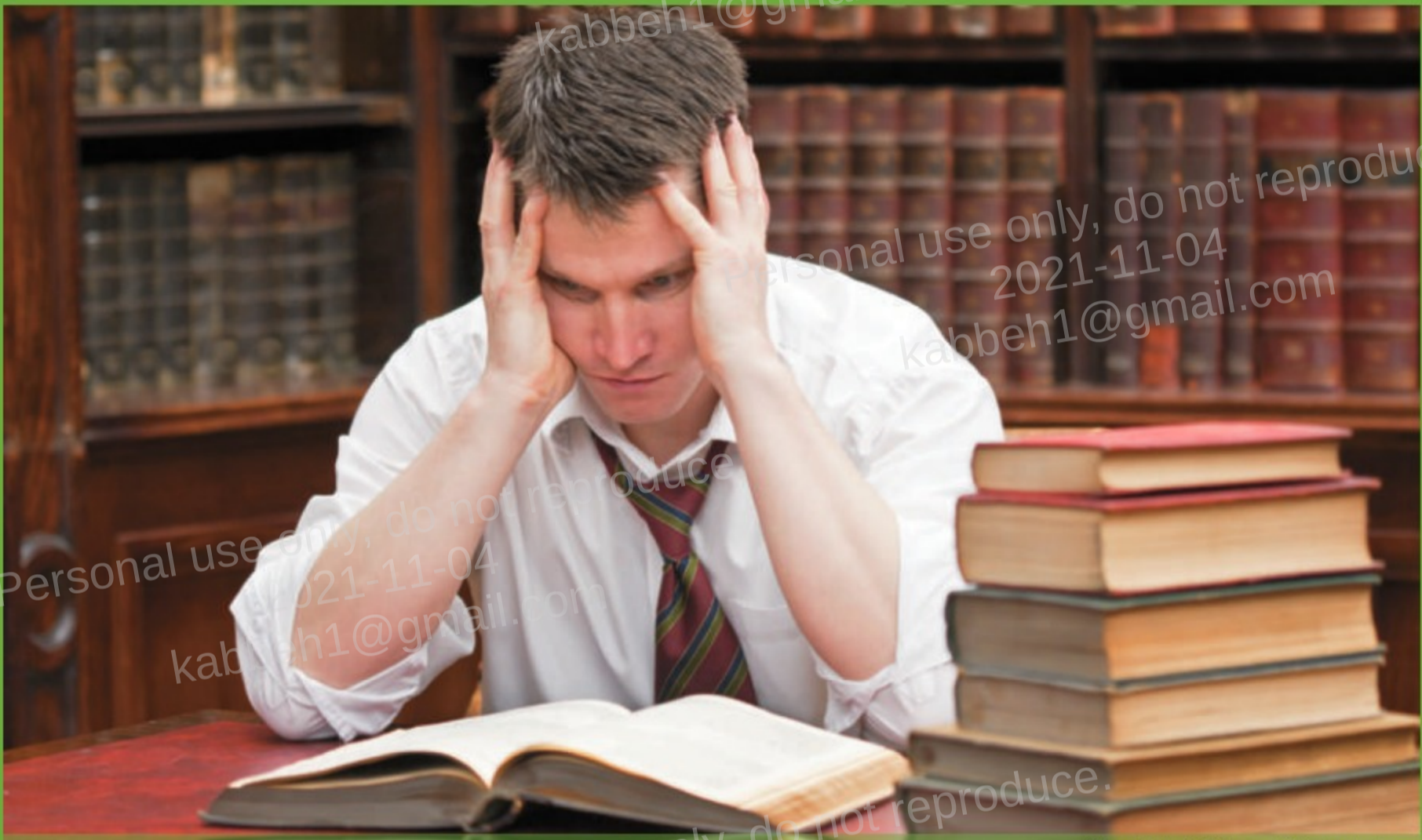


Building and Managing Effective Teams



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After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

- 1 Describe the form and function of the different types of work groups and the unique relevance of each to the supervisory role.
- 2 Explain the relevance of research findings about work groups.
- 3 Distinguish the relationships between employee morale, engagement, teamwork and productivity, and identify factors that influence employee engagement
- 4 Discuss techniques for assessing employee morale, including observation and employee attitude surveys.
- 5 Understand why counseling is an important part of the supervisor's job.
- 6 Identify programs that organizations use to help employees with personal and work-related problems.

YOU MAKE THE CALL!



Don Brockman had just begun his first official day on the job at Lighthouse Financial. He was 27 years old, had spent three years in active military service, and finished his degree in business administration in May of this year. He had taken eighteen hours of various HR management courses and had had an internship in HR at the local hospital. The intern position helped him to hone his interviewing and communication skills and his military experience had matured him and helped him to deal with difficult people.

The company was in the process of building a new operation center next to the corporate headquarters. Lighthouse will be adding 250 new positions and many of them will be customer service employees. Don will have primary responsibility for interviewing candidates for various positions the company needs to fill. His job would be screening, interviewing, and referring potential employees to the appropriate unit managers. Charlie Bright, vice president of HR, told him that he needed to look at becoming a member of the local SHRM chapter. Bright also said, "If you have any questions, come see me. My door is always open."

After spending a couple of hours reviewing company policies and procedures on recruiting, screening interviewing, and the like, Don wandered down to the break room. Betty Seward, HR specialist for compensation and benefits, sat down across the table from him. Seward asked him how his morning was going. Don responded, "O.K." "Let me give you some motherly advice," Betty began, "I've been working here for nine years and have learned to go with the flow—if you know what I mean? It took me a while to learn how you play the game. No one

ever told me—I had to learn without anyone to guide me. Remember when dealing with Charlie, you must be willing to say anything to him as long as it's something he wants to hear."

Pausing to sip coffee, Betty continued, "Saying what he wants to hear is more important than the truth. Remember, it's the only way to survive in this game. Charlie wants staff members who always take their cue from him. You need to listen carefully and watch him closely—take his ideas and make them work. If there is any doubt about what to do, take your cue from him. Without question, accept his decisions and if you have an idea of your own, find a way to make him think it is his idea. Let him take credit. You make him look good and he will take care of you. Gosh, I've got to run, see you later."

Don was startled by Betty's comments. He wondered how reliable her advice was. Back in his own cubicle, Don continued to review the company handbook but Betty's comments continued to interrupt his train of thought. Don recounted, "Lighthouse Financial has a good reputation in the area, and I like what I've been hired to do. I wonder if Betty's comments are personal to her alone or if others feel the same way. Time will tell." At lunch that day, Ken Howard, a member of the accounting team for Lighthouse, came over to the table and said, "You must be new here. Welcome." Don replied, "I'm Don Brockman. This is my first day here and I work in human resources." Ken said, "Oh, you're the new guy. Welcome aboard to Charlie's ship. I will be praying for you." Don wondered what he had gotten into and what he might do to be the best employee for Lighthouse Financial.

Disclaimer: The above scenario presents a supervisory situation based on real events to be used for educational purposes. The identities of some or all individuals, organizations, industries, and locations, as well as financial and other information may have been disguised to protect individual privacy and proprietary information. Fictional details may have been added to improve readability and interest.

YOU MAKE THE CALL!

Understanding Work Groups and Their Importance

In Chapter 9, we presented an overview of the informal organization, with particular reference to the supervisor's relationship with informal work groups and their leaders. We mentioned that informal work groups can positively or negatively influence employee motivation and performance. Throughout this book, we have emphasized that a supervisor must be concerned not only with employees as individuals but also with how those employees relate to groups both inside and outside the supervisor's department.

An individual's motivations and behavioral clues are often found in the context of the person's associates, colleagues, and peers. On the job, an employee's attitudes and morale can be shaped to a large degree by co-workers, at times even more than by the supervisor or other factors in the work environment. Therefore, a supervisor should be aware of work groups and how those groups function.

- 1 Describe the form and function of the different types of work groups and the unique relevance of each to the supervisory role.**

Moreover, a supervisor must understand how morale influences employee performance and what can be done to maintain a high level of morale at the departmental level.

WHY WORK GROUPS FORM AND FUNCTION

Work groups form and function in work settings for many reasons.¹ Among the most common reasons are the following:

- **Companionship and identification.** The work group provides a peer relationship and a sense of belonging, which can help satisfy the employee's social needs.
- **Behavior guidelines.** People tend to look to others, especially their peers, for guides to acceptable workplace behavior.
- **Problem solving.** The work group may be instrumental in providing a means by which an employee may solve a personal or minor work-related problem.
- **Protection.** Employees often look to the work group for protection from outside pressures, such as those pressures placed by supervisors and higher-level managers.

Much behavioral research has focused on factors that make work groups tightly knit, cohesive, and effective. A work group is usually most cohesive when it

- has members who perceive themselves as having higher status than other employees, as in job classification or pay;
- is small;
- shares similar personal characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnic background, and off-the-job interests;
- is relatively distant from other employees, as in geographically dispersed work groups and groups away from the home office;
- has formed due to outside pressures or for self-protection, such as a layoff or disciplinary action taken by management;
- has members who communicate relatively easily; and
- has succeeded in some group effort, which encourages members to seek new group objectives.

The most effective teams are those that have *shared cognition*, or a common level and depth of knowledge that allows all team members to anticipate and execute actions toward meeting the group's goals. In other words, in order to reach their goal, every team member must be on the same page of the play-book.² However, sometimes having all team members stuck on the same page can be detrimental to team performance and organizational outcomes if the team engages in **groupthink**, the tendency of members of a group to make faulty decisions because of group pressures, even in the face of red flags or better, more logical alternatives. Groupthink can have dire consequences, as was seen in the *Challenger* and *Columbia* space shuttle disasters, the failures of corporate powerhouses Enron and WorldCom, and most recently in the 2008 financial crisis.³ For that reason, it is important for supervisors to consider ways to encourage diverse opinions and opposing points of view, as well as check in with the team regularly to ensure they are steering toward appropriate outcomes. Of course, the supervisor will never be completely aware of the kinds of forces that are most prevalent in the department's group dynamics. However, regular interaction with teams, as well as sensitivity to employee needs and individual concerns, can help the supervisor guide work groups more effectively.

