teams. Think about the skills that you can learn from them.
- Think about the type of information that you share with your team members. Do you share too much? Not enough?
- How do you decide what to share?
- Create a description of what is expected from each position on the team and provide team members with a copy. If descriptions already exist, review them to make sure they are still accurate.
- Read business periodicals (for example, Business Week, Wall Street Journal, Fortune, Forbes, Inc., Harvard Business Review) and appropriate professional journals for articles about the newest team ideas.
- Identify people whose team leader skills you admire. Seek opportunities to work with them.
- Talk to other people who have recently moved or are in the process of moving to a team environment. Discuss approaches that worked well and those that might be improved.
- Consider alternative or nontraditional structures (partnerships, star points, or Self-directed teams) that might improve attaining organizational goals.
- Ask team members for ideas on ways to get them involved in team decisions. Talk about forming task forces to target specific situations.
- Confront conflict, problems, and others’ reservations or misgivings directly but tactfully. Get “all the cards on the table.”
- Hold regular meetings with your team to stay in touch with its projects. Offer to provide resources or talk to other team leaders to help your team reach its objectives.
- Talk with your team about how it is doing in relation to its and the organization’s goals and objectives.
- Seek assignments that involve increasing levels of leadership. Request feedback from others.
- Take on a project that will require you to establish goals and objectives that are inconsistent with organizational values.

- Join cross-functional, interdisciplinary, interdepartmental, or customer task forces or teams.
- Volunteer to serve as the coach for a sports team.
- Participate in local civic, charitable, and business groups and associations.
- Participate in a workshop designed to establish leadership skills, team building, and positive behavioral styles.
- Volunteer to be a leader for community, charitable, cultural, or political organization.
- Ask yourself what the "ideal" leader would do to encourage others to work together toward a common goal. After writing down your ideas, identify the things you need to work on most to meet the ideal. Commit yourself to practicing those behaviors when the next opportunity arises.
- Ask team members how well they feel you exemplify the values of the team. What things do you do that support the goals? What actions are inconsistent? After receiving your associates' input, work with your manager on developing a plan for building more supportive behaviors.
- Read customers' annual reports, advertisements, and publicity. Read industry and technical journals related to businesses that are an integral part of our organization's success. Read your organization's reports, advertisements, and publicity. Read local newspapers and business publications.
- Maintain a list of difficult business interactions, including the key contact, date, day of the week, time of day, a brief description of the problem, and how you handled it. Periodically review the list for patterns: Do you encounter more difficulties early in the day or week? Are the situations the same or similar? Are you developing routine solutions that might not satisfy particular needs?
- Ask questions that draw out the needs, interests, concerns, and objectives of other team members. Then do the following: (1) Paraphrase the responses of the other team members. This will show that you have listened and that you have an understanding of their perspective. (2) Discuss similarities in perspectives rather than focusing on differences. This will help you and other team members to realize that just because there are differences, it doesn't mean that there are no similarities in perspectives.
- Assess your level of commitment to the team, by asking yourself the following questions: Do you make it a point to attend all meetings, and be on time? Do you finish assigned tasks on time? Are you a contributor? Do you have a sense of team pride? Do you enjoy being part of a team? What actions do you take to help the team to achieve its goals?
- Keep a two-week log of your negative and positive behaviors as they relate to the team or team members. Then do the following: (1) Assess how many positive versus negative behaviors you engaged in. (2) Determine how you can increase the number of positive behaviors and decrease the number of negative behaviors. (3) Make a commitment and a plan for engaging in more positive behaviors.

- Obtain feedback from your manager or mentor on your teamwork skills and behaviors. Then do the following: (1) Ask this person to observe your actions and give you positive feedback and feedback for improvement. (2) Ask this person to give you his/her perceptions of when you have effectively demonstrated cooperation, collaboration, pride, and trust. (3) Ask this person what you can do to foster commitment in self and others, and how you can contribute to team spirit and team goals.
- Assess areas upon which you can improve your teamwork skills, meet with your manager to discuss these areas and your plan to start engaging in alternative and more positive behaviors. Track the consequences of these efforts.
- Identify your own needs, interests, concerns and objectives. Share these with other teams' members. Identify what kind of assistance and expertise you can offer to others in the team.

