

HR

Update

HR.....SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS.

STATE OF ALASKA
DIVISION OF PERSONNEL
AND LABOR RELATIONS

FY 09- ISSUE 01
JULY 15, 2008



July 4 Fireworks © Staci Augustus 2008

IN THIS ISSUE:

- BUILDING YOUR TEAM, EMPOWERING YOUR EMPLOYEES, AND FULFILLING THE MISSION OF THE AGENCY (OH MY!)
- WHEN CRITICISM IS NECESSARY
- YOUR ONE MINUTE MOTIVATOR
- QUICK FACTS

HR UPDATE

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

Please let us know what you think of our publication. If you have any suggestions about how to improve the HR Update or topics you think should be addressed, please contact franklin.hurt@alaska.gov.

Now Available

2006 & 2007 Turnover Data for Departments by Job Family and Organizational Unit is located on the Department of Administration, Division of Personnel & Labor Relations, Employee Planning & Information Center Publications Web Page:

<http://dop.state.ak.us/website/index.cfm?fuseaction=EPIC.publications>

Background photo: Purple Flower 2008 © Kathy Nava

Building Your Team, Empowering Your Employees, and Fulfilling the Mission of the Agency (Oh My!)

By

Carol McLeod

“The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say ‘I.’ And that’s not because they have trained themselves not to say ‘I.’ They don’t think ‘I.’ They think ‘we’; they think ‘team.’ They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don’t sidestep it, but ‘we’ gets the credit.... This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done.” --Peter Drucker

In almost every workplace, people talk about being part of a team, about building their teams, about “my team,” but it is often an unfortunate reality that many people do not truly feel part of something larger than themselves. In a team-oriented agency, employees feel a real sense of commitment to the agency’s success and feel unified with all other employees in fulfilling the mission of the agency. When a supervisor leads an effective team, the accomplishments are greater and more effective than anything a single employee can create alone.

“It is amazing how much people can get done if they do not worry about who gets the credit.” --Sandra Swinney

In real life, team work rarely happens by itself. A team needs to be built and managed, which takes a leader who understands how teams function and who understands how to build an effective, focused work team. Even when a supervisor has a group of dedicated, hard-working, high-performing individuals, it is still possible that this group is not a team.

Team effectiveness has two components. The first component is that the team members’ strengths and weaknesses complement each other. A team is as diverse as its members, and when members can use their strengths in full and compensate for each other’s weaknesses, you have an effective team. Of course, this component takes careful management because it also has the potential for some real conflict amongst people with similar personalities, as they juggle with authority issues over the same areas of expertise. Then there are those team members with completely different personalities whose natural inclination towards each other is conflictual rather than complementary.

The other component is that all team members are connected and working towards the same goal—the agency’s goals, not individual accomplishments. They have a fully developed sense of teamwork, and are committed to achieving the team’s clearly articulated and understood goals. This component takes a lot of open, honest, clear communication, which helps ensure that all members of the team understand the goals, what strengths they bring to the team to help accomplish those goals, and what their roles are.

HR Update FY 09 - Issue 01

“Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is a success.”—
Henry Ford

Every successful, focused team must have a team leader who will pay attention to certain factors that contribute to the team’s achievements. By paying attention to these factors, agency leaders will find it easier to build and manage teams that have come together to accomplish a task, concentrate on a particular problem to solve, and/or find creative, workable ways to get the job at hand done.

- ❖ Make sure that the **goals of the team** are clearly articulated and completely understood and *accepted* by all team members. Acceptance is key—if the goals are not accepted by all team members, you will not have an effective team. It would be best to put those members whose goals are not aligned with the rest of the team on another project. **Open, honest communication** is the only way to ensure that each team member truly supports the function and purpose of the team. As the leader, you will want to make it safe for your employee who does not support the goals of the team to tell you so, and to make reassigning this person non-punitive.
- ❖ Make sure that each member of the team **understands his/her role and what you expect of each one**. If you have two team members with similar skills, you can anticipate some juggling for position between the two. As leader, you need to be clear and concise about what each one will bring to the team and what each one will be held accountable for accomplishing.