Groupthink

The tendency of members of a group to make faulty decisions because of group pressures, even in the face of red flags or better, more logical alternatives



Members of a cohesive work group enjoy their group affiliation.

Classifications of Work Groups

Four major types of employee work groups can be identified in most organizations:

1. Command
2. Task
3. Friendship
4. Special interest⁴

Because these classifications overlap, a supervisor should recognize that employees may be members of several such groups.

The **command group** consists of employees classified according to the authority relationships on the formal organizational chart. Members of this group work together daily to accomplish regularly assigned work. For example, at the departmental level, a command group consists of the supervisor and the employees who report to the supervisor. Throughout the organization are interrelated departments or command-group divisions that reflect the formal authority structure.

Command group

Grouping of employees according to authority relationships on the formal organization chart

TASK GROUP OR CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAM

A **task group or cross-functional team** consists of employees from different departments brought together to accomplish a particular task or project. For example, for a telephone to operate in a customer's home, the telephone company's employees and supervisors from a number of departments, such as customer service, construction, plant installation, central office equipment, accounting, and testing, may work together to accomplish the job. Another example is a hospital in which numerous interdepartmental task relationships and communications

Task group or cross-functional team

Grouping of employees who come together to accomplish a particular task

take place among hospital personnel, from such departments as admitting, nursing, laboratory, dietary, pharmacy, physical therapy, and medical records, to care for a patient.

A specialized subset of the task group is the customer-satisfaction team. Members of this team represent many different functions and may include customer and supplier representatives. Team members come together to solve a specific problem, and they disband once the solution is put in place. For example, 3M empowers self-directed work teams (SDWTs) to develop systems and processes that help them do their jobs. The use of SDWTs to monitor and take action when needed to correct problems frees upper-level managers to do other things that contribute to 3M's success rather than tending to daily routine chores.⁵ Simply put, 3M's use of task groups or cross-functional teams brings groups of people together so that they can apply their combined talents to continuously improve quality and ultimately increase customer satisfaction.

The **friendship group** is an informal group of people who have similar personal characteristics and social interests. Many friendship groups are related primarily to such common factors as age, gender, ethnic background, outside interests, and marital status. Command and task groups may be instrumental in bringing friendship groups together. Also, preexisting friendships often serve as a catalyst for increased productivity and performance of newly formed teams, primarily because the team does not need to spend much time becoming oriented and building the relationships necessary to work effectively together.⁶

The **special-interest group** accomplishes in a group things that individuals feel unable or unwilling to pursue individually. A temporary special-interest group might be a committee of employees who wish to protest an action taken by a supervisor or management, promote a charitable undertaking, or organize an employee picnic.

A labor union is an example of a more permanent special-interest group because it is legally and formally organized. A labor union brings together employees from different departments and divisions as they strive to achieve economic and other objectives. A labor union official once made the following comment: "Labor unions don't just happen, they're caused. And it's the management, not labor unions, that cause them!" This official was quite candid in expressing his opinion that labor unions were a direct response to management's failure to respond to employee needs. The sentiments (morale) of workers are usually determined more by conditions existing in their work situations and the need to fulfill unmet needs. Thus, employees may join a labor union primarily to obtain economic objectives such as higher wages and greater benefits. Or they may join a group to satisfy psychological or sociological objectives, such as feeling a greater sense of identity. Some employees believe that membership in a group provides them with greater security and better control over their jobs. Other employees believe that the presence of a labor union in matters of grievances and complaints promotes a fairer settlement of disputes.

As stated earlier, an employee may belong to a number of groups in the workplace, and the supervisor who understands these different groups is more likely to influence these groups. Some research studies have suggested that a supervisor has a better chance of influencing an employee's behavior as a member of a work group than individually without the work group's influence. Some of these concepts are discussed later in this chapter.

Friendship group

Informal grouping of employees based on similar personalities and social interests

Special-interest group

Grouping of employees that exists to accomplish something as a group that would not likely be pursued individually

Research Insights for Managing Work Groups

Numerous behavioral studies have been conducted on work groups and on how they function. These studies have suggested a number of approaches for managing work groups effectively. While these approaches will not guarantee the desired results, they are consistent with behavioral research findings concerning work-group dynamics and group behavior.

2 Explain the relevance of research findings about work groups to their supervision and management.

FINDINGS FROM GROUP (TEAM) RESEARCH

The work-group studies that have probably had the most lasting influence during the twentieth century and beyond were conducted in the late 1920s and early 1930s at Western Electric Company's Hawthorne plant near Chicago, Illinois.⁷ Known as the **Hawthorne Studies**, they remain a comprehensive and definitive source on the subject of work-group dynamics as they relate to employee attitudes and productivity. Many of the lessons of the Hawthorne Studies still apply to supervisory practice today, supporting the adage that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Hawthorne Studies

Comprehensive research studies that focused on work-group dynamics as they related to employee attitudes and productivity

Throughout the text, we have mentioned various organized participative management programs. Regardless of what these programs are called, they share certain characteristics. For the most part, these programs try to build effective work teams that foster the continual improvement of work processes, project tasks, and customer service. One of the most comprehensive surveys was conducted by Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith, two management consultants who interviewed hundreds of team members in dozens of organizations that had used teams to address various problems. Katzenbach and Smith identified principles that are most closely associated with effective work teams, including the following:

- Team members must be committed to the group and its performance.
- Teams function better when they are small, usually consisting of ten or fewer members.
- Teams should be composed of individuals with skills that are complementary and sufficient to deal with the problem.
- Teams should be committed to objectives that are specific and realistic.⁸

Much also can be learned from the case studies reported in Steven Jones and Michael Beyerlein's *Developing High Performance Work Teams*. One such study, which describes Eastman Chemical Company's decision to move to a team management approach at its Kingsport, Tennessee, facility, delivered the following findings:

- Because supervisors must take on more responsibility and receive less recognition, they feel threatened by transitions to teams. Therefore, supervisors must be coached, supported, and encouraged in their new roles.
- Team members must be held accountable for their actions to increase feelings of personal responsibility for the team's success.
- New team leadership roles for supervisors include coaching and facilitating.
- Communication becomes more important. Team leaders must be process-oriented and have meetings to clarify team roles.⁹

The Kingsport facility employs almost 7,000 of Eastman's 14,500 employees and is one of the largest chemical manufacturing facilities in the country.¹⁰

INSIGHTS INTO THE GROUP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

When the need to convene a work group arises, the supervisor's work is just beginning. The first step in the process is identifying the task the group needs to accomplish or the problem that needs to be solved. Then, the supervisor needs to identify work-group members who will fulfill the SKA needs of the task or problem, or delegate this role to an employee who is familiar with the skills and abilities of others in the department or company. Once the group is built, it may seem logical for the supervisor to step out of the way and let the team do its work. However, Tuckman and Jensen's classical research on the process of group development asserts that when new work groups are formed, the supervisor remains a key player. They describe five specific stages small groups go through: *forming*, *storming*, *norming*, *performing*, and *adjourning*.

- **Forming**—When a group first convenes, individuals meet, agree on goals, and begin the task at hand. At the same time, members are often on their best behavior as they gather information and impressions about the rest of the group's personalities, motivations, and orientation to the task. During this stage, the supervisor's role is directive in outlining roles, responsibilities, the task, and its deliverables.
- **Storming**—As the work progresses, group members begin to share ideas and perspectives about the task and the group itself, some of which may be in competition or conflict. The supervisor should remain accessible to the team during this stage to provide feedback, suggest decision-making strategies, give explicit direction regarding next steps, and coach employees in the use of professional behavior when competing ideas and personalities begin to hamper productivity. It is possible for groups to get stuck in this stage if conflict overtakes the group's goal as a primary focus of its activities, which illustrates why it is important for the supervisor to stay indirectly involved in a supportive monitor role.
- **Norming**—Once group members establish their roles and responsibilities and a shared understanding of the goal, they tend to move forward productively with the work. At this point in the group development process, the supervisor should expect, receive, and review regular reports of progress from the group and provide feedback and support when appropriate.
- **Performing**—Groups at this stage run like clockwork. They can work independently, make decisions, and establish new goals with little or no supervision. Group members have established processes for resolving conflict and changing direction when necessary. The group's supervisor should remain active in holding the group accountable for deliverables, providing feedback, and approving changes as they are proposed.
- **Adjourning**—At some point, an existing group may no longer be necessary, particularly in the case of task or special-interest groups that have achieved the goals for which they were originally established. In order to help group members transition to new roles, either in new groups or back to their original positions, the supervisor should be directive in providing explicit guidance to each employee about his or her new responsibilities. While it may again seem logical to simply disband the group, it is important for supervisors to recognize that employees' levels of power and discretion may change as they move into different roles. Accordingly, orienting employees to new expectations will help them transition out of work groups smoothly.¹¹

EXAMPLES OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEAMS

Highly effective teams are hard to find, and they are inspiring. The Japan women's national soccer team demonstrated teamwork and perseverance against all odds in 2011. Members of the nonprofessional league team, many of whom work day jobs in hot spring resort hotels and train in the evenings,¹² stunned the world and inspired their earthquake-ravaged homeland as it stood on the brink of nuclear and economic disaster when they became the first Asian team to win the FIFA Women's World Cup.

The road to victory was treacherous, but the Japanese women's team was prepared. Finishing second behind England to reach the quarter finals, the team shocked the host nation and defending champion Germany with a 1-0 victory. Prior to the match against Germany, Japanese coach Norio Sasaki showed the team a video of the crippled Fukushima power plant. Karina Maruyama, who had worked at the plant from 2005 to 2009, scored the match's only goal.¹³ Japan then handily defeated Sweden 3-1 in the semi-final. A 2-2 tie in the championship match against the United States sent the competition into extra time, but Japanese players didn't get discouraged when the referee sent off one of their players with a red card for a questionable tackle. Instead, their coach set a celebratory tone for the team, smiling, clapping, and embracing the thrill of the moment as the women proceeded to astonish their opponents and spectators with an unlikely 3-1 penalty shoot-out victory.¹⁴

Kumiko Fukushi, a Tokyo music studio owner, believes the tragedy of the earthquake bolstered the resolve and initiative of the team as they prepared for their international challenge. "It shows the true bravery of Japanese women. Even when we are under intense pressure, in life or on the soccer field, we don't panic. We just think about trying our best to reach our goal."¹⁵

The Japan women's team, nicknamed "Nadeshido," or beautiful flower,¹⁶ captured hearts worldwide as it brought joy to a devastated country. The team



Japan's women's soccer team, who won the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup, give tribute to 2011 tsunami victims on March 14, 2014, continue to work to as a team.