## Teamwork

- Ask other team members to give you feedback about these questions.
- Identify your own needs, interests, concerns and objectives. Share these with other teams' members. Identify what kind of assistance and expertise you can offer to others in the team.
- For each person in your team, identify what you see as his/her greatest contribution to date. Develop a way to recognize each person for what they have contributed.
- Assess areas upon which you can improve your teamwork skills, meet with your manager to discuss these areas and your plan to start engaging in alternative and more positive behaviors. Track the consequences of these efforts.
- Ask questions that draw out the needs, interests, concerns, and objectives of other team members. Then do the following: (1) Paraphrase the responses of the other team members. This will show that you have listened and that you have an understanding of their perspective. (2) Discuss similarities in perspectives rather than focusing on differences. This will help you and other team members to realize that just because there are differences, it doesn't mean that there are no similarities in perspectives.
- Assess your level of commitment to the team, by asking yourself the following questions: Do you make it a point to attend all meetings, and be on time? Do you finish assigned tasks on time? Are you a contributor? Do you have a sense of team pride? Do you enjoy being part of a team? What actions do you take to help the team to achieve its goals?
- Keep a two-week log of your negative and positive behaviors as they relate to the team or team members. Then do the following: (1) Assess how many positive versus negative behaviors you engaged in. (2) Determine how you can increase the number of positive behaviors and decrease the number of negative behaviors. (3) Make a commitment and a plan for engaging in more positive behaviors.

- Obtain feedback from your manager or mentor on your teamwork skills and behaviors. Then do the following: (1) Ask this person to observe your actions and give you positive feedback and feedback for improvement. (2) Ask this person to give you his/her perceptions of when you have effectively demonstrated cooperation, collaboration, pride, and trust. (3) Ask this person what you can do to foster commitment in self and others, and how you can contribute to team spirit and team goals.

### **Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skills**

- Track the amount of time you spend asking coworkers for information about updates regarding policies and procedures and/or technical information that you should know. Double this to account for the time spent by co-workers answering your questions. Now, consider the amount of time it would take you to track this information yourself.
- Schedule time to experiment with skills and knowledge you gain from either formal or informal training as close to the time of the training as possible. Practice the new skills until you are comfortable with them. Do not wait to practice and become comfortable with them.
- Ask the people to whom you go for information about updates on policies and procedures to explain how they track and organize this information. Implement similar systems for yourself.
- Build a network of professionals in your organization who meet on a regular basis to discuss developments in your profession and to share thoughts and experiences of applying these new developments.
- Explore with your manager the possibility of creating a central file for information about updates to policies and procedures that can be shared by all who need access to this information.
- Provide your manager with information about developments in your professional field and identify the pros and cons of incorporating these developments in your work.
- Explore with your manager the possibility of creating a series of meetings for professionals within the organization to share information and experiences with new developments in your area of expertise.
- Before starting a new project, task or assignment, ask yourself the following questions: What have I learned recently that will help me complete this project, task or assignment? What new information has been made available to me that pertains to this project, task or assignment? How can I complete this project, task or assignment efficiently? What can I share with others about the results of completing the project, task or assignment that will help my department to better and more efficiently complete work?
- Subscribe to a professional journal in your field or join a professional association. Ask other professionals in your field to suggest journals and associations which they would recommend. Go to a library or the web and identify journals or websites maintained by professional associations in your field to determine what new

developments are occurring in your profession. Expand your personal network of connections with professional in your field. Include professionals in other organizations to learn about what developments are occurring in your field and to share your own developments.

- Find peers who display a high level of technical knowledge and skill. Then do the following: (1) Talk with them about your desire to improve your technical knowledge and skill. (2) Ask them how they improve their technical knowledge and skill. (3) Ask them to provide you with feedback on your use of technical knowledge and skill. (4) Ask them to keep you informed of publications, training programs, books, etc. that might help to increase your technical knowledge and skill.
- After attending a training program or seminar, review the key information, actions and behaviors. Then do the following: (1) Develop an action plan to perform or implement the key information, actions and behaviors learned during the training. (2) Describe how you, your department, your organization and your customers will benefit from your action plan. (3) Discuss your action plan with your manager or supervisor. (4) Consider making your action plan part of your Performance Plan for the year.