- ❖ **Empower your team members** by allowing them some autonomy to make decisions about the process, as long as there is complete understanding about what the end product will be. This will be easier to do if each team member has a clear understanding of why he/she was chosen to serve on the team. From inception of the team, state clearly that each person was chosen because of competence and skills in certain areas, and articulate what those skills and competence are.
- ❖ Along with empowerment comes the **definition of boundaries**. Team members need to know what limitations there are, such as time or money resources. Team leaders will need to let the team know how far they can go in pursuit of solutions.
- ❖ **Interpersonal relationships and issues** must be dealt with early on and in full. Team members need to understand the stages of group development and what their own individual roles and responsibilities are. An effective team will establish group norms in such areas as conflict resolution, consensus and other decision making, and meeting management. The team leader will need to ensure that all members understand the reporting structure, timelines, and any barriers that exist. It is worth a little extra time in the beginning to discuss and decide these things rather than waiting until interpersonal relationship *issues* become interpersonal relationship *problems* that cause the team to break down.
- ❖ Establish a method for giving and receiving **feedback and performance evaluations**. Team members should be given clear expectations for performance and expected outcomes. All members

should fully understand why the team was created, what it is expected to do, and how their individual and group performance impacts the group, the department, and their own evaluations.

- ❖ Finally, answer these questions for the team:
 - Do you know why you were selected?
 - Do you understand how the work of the team fits the mission of the department, division, or agency?
 - Do you understand team and group process?
 - Do you know what the priorities of the team are?

Creating an effective team takes work, but in the long run, a successful, effective team of empowered employees will meet and overcome challenges that would defeat single individuals.

“None of us is as smart as all of us.”-- **Ken Blanchard**

For more information on team building, you may find the following resources helpful:

<http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/Misc/cc352.htm>

http://telecollege.dcccd.edu/mgmt1374/book_contents/4directing/teambldg/teambldg.htm

HR Update FY 09 - Issue 01

When Criticism is Necessary

Sometimes supervisors and managers must provide feedback to an employee that is criticizing. While it is unpleasant to deliver and get criticism, this simple three step method can help make sending and receiving this kind of feedback less disagreeable to both parties:

1. Open with something positive so that you get the person to pay attention, and let them know you appreciate them.
2. Be critical in specific, meaningful ways. Tell what you observed and what needs to change.
3. Close with something positive so that the person feels good about the interaction.

For example, a conversation with an employee following these three steps may sound something like:

“I have often observed your interactions with clients and appreciate that you are usually cheerful and upbeat. However, with this particular client, I noticed that you were impatient and curt. That is not the image I’d like for this agency to have, regardless of the client’s behavior. I realize that you seldom project that sort of image, and want you to know that your typical behavior is much more appropriate to the work that we do and the clients that we serve.”

As with all other feedback, criticism works best when it is given as close to the event as possible, is based upon observations, and is specific.

Your One Minute Motivator

Within our dreams and aspirations we find our opportunities.

When you are feeling depreciated, angry and drained, it is a sign that other people are not open to your energy.

Making mistakes means you are learning faster.

It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that things are difficult.

While it is important that supervisors and managers find ways to help their employees become and remain motivated at work, it is equally important that employees (including managers and supervisors) develop their own skills in motivating themselves. It is all well and good for motivation and discipline to come from our bosses, but the ability to self-motivate and self-discipline are extremely important in today’s world. And these are skills, like all other skills, that can be taught, learned, and managed.

A one-minute motivator is a positive, uplifting thought or saying that you use when you are feeling overwhelmed, or unappreciated, or when times are just tough. Your motivator doesn’t need to be long, just something to say to yourself, almost like a mantra, that will help you focus on the job and power through it. Find something meaningful to you and post it where you can see it and read it

every day. Just being able to articulate your motivator can displace a lot of negativity that happens upon occasion in the workplace. Don’t be afraid to change your motivator, either. When it stops working for you, find another one.

Source: <http://www.usnews.com/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2008/6/17/the-one-sentence-motivator.html>

Quick Facts

Helping your employees maintain a balance between their work lives and their private lives is one way to boost your retention efforts. In a national survey of 1,000 workers, Yahoo!Hot Jobs discovered:

- 69% of all employees surveyed planned to take vacations this summer
- 51% of those employees had to cancel vacations due to workload requirements
- 21% of those employees learned that the dates they requested were not available because the dates had been granted to someone else
- 15% of all employees surveyed anticipated calling in sick at least once in order to take a day off.



Bear © Tara Stephens 2008

The Alaska Department of Administration complies with Title II of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. This publication is available in alternative communication formats upon request. To make necessary arrangements, contact the Employee Planning and Information Center for the Division of Personnel and Labor Relations at (907) 465-4434 or the TDD for the hearing impaired at (907) 465-3888.