Tony Feder/Getty Images

was awarded the People's Honor Award by the prime minister of Japan, Naoto Kan. "With firm teamwork and the spirit of never giving up, you accomplished a great achievement of becoming No. 1 in the world for the first time in the history of Japanese soccer," Kan shared with the women. "To the disaster victims and all the people of Japan who are trying to recover from the Great East Japan Earthquake, you gave them the courage to face hardships and moved them with your eloquent victory." Its victory in the face of adversity has made the Japan women's team iconic, a national treasure that continues to inspire the country and lend support through ongoing recovery.¹⁷

Think back also to the 2008 Olympics and the performance of the U.S. men's volleyball team. The underdog team overcame tragedy to win the Olympic gold medal. The team claimed the gold with a four-set win over the defending champion, Brazil. Coach Hugh McCutchen's father-in-law was stabbed to death in Beijing on the eve of the team's first game. He turned the reins over to his assistant for the first three matches.¹⁸

Having lost the first game 20–25, the Americans' backs were against the wall. They came back to win the next two games and, when the Brazilian star player popped the ball out of bounds, the Brazilians crouched on the floor in disbelief. The U.S. team rushed the court and savored the moment and what they had just accomplished.¹⁹ In volleyball, every player is intensely involved in each and every play. What each one does or doesn't do is critical to the success of the team.

The highly effective team is the one whose members are always supporting and encouraging one another. Chris Widener, president of Made for Success, said it well: "The coach always does a pre-game talk, laying out the vision. During the game, the coach is always updating the team as to where they are and what changes need to be made. He or she coaches and communicates throughout the game. When you watch a great team, they are talking to each other all of the time, helping one another out, encouraging one another, praising one another, and telling each other how they can make changes so the same mistakes aren't made again."²⁰

Regardless of the activity, good communication skills are needed to create trust and collaboration among the various players. Remember, there is no "I" in the word team.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAM MEMBERS

In Chapter 9, we postulated various organizational designs, but many forces in the marketplace can rapidly change even our best guesses. Nevertheless, we expect that teamwork will be as important tomorrow as it was yesterday and perhaps even more so. The American Management Association's 2012 Critical Skills Survey found that 72 percent of managers and executives surveyed want employees who are compatible in a team setting, supporting the notion that very little is accomplished without strong collaboration.²¹

When asked about effective teams, another illustration from professional and amateur sports comes to mind. Why? Few organizations, their leaders, and members are as well-documented as sports teams. Legendary basketball coach John Wooden won ten national championships at UCLA, including an unbelievable seven in a row from 1966 to 1973. Coach Wooden's team won over 80 percent of their games.²² Imagine making the right choice at the right time that turns out the right way—the way it was intended—eight out of ten times. This former

basketball coach believes that “Coach” was able to get a diverse group of individuals to work together and satisfy the needs of each member of the team because “Coach” was able to recruit individuals who were willing to put aside individual differences and focus on the goals he set for the team. “Coach” prepared his players with a “we will win!” mentality, and the team members made it happen again and again and again!²³

Yet another factor may help to explain the difference between winning and losing. Synergy! A **synergistic effect** takes place when the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Many organizations like great sports teams lose their competitive advantage when key team members leave or the coach retires. Since Coach Wooden’s retirement in 1975, the team has won just one NCAA basketball championship. Clearly, success increases the appetite for additional success. If you don’t win it all every year, people are clamoring for the coach’s head. The same is true for the CEO who doesn’t meet Wall Street expectations.

Astute sports fans can recall some of the stars from these winning teams, but for every star, there are dozens of unheralded support players, sometimes called role players. These role players show up for work every day, clearly understand their roles, are trained so that they know how to perform and continuously improve on their jobs, and want to feel that they are contributing meaningfully to the effectiveness of their teams. As author Kenneth Turan said, “Team sports could not exist without, well, teams. Competent, superbly professional role players, the good soldiers who do what’s asked of them and don’t bask in anyone’s attention, are the *sine qua non* of the organizations that win year after year.”²⁴

Several observations are pertinent here. First, a team is made up of a group of individuals who *must work together* to meet their individual and team objectives.²⁵ It is important to remember that people are more motivated to achieve goals they help set. Second, strong leadership and effective communication are key ingredients for successful teams. As stated previously, the ability to trust a leader (or for that matter, an upper manager) is more important today than at any time in recent history. Perhaps nothing is more important to the success of a team than the leader’s ability to build an environment of mutual trust and respect. Finally, not everyone is suited for team play. Throughout this text we have introduced people, who, at best, are not team players, and they make your life difficult. As one engineering vice president related, “Some people can leave their ego at the door, and some can’t, and you will immediately know who is on (board) and who isn’t.”²⁶ The key is to identify people who can work in teams and those who cannot.

COLLABORATIVE WORKPLACE

None of the great sports teams or business organizations could have succeeded without **teamwork**—people working cooperatively to solve problems and achieve goals important to the group. Stated succinctly, a **collaborative workplace** means that, throughout the organization, employees and management share authority for decision making. Teamwork processes promote trust, integrity, consensus, and shared ownership as team members strive to achieve common objectives. Collaboration recognizes that people want and need to be valued for their contributions and that improvements and changes are best achieved by those who are responsible for implementing changes and are committed to making those changes work.²⁷

Synergistic effect

The interaction of two or more individuals such that their combined efforts are greater than the sum of their individual efforts

Teamwork

People working cooperatively to solve problems and achieve goals important to the group

Collaborative workplace

Work environment characterized by joint decision making, shared accountability and authority, and high trust levels between employees and managers

Noted quality writer H. James Harrington wrote:

*The disadvantage with teams is that they are inwardly focused. They are small groups that, if functioning properly, strive to be better than other teams. Teams by their very nature are competitive. . . . In well-managed organizations, trust runs high and people are empowered to make decisions on their own. These organizations focus on promoting teamwork between individuals. It's an attitude of "How can I help?" "What can I do to make your job easier?" and "How can we work together to produce more value for the whole organization?"*²⁸

Figure 11.1 summarizes the characteristics of effective work teams. While no one approach succeeds in all situations, a group must know where it is going. Throughout this text, we have stressed the importance of setting goals and the

FIGURE 11.1 Characteristics of effective work teams

Keys to Effective Work Teams

- Top management removes the barriers, that is, clears the roadblocks.
- Team members receive training on how to work together.
- Group members agree on team goals and objectives and commit to those goals.
- All members participate actively in team meetings and discussions.
- All team members follow team rules, guidelines, and procedures.
- All members are valued and treated with respect and dignity.
- Team members share vital information and ensure that everyone is informed on a need-to-know basis.
- Members express their ideas without fear of retribution. Team members also feel free to disagree, and the group grows with differences of opinion.
- The team uses a systematic problem-solving approach, but members are encouraged to think "outside the box" (i.e., alternative ways of thinking are encouraged).
- All members are included in solving problems, developing alternatives, and institutionalizing decisions.
- Decisions are made by consensus (i.e., all team members support decisions, even though they may not totally agree with those decisions; therefore, every team member feels ownership for the team's decisions and responsibility for the team's success).
- The team is cohesive—openness, trust, support, and encouragement are always present.
- Conflict is viewed as healthy and is brought out into the open and addressed in a timely manner.
- Group members give each other honest feedback on performance; constructive feedback is used to improve performance.
- Team training and peer helping are essential elements of the team process. Peers help team members who may need individualized attention.
- The team continually evaluates its performance and uses that information as the basis for improvement.
- Team members take pride in team accomplishments. Challenging tasks, recognition of accomplishments, and continued support from top management fuel the drive for continued success.
- Members enjoy their team affiliation.

notion that the supervisor must provide direction. As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, if supervisors want their work groups to perform at higher levels, there must be a shared purpose and values, and the supervisor must constantly strive to balance employees' needs with the organization's needs.

VIRTUAL TEAMS

As many companies have expanded their operations domestically and internationally, they have found that virtual teams can help them focus on meeting customer requirements. A virtual team is one that has members who rarely, if ever, meet face to face, even though they work on a project or in an area of operations with a common goal. In a **virtual team**, also known as a **geographically dispersed team (GDT)**, members share a common purpose, but are physically separated by time and/or space and primarily interact electronically.²⁹ GDTs are a variant of work teams that present unique supervisory challenges at every stage of development and performance.

Virtual or geographically dispersed team (GDT)

Geographically separated people who are working on a common project and linked by communication technologies

Workforce surveys across multiple sectors indicate that the number of employees who participate in virtual teams is increasing every day, and with that increase comes a need to address the specific SKAs that are necessary for workers to effectively contribute to organizational goals. Consider these statistics:

- Approximately 25 million people telecommute at least one day per month as of September 2013.³⁰
- By 2015 an additional 300 million virtual workers will join the global workforce.³¹
- 85 percent of HR professionals expect that the use of virtual global teams will change the face of the U.S. workplace in the next five years.³²
- While over 60 percent of respondents to a *Training Magazine* survey believe that virtual team management is an emerging skill need, less than 40 percent believe their managers have this skill.³³

Virtual teams function primarily through technological tools that enable them to communicate and share documents. Most prominent are audio and video web conferencing, instant messaging, online collaboration software, document storage and file sharing applications, co-creation tools, social networking applications, scheduling applications, and project management software.³⁴ Virtual teams require their members to receive specialized training in technology use. They also demand careful planning and organization to establish regular times for group interaction as well as other communication needs. One advantage of virtual teams is that members can communicate quickly when needed to bring team members up to date on events and to keep each other informed. Scheduling becomes critical as one team member may be located, for example, in Ohio and another in Australia. Communication must cross several time zones, with 12 or more hours of difference. When one employee is working, the other may be sleeping.