### **Visionary Leadership**

- Whenever your organization announces a business decision or places special emphasis on an organizational goal, analyze how it fits into the overall business strategy and how it will affect your area. Make sure that decisions in your area mirror the decisions of your organization.
- Identify those elements in existing systems that support and inhibit the organizational vision (selection, training, compensation/rewards, communication, performance management, etc.) and prepare action strategies to address them appropriately. When addressing inhibitors or problems, make sure you are working with the sources of problems and not their symptoms.
- Identify a project in which the work procedures followed were not consistent with organizational systems. Compare this to a project where procedures and systems were consistent, analyzing the differences both in terms of commitment to the project and project outputs.
- Review the latest business plan you wrote for your team or department. Did you include a section on how your plan ties into long-term major goals? Ask yourself how the plan could be improved and what you have to do as a leader to create a sense of direction for long-term goals.
- Read documents and/or attend meetings concerning strategic plans, business plans, and annual reports for your organization. Point out to others how organizational vision and values apply to everyday contexts.
- Reinforce organizational, departmental, and team goals and business plans to your team by incorporating them into work expectations. Make sure that everyone's key objectives reflect a contribution toward organizational goals.

- Analyze the operational and communications problems your work group encounters. Could those problems be solved by an interdepartmental task force looking at broader issues and long-range solutions? If so, take the initiative to form that group.
- Talk with people who have faced the challenge of meeting a long-term strategic goal in their department or team.
- Ask them how they went about encouraging and motivating others and how they reinforced the importance of meeting the goal. See if any of the systems or processes they found helpful could be incorporated into your team.
- Write down what you believe are the goals and objectives of your department. Ask your leader to review your list and then discuss how your goals can be better tied to organizational vision and values.
- Seek feedback from others on what they perceive to be your department's top priorities and short- and long-term goals.
- What are the differences in perception between their statements and your (or your organization's) actual goals?
- Identify an activity or process that does not align well with the organizational vision and values. Set up and implement a plan for realigning the process so that it no longer conflicts.
- Meet with your team members and ask them to provide feedback concerning how well you communicate and exemplify the values of your organization. What things do you do that support or inhibit the vision? Ask team members what you can do to gain their enthusiasm and commitment to reaching organizational or department goals.
- Set up a trial run by deciding on one thing you and your team would like to accomplish by the end of the month (for example, high customer satisfaction ratings for the month). Communicate this "vision" to your team and make sure they have the resources to make it happen. Afterward, discuss the trial run with your team and figure out ways to improve the goal-setting process and to make it on-going.
- Ask to observe or participate in a project team or task force that targets broader-range organizational issues (especially those that involve senior management participation). Use the experience as an opportunity to gain insight into establishing vision and values.

### **Work Standards**

- Compose you own personal "commitment to quality" pledge. Keep it in a place where it is visible in your office to serve as a reminder to keep quality a top priority.
- Schedule time to check work before submitting it. Ensure that it is complete, accurate, well organized and reflects all current policies.
- Regularly communicate with other people who do similar work. How do they ensure quality outputs? Are their quality issues similar to yours, or are they different?

- Identify a coworker or supervisor who is recognized as a "quality conscious" person. Ask for advice about how to bring the same focus to your work.
- Develop a system for tracking changes in policies so that you can easily determine whether your work reflects the most current policies.
- Write down key steps to a complicated procedure. Put them in a visible place and refer to them whenever you need to use the procedure.
- Write or draw the key steps in a procedure that you feel could be streamlined or changed to produce fewer errors. Identify which steps could be changed, eliminated, added to streamline the procedure or reduce the number of errors in the outcome.
- Clarify criteria of quality for your work with you supervisor. Document these criteria and regularly assess your work against these criteria.
- Ask your supervisor or coworkers to explain the rationale behind procedures that seem a waste of time or that are complicated to perform. The urge to take shortcuts is often eliminated when giving an explanation.
- Review with your supervisor the possibility of developing a partnership with a coworker to do regular quality checks on each other's work. A fresh pair of eyes will sometime catch an error or defect that might have gone unnoticed.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to review your work and identify any problems with the quality of your work. Review the problems and identify why you had these problems. Determine what can be done to avoid these problems in the future. Employ your solutions and, after an appropriate amount of time, ask your supervisor or mentor to review your work again. Compare the number of problems from the second batch of work with the first batch of work. Note your progress.