While technology serves as the primary facilitator for the growth of virtual teamwork, it also has been indicated as a significant challenge to productivity and the achievement of team goals. In a study of collaboration breakdowns of thirty virtual team projects, investigators found that most problems stemmed from technology policy restrictions, mandated technology changes, and inadequate or malfunctioning technology tools.³⁵

However, technology is not the only challenge in geographically dispersed teams. This study, as well as an investigation of eighteen teams working

worldwide for a Fortune 500 company, also identifies trust (see Chapter 5) and power (see Chapter 2) as barriers to success. In virtual teams that rated themselves as having a high level of trust among members, employees indicated that sharing and shifting power based on the needs of the group and specific tasks helped them succeed in reaching their goals. In virtual teams with low levels of trust, power battles, coercion, misunderstandings, and conflicts of interest kept teams from performing effectively.³⁶

These findings illustrate that virtual teams share some of the same challenges as face-to-face teams, but at the same time they encounter barriers that are not typically found in the traditional office setting. During more than a decade of working with virtual teams in business, government, and military environments, Professors Jay Nunamaker, Bruce Reinig, and Robert Briggs identified some challenges that are unique to virtual teams. Nonverbal communication, such as eye-rolling or nodding in agreement, cannot be seen by virtual teammates unless, of course, they are videoconferencing. Informal conversations and friendships forged in hallways and break rooms do not take place when employees are not in the same building or town, although they can take place through FaceTime, Google Hangouts, texting or instant messaging. When different work processes, cultures, and time zones are added to the mix, we can envision the potential for miscommunication and misunderstanding, as well as the difficulties virtual teams might find in building consensus and establishing shared understandings about tasks and goals.³⁷ However, as virtual work becomes more commonplace and technology is able to facilitate more seamless communication, high-performing teams are finding success in translating their skills to the virtual environment. See Figure 11.2 for some specific strategies that you can use to make a virtual team more successful.

FIGURE 11.2 Twelve principles for making virtual teams work

- *Get the team together physically, or at least in a videoconference, early on.* Having a get-to-know-you session or two will help establish relationships and give the opportunity to create guiding principles and a shared vision for the team. Reconnect regularly.
- *Clarify processes and tasks, not just roles and goals.* It is important for everyone to know who needs to do what, so roles and goals should be established within the first few meetings, as they would be for any team project. It is equally important to come to agreement on how and when individual and collaborative tasks will take place, how documents will be shared, who will facilitate processes, and who is accountable for specific deliverables. Virtual teams do not have the benefit of being able to “do what has always been done,” so work processes need to be clearly defined, reviewed, and revised to ensure they are efficient and effective.
- *Commit to a communication charter.* To avoid the pitfalls of miscommunication that can emerge on virtual teams due to less rich, less frequent, and less nonverbal communication, create a clear set of expectations for communication. Norms of behavior such as reducing background noise, when to mute, balancing conversations, and when to use certain communication modalities, for example when to reply via e-mail versus calling or going online to collaborate on a document, should be established and distributed to the team.
- *Leverage the best communication technologies.* Collaborative technologies are improving every day and, for the most part, are becoming more and more affordable.

(continued)

FIGURE 11.2 Twelve principles for making virtual teams work (continued)

When deciding what communication vehicles to employ, opt for those that are most reliable and easy to use to avoid wasting time on learning all the features or troubleshooting.

- *Build a team with rhythm.* When working remotely, it is easy to get disconnected from the rhythms of the workplace. Establishing and enforcing systems and schedules for virtual team work, such as weekly meetings and set collaboration sessions, will help get everyone moving forward together on projects. When a team is distributed across time zones, rotate the schedule so that the load is spread equitably.
- *Agree on a shared language.* Virtual teams can be distributed across the entire world, so it is likely that different cultures will be represented. When working on technical topics, science and engineering language usually sets a good foundation for language. When working on social or relational issues or problem solving, translations may not mesh. Accordingly, come to agreement on shared interpretations of important words and phrases, for example, “when we say ‘yes,’ we mean ...” and post the list in the virtual workspace.
- *Create a virtual staff lounge or water cooler.* Gathering around the water cooler is an adage used to describe informal exchanges in the workplace. The virtual workspace is often very task-focused with little shared downtime. In order to prevent burnout, reinforce team cohesion and give team members opportunities to casually share ideas, carve out time during each meeting for a “check-in” or “personal update,” use virtual team-building activities to add a bit of fun, or embed social networking features like a newsfeed, a chat room, or a video portal into the workspace.
- *Clarify and track commitments.* In the virtual workspace, unlike the office hallway, it is uncommon for team members to check in to ask, “How’s it going?” Even after establishing tasks, processes, roles and responsibilities, it is important to establish a mechanism for tracking progress. Scheduling regular status meetings, posting and reporting on a shared work plan, or creating a deliverables dashboard visible to all members can ensure that everyone is on track. Avoid micromanaging.
- *Foster shared leadership.* Designing work plans and defining and tracking deliverables provides push to keep members focused and productive. Leadership provides the pull of motivation, encouragement, and support. Appoint specific virtual team members to serve as coaches, share best practices, run virtual team-building exercises, and lead special projects so that everyone has an opportunity to lead.
- *Don’t forget the 1:1s.* One-on-one coaching and performance management are fundamentally sound practices on any team and should be incorporated into the rhythm of the virtual team. As you lead, use them to check status, provide feedback, listen to frustrations, and focus on each member’s contribution to the work.
- *Visit the past to define the future.* If you are taking over a team, take the time to learn about the structures, processes, and culture of the team so you can quickly step into the communication and coordination role.
- *Realign reward structures for virtual teams.* A virtual team member doesn’t get a pat on the back for staying late or arriving early. Find ways to incentivize consistency and participation or share deliverables with management so distributed employees are recognized for their efforts.

Adapted by Kelly A. Trusty from: Michael Watkins, “Making Virtual Teams Work: Ten Basic Principles,” HBR Blog Network (June 27, 2013), <http://blogs.hbr.org/2013/06/making-virtual-teams-work-ten/> and and Surinder Kahai, “What Leads to Effective Virtual Teamwork?” *LeadingVirtually.com* (April 18, 2009), <http://www.leadingvirtually.com/what-leads-to-effective-virtual-teamwork/>

Virtual teams require strong management support, which typically means that managers and supervisors have less direct control over team members. Nevertheless, the need for supervisory feedback and evaluation is paramount. The challenge for a manager or supervisor of a virtual team is to hold team members together and keep them motivated, even though they are separated geographically. The focus must be on overall results rather than on the specific activities of team members. Managers of virtual teams have tried various techniques to help team members stay focused on their projects and to strengthen their functioning and team spirit. Among these techniques are giving the project team a name or logo, rotating the hosting of conference calls, and recognizing accomplishments.

In essence, managing virtual teams, while it has some unique challenges and problems, is not completely unlike managing teams that are close geographically. Regardless of the team approach used, supervisors must be adept at applying their managerial skills with appropriate human relations approaches. Remember, the manager's challenge is to build commitment, cooperation, and collaboration through effective communication.

3 Distinguish the relationships between employee morale, engagement, teamwork and productivity, and identify factors that influence employee morale and engagement.

Morale

A composite of feelings and attitudes that individuals and groups have toward their work, working condition, supervisors, top-level management, and the organization

Understanding and Maintaining Employee Morale and Engagement

Most definitions of morale recognize that it is essentially a state of mind. For example, Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines *morale* as "the mental and emotional condition of an individual or group with regard to the function or tasks at hand." We consider **morale** to be the attitudes and feelings of individuals and groups toward their work, their environment, their supervisors, their top-level management, and the organization. Morale is not one single feeling or attitude but a composite. It can affect employee performance and willingness to work, which in turn can affect individual and organizational objectives. When employee morale is high, employees usually do what the company wants them to do; when it is low, the opposite tends to occur.

Engagement, which we introduced in Chapter 9, is the level of emotional commitment the employee has to the organization and its goals. If we consider these two terms side by side, we might conjecture that the two mean essentially the same thing, but they do not. Morale is the general feeling toward the workplace, and engagement focuses on its goals. Cari Turley provides us with an illustration that shows the difference:

Treating everyone on your staff to ice cream would surely improve morale for the afternoon. But that's about it. Consider, however, promising an ice cream social for the afternoon to your sales team as a reward for closing the big account they've been after. You get the same morale boost on ice cream day, but you also get the incentive to close the deal, the anticipation of the event, and the message that good work is noticed and rewarded. That's much likelier to translate to business results than the impromptu dessert, and for no additional cost.³⁸

Numerous articles have suggested that today's employees are less happy with many aspects of their jobs than were employees of earlier decades, a significant problem because it has long been recognized and documented that the reasons employees stay with or leave employers are more frequently attributed to factors

other than pay.³⁹ However, an organization's employees can have high morale, love their boss and their job, but never get anything done, which can put them at risk of being let go or becoming "dead wood." When employees are highly engaged, by contrast, they invest more time, effort, and sometimes creativity and passion into the work they do in order to do their best and help the company achieve its objectives.

The idea of workplace morale has been discussed for decades, but increasingly workplaces are finding that unpacking the black box of morale by considering its roots in engagement is key to keeping employees happy and productive. Building employee engagement increases trust, loyalty, and, ultimately organizational performance more so than just creating a feel-good environment. According to the Towers Watson 2012 Global Workforce Study, which covers more than 32,000 full-time employees of large and mid-sized organizations in twenty-nine markets around the world, highly engaged employees have 25 percent less absenteeism than those who are disengaged; 18 percent of highly engaged workers reported being likely to leave their jobs compared to 40 percent of disengaged workers; and 72 percent of highly engaged workers would stay at their current workplace if they were offered a similar job elsewhere compared to 28 percent of disengaged workers. Further, Gallup's nearly two decades of research on employee engagement has linked its levels to nine performance outcomes: customer ratings, profitability, productivity, turnover, safety incidents, theft, absenteeism, patient safety, and product quality. Additionally, the Gallup research has found that workers who rate themselves as highly engaged at work view their lives as better, report having better moods and better relationships with colleagues, and are four times as likely as actively disengaged workers to say they like what they do at work every day.⁴⁰

Based on these findings, these authors contend that the happiest workers are highly engaged workers. But what does a highly engaged worker look like?

Highly engaged workers, which comprise approximately one-third of those surveyed, cooperate, are enthusiastic about their work, understand their jobs, and look for ways to improve. Workers who are not engaged and aren't concerned about customers, productivity, safety, or the organization's purpose, whereas actively disengaged workers are out to damage the company, waste managers' time, are often absent, have more accidents, and quit more often than nonengaged workers. Nonengaged and actively disengaged workers make up the other two-thirds of those surveyed.⁴¹

FACTORS INFLUENCING ENGAGEMENT AND MORALE

The research on engagement has identified a number of things workers need in order to feel engaged with their work and committed to their organization's mission. They need to know what is expected of them; have the appropriate materials and equipment to do their jobs and opportunities to do things they are good at; and they need to be recognized for their achievements. Employees engage and thrive when their supervisors show that they care about them, encourage them to develop their strengths, value their opinions, and promote an organizational mission that makes workers feel important. Further, workers who have colleagues who are committed to doing good work and are genuinely friendly enjoy and invest in their work, and they are inspired to contribute new ideas when they are given feedback about their performance and provided with opportunities to grow in new ways. When an organization provides this type of work

environment, workers become more trusting of management, more willing to put in extra effort, and more likely to recommend their company to others.⁴²

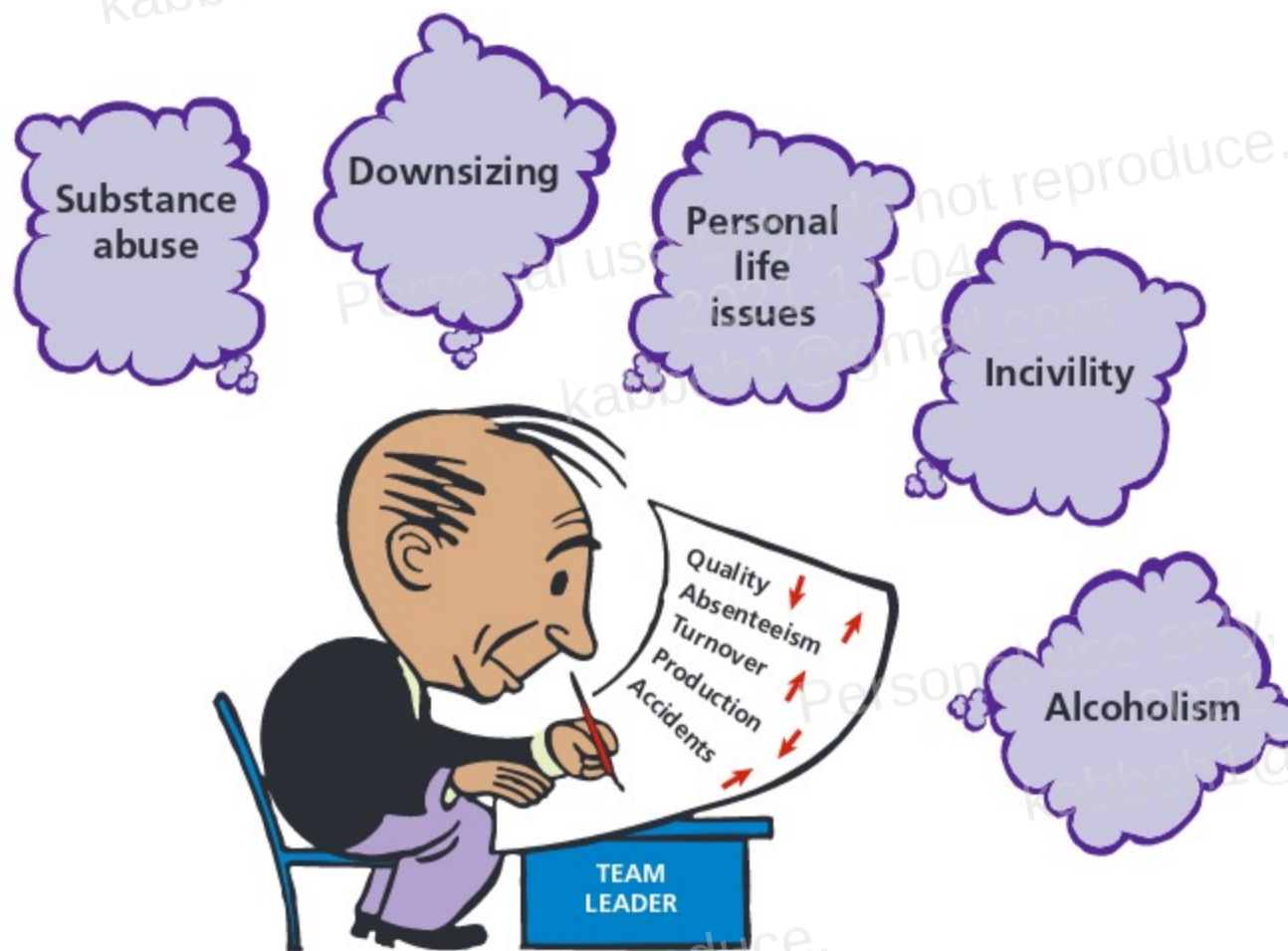
The description of engaged workers above sounds much like a Cinderella story, as though engagement is a glass slipper that can be slipped on to transform an entire workforce. Increasing engagement requires a great deal of concentrated, coordinated effort by an organization, starting with hiring managers who genuinely care for people and are committed to high performance and can balance the two by motivating and rewarding engaged behaviors; also, managers must be held accountable for their efforts to engage workers. Managers also need to invest extra time in assessing workers' strengths and assigning them to positions that best fit their strengths. When employees are regularly asked to do low-value work—tasks that don't use their talents, are a waste of time, don't contribute to organizational success, and wouldn't be missed if they weren't done—they tend to become frustrated, less effective, and resentful toward their employer.⁴³

We discussed training and development in Chapter 10, and this is another area where managers can build engagement—by identifying and developing employees' strengths. Think about the last time your performance was evaluated, whether it was in a work role, at home, or at school. Did the evaluation focus on everything you did wrong, or everything you did right? Research shows that when performance evaluations and coaching focus on a person's weaknesses, even if just one or two, the person walks away from the process feeling worse than before. When developmental interactions focus on the positives or strengths, a person's morale is much higher and engagement and performance increase.⁴⁴ If we translate this approach to employee engagement, it is easy to conjecture that when managers focus on employees' strengths, give them opportunities to use their strengths, and help them build those strengths to an even greater extent, the employees will feel good about their contribution to the organization and grow in their commitment to their work. As workers become more engaged, they become more productive, and the organization also reaps benefits. If managers just focus on what employees do wrong, they tend to get more of the same or even worse performance.

These findings encourage supervisors to focus on strengths and find ways to help employees build on those strengths. The Gallup research also found that investing in workers' well-being also contributes to higher levels of engagement. Placing a high priority on helping workers maintain a healthy balance between work and family, providing a sense of job security, and ensuring sufficient health and retirement benefits also encourages worker loyalty, commitment, and investment in the company's mission.⁴⁵ Wellness programs, which are discussed later in this chapter, also boost engagement.⁴⁶

Virtually any factor can influence employee morale, positively or negatively (see Figure 11.3). Some of these factors are within the supervisor's control, while others are not. Influences outside the organization are generally beyond the supervisor's control. Nevertheless, they may significantly affect employee morale. Examples of such external factors are family relationships, care of children or elderly parents, financial difficulties, problems with friends, vehicle breakdowns, and sickness or death in the family. What happens at home can change an employee's feelings very quickly. An argument before work may set the tone for the rest of the day. Even headlines in the morning newspaper may depress or uplift.

Company conditions can also influence morale. Examples of internal factors are compensation, relations with co-workers, and working conditions. These factors are partially or fully within the supervisor's control. For example, when

FIGURE 11.3 Dark clouds affect on-the-job performance

compensation is adequate, other factors may be more significant, but even when wages are good, morale can sink quickly when working conditions are neglected. The critical factor is whether the supervisor tries to improve working conditions. Employees often will perform well under undesirable conditions and still maintain high morale and engagement when they believe their supervisors are seriously trying to improve work conditions.

MORALE, ENGAGEMENT, TEAMWORK, AND PRODUCTIVITY RELATIONSHIPS

Workplace morale tends to be contagious, as does engagement, and this contagion works in both positive and negative ways. When managers select and hire employees who are enthusiastic and interact with those workers using the strategies described earlier, the workers become committed and driven as they gain tenure in the company. If supervisors provide those workers with opportunities to influence others in their work groups, their positive morale and work ethic often rubs off. Recall our discussion of informal organizations in Chapter 9. In most organizations, informal groups form organically, and certain people in those groups naturally emerge as leaders. When supervisors position informal leaders where they can share their energy and commitment and inspire others, entire teams' engagement levels are often elevated. Further, in a team environment, managers can create teams whose members have different strengths and assign team roles based on strengths and encourage co-workers to understand and engage each others' strengths so that the team's talents complement each other, thereby increasing the team's performance. In a similar way, when actively disengaged workers emerge as leaders in teams and informal groups, they model behaviors and attitudes such as complaining, absenteeism, and negativity toward management that can frustrate and demotivate others in the group, thus

decreasing everyone's productivity. Clearly, choosing engaged team leaders is the right choice.

Teamwork is often associated with morale, but the two are not the same. *Morale* refers to the attitudes and feelings of employees, whereas *teamwork* relates primarily to the degree of cooperation among people who are solving problems and accomplishing objectives. Good morale and high engagement help achieve teamwork, but teamwork can be high when morale and engagement are low. Such a situation might exist when jobs are scarce and employees tolerate bad conditions and poor supervision for fear of losing their jobs. On the other hand, teamwork may be absent when morale is high and is accompanied by high engagement. For example, employees working on a piecework basis or salespeople being paid on straight commissions are typically rewarded for individual efforts toward achieving the company's objectives rather than for group performance.

There is substantial evidence to suggest that, in the long run, employees with high engagement tend to be highly productive. That is to say, highly engaged, self-disciplined, mission-driven groups of employees tend to do more satisfactory work than those from whom the supervisor tries to force performance with little regard for the employees themselves. When supervisors are considerate of their employees, recognize their efforts, build on their strengths, and encourage positive attitudes among them, there tends to be greater mutual trust, lower absenteeism and turnover, and fewer grievances.⁴⁷ Regardless of its other effects, there is little question that a high level of engagement tends to make work more pleasant for employees and their supervisors.

THE IMPACT OF DOWNSIZING AND OUTSOURCING ON MORALE

The magnitude of downsizing is nothing compared with the impact of outsourcing. According to recent studies, 75 percent of U.S. and European multinational companies now use outsourcing to support administration of their retirement plans, 52 percent use outsourcing to manage health and welfare plans, and many expect to increase their use of outsourcing.⁴⁸ Outsourcing is not limited to the financial field. Information technology (IT), call center operations, and production processes have been a favorite targets of the outsourcers.

Consider the following scenario: It was a beautiful morning, on August 5, 2011, when Gary, aged 39, married with two small children, ages 7 and 4, left home for his software development job. He usually arrived at work early on Friday so that he could leave early and get home to spend some time with his children. Shortly after 8:00 A.M., Gary and thirty-one of his software development and IT team members were summoned into the conference room. The announcement came as a shock. Effective immediately, his job, as well as those of his colleagues, was eliminated. That day was his last day of work. The employees were escorted from the facility, told that their personal effects would be boxed up, and that they could come back for them at 4:30 P.M. They were informed of the day and time for their scheduled exit meetings with human resources. Their meetings with HR would clarify what severance they might be entitled to, if any. The work would still need to be done, but not in the United States. Their work projects had been offshored to India. The story of Gary and his colleagues has been repeated over and over during the last several years. After thirteen years of service with the same company, what would he do? Where would he go?

Clearly, these events have disturbed workers deeply. Many downsized and/or outsourced employees feel they might never again find jobs like those they had. The survivors—those who remain in the downsized workplace—worry about being laid off and are concerned about the future of their firms. Employees have lost trust in their organizations and their leadership. As one study reported:

A worker's ability to form "best" friendships at work is among the most powerful of twelve indicators of a highly productive workplace. Workplaces with low turnover and high customer satisfaction, productivity, and profitability also tended to be places where employees reported having a best friend present.⁴⁹

Downsizings and outsourcings force employees to sever workplace friendships. Those who remain suffer from what has been termed survivors' syndrome. Few companies are prepared to address widespread employee fears and insecurities. However, some firms have developed training programs and have provided counseling services to plan for and implement job reductions and to help surviving employees cope with the aftereffects of downsizing. A detailed discussion of these types of programs is beyond the scope of this text, but among the recommended strategies are (1) early and ample communication with clear and specific details concerning which jobs have been eliminated and, more important, why they have been eliminated, and (2) working with surviving employees to develop the new short-term objectives that will help those employees focus on activities and targets over which they have some control.⁵⁰ Here, as in many other situations, first-line supervisors play a crucial role in influencing employee morale.

ENGAGEMENT SHOULD BE EVERYONE'S CONCERN

Jim Clifton, chairman and CEO of the Gallup, Inc., contends that "How employees feel about their job starts and ends with their direct supervisor. If employees feel, among other things, that their supervisor takes a real interest in their development or offers frequent [authentic] recognition, they are very likely to be engaged."⁵¹ Every manager, from the chief executive down to the supervisor, should be concerned with the engagement level of the workforce. It should be a priority to develop and maintain employee engagement at as high a level as possible.

It should be clear that the actions of the first-line supervisor, probably more than anyone else, influences engagement and morale in day-to-day contact with employees. Bringing engagement to a high level and maintaining it is a continuous process; engagement cannot be achieved simply through short-run devices, such as pep talks or contests. High engagement is slow to develop and difficult to maintain. The level of morale can vary considerably from day to day. Morale is contagious in both directions because both favorable and unfavorable attitudes spread rapidly among employees. Unfortunately, it seems to be human nature for employees to quickly forget the good and long remember the bad when it comes to factors influencing their morale.

The supervisor is not alone in desiring high engagement and positive morale. Employees are just as concerned with engagement because it is paramount to their work satisfaction and achievement. Feeling engaged helps to make the employee's day at work a pleasure, not a misery. Positive morale and high engagement are also important to an organization's customers. Customers can usually sense whether employees care about their satisfaction and are serving them enthusiastically or are just going through the motions.

Workplace spirituality

Organizational efforts to make the work environment more meaningful and creative by relating work to employees' personal values and spiritual beliefs

Because of widespread concern about deteriorating employee morale and the disengagement of many workers, many firms have launched programs and efforts that collectively have been called **workplace spirituality**. This term essentially covers organizational efforts that are designed to make the work environment more meaningful and creative by recognizing and tapping into people's deeply held values and spiritual beliefs. Some believe that spirituality can improve employees' personal lives and mental outlook and that this outlook might translate to a better work environment.⁵²

Listen carefully to what Ben Cohen, co-founder of Ben & Jerry's Homemade Ice Cream Company, had to say: "At Ben & Jerry's, we learned that there's a spiritual life to businesses as there is in the lives of individuals. As you give, you receive. As you help others, you are helped in return."⁵³ When some people accused Cohen and co-founder, Jerry Greenfield, of doing "nice things" only to sell more ice cream, Cohen responded, "We did what we believed in; it just happened to sell more ice cream. Our actions are based on deeply held values. We are all interconnected, and as we help others, we cannot help but help ourselves. Creating a consonance of values with employees and customers builds loyalty and even more value."⁵⁴

4 Discuss techniques for assessing employee morale, including observation and employee attitude surveys.

Assessing Employee Engagement

Most firms believe that, if they are to succeed, employee engagement is important in the long run. That said, we can only manage what we can measure. Measuring engagement is complicated and somewhat elusive because, as Kevin Kruse, author of *Employee Engagement 2.0*, states, "Engagement is a feeling just like love is a feeling. And how in the world can we measure the amount of love someone feels? It would be silly to say, 'Today the amount of love I feel for my wife is 3.8.'"⁵⁵ Kruse explains that like with other emotional states, an observer would know engagement if he or she saw it. There are behaviors that demonstrate engagement or lack of it, in other words, proxy measures.

An employer can observe when a worker puts in extra effort, is proactive and creative in solving problems, and encourages co-workers. A number of surveys comprised of proxy measures for engagement have been developed and are widely used to assess organizations', teams', and individuals' levels of engagement. The survey data, along with real-time, observable measures of engagement provide supervisors with a relatively strong measure of employee engagement. Employers can then analyze these measures relative to employee and organization performance in areas such as attendance, turnover, sick leave use, productivity, and profit margins to create action plans for improvement. Supervisors are advised to approach engagement measurement systematically to assess prevailing levels and trends. The two most frequently used techniques—(1) observation and study and (2) engagement surveys—warrant a closer look.

OBSERVATION AND STUDY

By observing, monitoring, and studying patterns of employee behavior, a supervisor often can discover evidence of employee engagement. The supervisor should closely monitor such key indicators as job performance levels, tardiness and absenteeism, the amount of waste or scrap, employee complaints, and accident and safety records. Any significant changes in these indicators should be analyzed because often they are related to engagement. For example, excessive tardiness and

absenteeism seriously interfere with job performance. If the reasons are related to the employee's feelings of engagement, the supervisor should determine, through conversation with the employee, whether the causes are within the supervisor's span of control and follow-up accordingly.

Specific behaviors in the workplace also provide insight into employee engagement levels. Entrepreneur Lisa Horan suggests that supervisors should consider the extent and character of employee communication—are employees pleasant and fair, do they engage in conversation, and share ideas? Also, Horan advises supervisors to study employee choices on a day-to-day basis to observe the decisions they make on a consistent basis to see the extent to which decisions are appropriate and focused on achievement and performance.⁵⁶ Gazelle CEO Verne Harnish proposes that real-time assessment of employee engagement is critical to organizational performance because using just surveys to assess engagement is “like driving your car by only looking in the rearview mirror. By the time you get the results, most of the ‘accidents’ have already happened: grumpy employees have already alienated customers, incompetent managers have killed productivity, and the best talent has left for the competition.” Harnish recommends that supervisors adopt analytic tools such as NetPromoter System to track progress toward goals and priorities and MoodApp or TINYPulse to quickly measure morale on-the-spot through daily questions on touch pads or mobile devices. He cautions that those practices cannot substitute for regular conversations with employees and suggests three simple questions managers should ask at least one employee each week: “What do we need to start doing, stop doing and keep doing?”⁵⁷ The combination of data can provide a rich, timely perspective of employee engagement, which can be combined with engagement survey data to be used for organizational planning and development.



Overloading an employee with too much work can deflate his or her morale

Daily working relationships offer numerous opportunities for a supervisor to observe and analyze changes in employee engagement and morale. However, many supervisors do not take time to observe; others do not analyze what they observe. It is only when engagement and/or performance clearly drops that some supervisors first take note. By then, the problems that caused the changes probably will have magnified to the point that major corrective actions are necessary. As is often the case in supervision, an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure.

Many companies conduct exit interviews with individuals leaving their employ. **Exit interviews** are usually conducted by a HR staff person, although sometimes, especially in small firms, the supervisor may fill this role. The interviewer asks why the person is leaving and about the person's perceptions of the firm's conditions. Results of exit interviews are used to assess morale in the firm as a whole or in certain departments of the firm, as well as to identify reasons for employee turnover.

Exit interviews

Interviews with individuals who leave a firm that are used to assess morale and the reasons for employee turnover

ATTITUDE SURVEYS

Another technique to assess employee engagement is an **attitude survey**, also called an engagement survey or morale survey. All employees, or a sample of the employees, are asked to express their opinions about major aspects of organizational life, usually in the form of answers to questions or rating scales printed on a survey form or presented in electronic format to be completed online using a computer or mobile device. The survey questionnaire elicits employee opinions about such factors as management and supervision, job conditions, job satisfaction, rewards and incentives, recognition, co-workers, pay and benefits, job security, and advancement opportunities. Often engagement surveys also include items asking whether employees feel a sense of belonging, whether they would promote the organization to others, and if they feel committed to the company and its mission.⁵⁸

Employee attitude surveys are rarely initiated by a supervisor. Usually, they are undertaken by top-level management and are prepared with the help of the HR department or an outside consulting firm.⁵⁹ The survey questionnaire should be written in language that is appropriate for most employees.

Attitude surveys or questionnaires may be completed on the job or in the privacy of the employee's home, and they are often offered online. However, if using a traditional paper questionnaire, some organizations prefer to have employees answer these questionnaires on the job because a high percentage of questionnaires that are taken home or mailed are never returned. On the other hand, a possible advantage of completing the questionnaire at home is that employees may give more thoughtful and truthful answers. Regardless of where they are completed, questionnaires should remain anonymous. However, some surveys may ask employees to indicate their departments.

Many attitude survey forms allow employees to choose answers from a list. Other forms that are not so specific give employees the opportunity to answer as freely as they wish. Because some employees may find it difficult to express their opinions in sentences or to fill in answers, better results usually are obtained with survey forms on which employees simply check the responses that correspond to their answers.

Attitude surveys, like any other surveys, are limited by their ability to report workforce engagement and summarize employee sentiments at a specific moment in time. An isolated incident or organizational change may have temporary effects on morale or long-term impacts on engagement, neither of which can be

Attitude survey

Survey of employee opinions about major aspects of organizational life that is used to assess engagement and morale

measured with a single survey. Supervisors might consider using attitude surveys on an annual or semiannual basis as part of continuous improvement processes to monitor shifts in organizational or departmental culture and climate that might erode engagement over time. This long-term data can be used to identify specific problems and make proactive changes accordingly.

FOLLOW-UP OF SURVEY RESULTS

The tabulation and analysis tasks of questionnaires usually are assigned to the HR department or to an outside consulting firm. Survey results are first presented to top-level and middle-level managers and eventually to departmental supervisors. In some organizations, survey results are used as discussion materials during supervisory training. What happens to the survey results next can have dramatic impact on employee engagement. If the survey results are then put on a shelf, the survey has done nothing to help the organization. Survey results should be used as a tool, a baseline for problem solving and action planning efforts that will increase engagement and morale across the organization.

Attitude surveys may reveal deficiencies the supervisor can eliminate. For example, a complaint that there is a lack of soap in the washroom can be resolved easily. Frequently, however, responses are difficult to evaluate, such as a complaint that communication channels are not open to employees. Such complaints raise more questions than answers and may necessitate a careful study of existing policies and procedures to see whether corrective actions are warranted.

If the attitude survey reveals that the problem can be corrected at the departmental level—perhaps with a supervisor—the solution should be developed and implemented by the involved supervisor. A broader problem, however, that requires the attention of higher-level managers should be reported to the appropriate manager for action. When supervisors and higher-level managers do not make needed changes as a result of a survey, the survey wastes time and money. In fact, if no changes materialize, or if changes are not communicated to employees, morale may decline after the survey and engagement levels will not change. Employees may feel that their problems and suggestions have been ignored. Therefore, whenever possible, concerns or dissatisfactions expressed in an attitude survey should be addressed promptly by managers and supervisors. At a minimum, employees should be informed that management is aware of the dissatisfactions and will work to change things by some future date.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Many companies follow up their attitude surveys with feedback meetings and conference sessions with groups of employees and supervisors. Typically these meetings are conducted by outside consultants or by staff members from HR or some other department. In these meetings, the results of attitude surveys are discussed and debated openly. The groups are expected to recommend improvements, which are forwarded anonymously to higher-level management for consideration and possible implementation.

This approach is often part of a broader concept that also has become widespread in large enterprises. Known as **organizational development (OD)**, or process consultation, this concept usually involves group meetings under the guidance of a neutral conference leader. The groups may consist of only employees, employees and supervisors, only supervisors, only higher-level managers, or whatever composition is appropriate. For the most part, these meetings focus on

Organizational development (OD)

Meetings with groups under the guidance of a neutral conference leader to solve problems that are hindering organizational effectiveness

solving problems that may be hindering work performance or causing disruption, poor coordination, inadequate communication, or strained personal relations. When there is frank discussion in a relatively open and informal atmosphere, individuals tend to open up about what really is on their minds and what might be done to solve problems and reduce conflict. OD can take numerous forms that are beyond the scope of this text.⁶⁰ However, supervisors may be involved in OD efforts because these programs can improve morale and organizational effectiveness.

5 Understand why counseling is an important part of the supervisor's job.

Counseling

An effort by the supervisor to deal with on-the-job performance problems that are the result of an employee's personal problems

Counseling interview

Nondirective interview during which the supervisor listens empathetically and encourages the employee to discuss problems openly and to develop solutions

The Supervisor's Counseling Role

Counseling is not the same as coaching. In **counseling**, the supervisor tries to address on-the-job performance problems that result from an employee's personal problems.⁶¹ As described in Chapter 12, an employee's performance problems may stem from a job-related personal problem, such as the failure to get a promotion, or from an off-the-job situation, such as a financial crisis due to divorce. When not addressed, these problems can impede morale, engagement, and quality of work. Therefore, the supervisor must help the employee return to productivity. The most effective way to get an employee back on track is to counsel—to ask, listen, reflect, and encourage. A **counseling interview** is essentially nondirective; the supervisor serves primarily as an empathetic listener, and the employee is encouraged to discuss the problem frankly and to develop solutions.

By being a good listener, the supervisor can find out what happened and may help the employee develop alternatives. For example, consider Laura, an X-ray technician at Anderson Memorial Hospital, who is upset because of a personal financial crisis. She and her husband recently filed bankruptcy under Chapter 7 of the federal Bankruptcy Code. To compound the problem, Laura's bankruptcy filing was listed in the local newspaper, announcing to the community her family's current debt of \$140,000 and assets of \$20,000.⁶² This public information has resulted in Laura's fellow employees giving her pitying looks and shaking their heads as they pass her in the hallway. She can just imagine them thinking to themselves, "How can Laura be so stupid?" Because of this crisis, Laura's work performance is showing a marked decline. She spends more of her time thinking about how to solve her financial problems than she does thinking about her work.

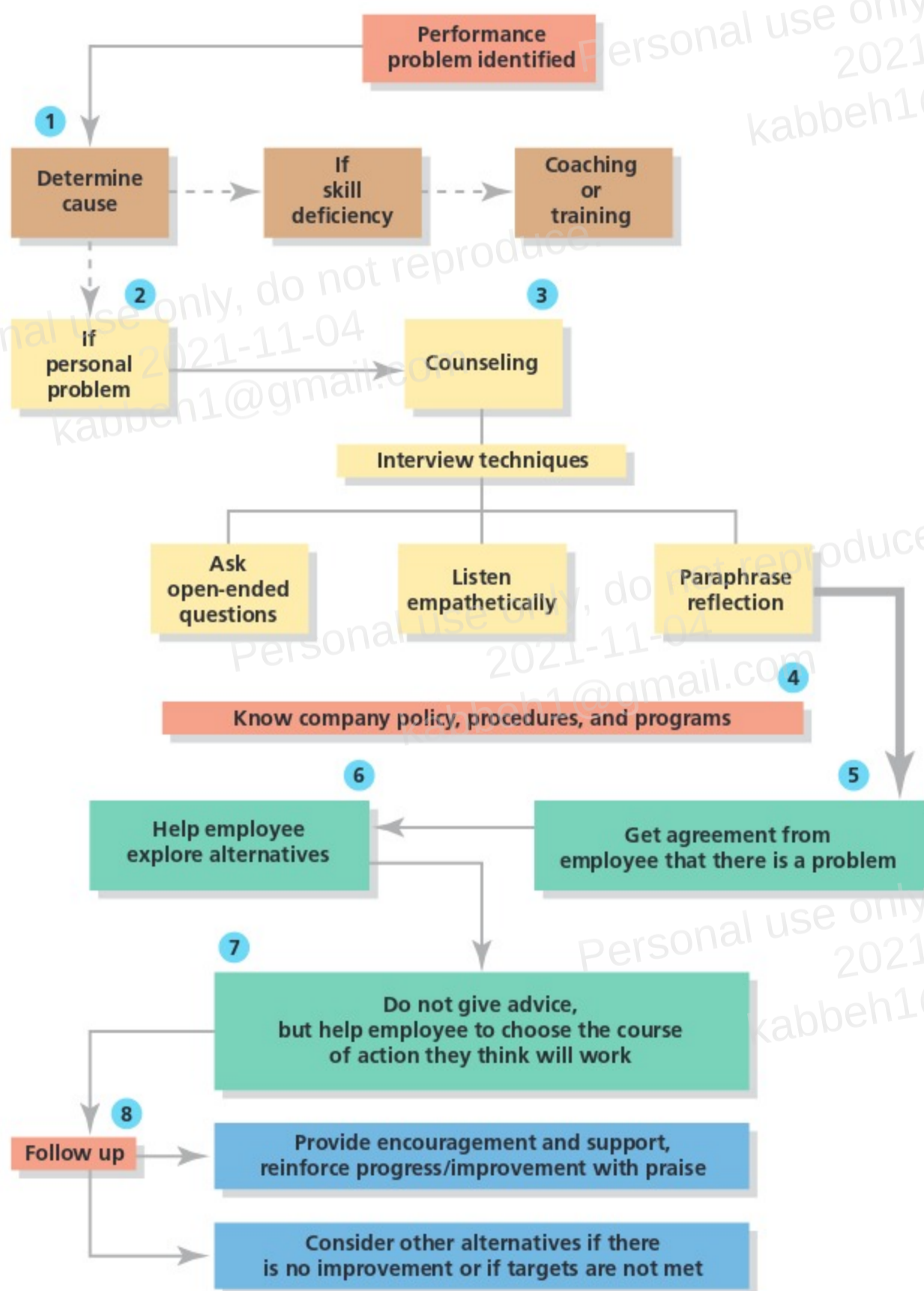
Laura's counseling interview might begin when the supervisor addresses a performance problem and expresses concern: "Laura, I'm concerned about your performance. You were late for work two days last week, and the Finegan report did not get done. Could you explain?" The supervisor should listen carefully and without interruption to understand Laura's perspective. In Chapter 6, we discussed the importance of paraphrasing and reflecting to improve understanding. Paraphrasing involves expressing, in different words, Laura's response, such as, "Let me see if I understand what you're saying. . . ." A follow-up question might be, "Why do you feel that way?" Through reflection, the supervisor can help Laura talk about her feelings.

The supervisor may discuss with Laura possible ways to obtain financial assistance. The supervisor should not offer specific advice because it might bring unwanted repercussions. If Laura is dissatisfied with the results of following a supervisor's advice, for example, she might blame the supervisor, which would complicate an already difficult situation. If Laura's problem is beyond the

supervisor's expertise, perhaps the supervisor can arrange for Laura to get help from a professional or refer her to the HR department where assistance may be available. For example, many employers provide assistance and referral services for employees with personal problems. Many large employers also have employee assistance programs (EAPs), which are discussed later in this chapter. Regardless, the supervisor's job is to help the employee explore alternatives and choose the course of action that is best for the particular situation.

Aside from conducting a private counseling interview or referring the employee to some source of assistance, there may be little else the supervisor can do to cope with the factors affecting an employee's morale. The supervisor's main role is to help get the employee's performance back to an acceptable level. Figure 11.4 presents a roadmap to guide your steps when dealing with employee problems.

FIGURE 11.4 Steps in the counseling process



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6 Identify programs that organizations use to help employees with personal and work-related problems.

Supporting and Helping Employees with Personal and Work-Related Problems

As discussed previously, the supervisor may refer an employee to the HR department or to a designated manager who will conduct the counseling interview and make helpful suggestions.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE PROVISIONS

If the employee's problem involves requesting a leave of absence due to sickness or family considerations such as childbirth or caring for a seriously ill member of the immediate family, the supervisor normally should refer the request to the HR department or to higher-level managers. Many employers, in connection with the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), have developed policies for handling such requests. Passed in 1993, the FMLA generally requires employers with fifty or more employees to grant up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave to workers for various reasons, particularly serious medical problems experienced by employees or their families, and the births or adoptions of children. Paid sick leave or vacation time under a company policy may be substituted for the unpaid leave allowed by the FMLA.⁶³ Because major changes to FLMA came into effect on January 16, 2009, supervisors should rely on the advice of HR or the company's legal counsel for interpretation of the regulations. Clearly, the leave policies must be applied consistently and uniformly in the organization.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Many organizations, especially large corporations and major government agencies, have adopted **employee assistance programs (EAPs)**. These programs typically involve a special department or outside resources retained by the firm to whom supervisors may refer employees with certain types of problems. Alternatively, employees may seek help on their own from the EAP, or they may be referred to the EAP by other sources, such as their union. Most EAPs provide help for alcoholism and substance abuse; marriage, childcare, and family problems; financial questions; and other personal, emotional, or psychological problems that may be interfering with job performance.

The supervisor's role in an EAP is essential to the program's effectiveness. The supervisor must be alert to signs that an employee may be troubled, even though the supervisor may have tried to respond to the employee's work performance using normal supervisory procedures. For example, a supervisor may be concerned about an employee's recent poor attendance and low production at work. The supervisor may even suspect that the employee is struggling with an alcohol-related problem or substance abuse. Drug and alcohol abuse costs American businesses almost \$100 billion in lost productivity annually. Employers also incur hidden costs related to tardiness, absenteeism, health care benefits, and turnover.⁶⁴ The American Council on Drug Education reports that drug abusers are

- 10 times more likely to miss work,
- 3.6 times more likely to be involved in on-the-job accidents,
- 5 times more likely to file a workers' compensation claim,

Employee assistance programs (EAPs)

Company programs to help employees with personal or work-related problems that are interfering with job performance

- two-thirds as productive, and
- responsible for health care costs that are three times as high.⁶⁵

When talking with the employee, the supervisor should focus primarily on the person's poor or deteriorating job performance and then suggest the EAP services that might be of help.

Most EAPs emphasize the confidential nature of the services. Supervisors should discuss this confidentiality with employees and assure them that no stigma will be associated with their seeking EAP help. However, the supervisor should inform an employee who refuses EAP assistance and whose work performance continues to deteriorate that such a refusal might be a consideration in a termination decision.

WELLNESS PROGRAMS

Another approach used by some firms, often where EAPs are in place, is the wellness program. The Towers Watson 2013 Global Benefits Attitude Survey found that workers' wellness is directly related to performance, both employee performance and organizational performance. The survey identified seven lifestyle risk factors that decrease productivity even in the best-equipped workforces: stress, obesity, lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, tobacco use, presenteeism, and substance abuse, which have dire, yet often preventable consequences for workers and organizations.⁶⁶

In order to comprehensively empower workers for success, employers are forced to consider how they can address these risk factors by promoting and supporting employee wellness. Companies are recognizing this growing challenge and are committed to helping by providing wellness programs for employees. A **wellness program** is essentially a firm's organized effort to help employees stay healthy physically and mentally so they can stay productive and engaged, and to reduce employer health costs. Wellness programs vary, but they often focus on areas of recovery and prevention of chronic, preventable health problems. Wellness programs can include exercise facilities, counseling, and other resources, both on company premises and elsewhere. New wellness technologies provided within contracted wellness services can actively engage workers with wellness programs by providing tools to build healthy habits, incentives for participation, and tracking tools to manage chronic health conditions, as well as securely report data to employees' medical providers. For just a few dollars per employee, companies can help workers be proactive in improving their health and substantially reducing health care costs for the organization.⁶⁷ In some firms, corporate wellness programs are viewed as an employee benefit, but for the most part, they are directed efforts by the firm to improve employee health and safety, which should positively impact engagement and work performance.⁶⁸

Wellness program

Organized effort by a firm to help employees get and stay healthy to remain productive
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A wellness program might include a gym membership to encourage exercise and overall good health.



SW Productions/Photodisc/Getty Images

PAID TIME OFF (PTO)

It is well known that all work and no play will negatively impact the best of us. We all need time to pause, relax, and recharge our batteries. Did you ever wonder why schools have a spring break? How do you spend your time off? We suspect that you use it for personal reasons. The same is true for employees. Did you ever know an employee who used a sick day to tend to personal business? Of course, we all do. Anderson Memorial Hospital recently eliminated the distinction between vacation, sick, and personal days by granting employees *paid time off*.

Paid time off (PTO) program

PTO allows employees to establish a personal time-off bank that they can use for any reason they want

Increasingly, companies are developing **paid time off (PTO) programs** where employees can use their accrued time off for personal reasons rather than solely for illnesses or vacations. PTO programs are in place at about one-third of the companies that responded to a recent SHRM Benefits Survey.⁶⁹ Under the PTO plan, employees can take time off with pay as needed without the restrictions imposed by traditional time-off policies. Anderson Memorial employees get days in their personal leave bank and make withdrawals as needed. At Anderson, the average employee previously received ten days of paid vacation, five sick days, and three personal days. Now employees receive eighteen days of personal time to use as they wish. It eliminates the problem of employees calling in sick when they want to play golf. PTO plans should be coordinated with FMLA, and employees have more control over how they use their time-off days.

GOOD SUPERVISION IS THE FOUNDATION FOR HIGH ENGAGEMENT

All aspects of good supervision impact employee engagement as it relates to job conditions. However, perhaps the most significant day-to-day influence on employee engagement is the supervisor's general attitude and behavior in departmental relationships. When a supervisor's behavior indicates he or she is suspicious of employees' motives and actions, low morale will likely result. When supervisors act worried or depressed, employees tend to follow suit. When supervisors lose their temper, some employees also may lose theirs. Conversely, supervisors who show confidence in their employees' work and commend employees for good performance reinforce their positive outlook.

This does not mean that a supervisor should overlook difficulties that are present from time to time. Rather, it means that if something goes wrong, the supervisor should act as a leader who has the situation in hand. For example, supervisors often will be called on to mediate conflict among their employees. The supervisor should demonstrate the attitude that the employees will be relied on to correct the situation and do what is necessary to prevent similar situations.

Supervisors should not relax their efforts to build and maintain high employee engagement. However, they should not become discouraged if morale drops from time to time, because many factors impacting morale are beyond their control. Supervisors should always maintain a focus on building high engagement in the long-term. We have found that effective supervisors embrace that old saying, "If it [high engagement] is to be, it is up to me!"

SUMMARY

1. Work groups are typically formed to provide companionship and identification, behavioral guidelines, problem-solving help, and protection. Various factors can contribute to the cohesiveness and functioning of the work group, including the group's status, size, personal characteristics, location, and previous successes. Work groups can significantly influence employee attitudes and job performance, a reality supervisors must recognize and be prepared to address.

At any time, an employee may be a member of a command group, a task group or cross-functional team, a friendship group, or a special-interest group. Command and task groups are based primarily on job-related factors. Friendship and special-interest groups mainly reflect personal relationships and interests. Employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs or working conditions, or fear losing their jobs due to outsourcing or economic downturn, may be attracted to form a special-interest group, for example, a labor union. As a supervisor, you need to be aware of any hint of employee dissatisfaction that may lead to a unionizing effort. There is increasing use of customer-satisfaction teams, which may include customer and supplier representatives. Participation in each of these work groups can influence worker attitudes and productivity in different ways. Supervisors should be sensitive to all these groups and how they impact their employee members.

2. The Hawthorne Studies demonstrated that work groups can positively or negatively influence employee performance. To influence work groups positively, supervisors should review the keys to effective team building. Teams should be relatively small, and members must have the necessary skills and be committed to specific and realistic objectives. Organized participative management programs primarily involve building effective teams to work on tasks that will improve work performance and customer service. While work teams are convened with the expectation that the group will take charge of accomplishing a specific task, the supervisor still plays an important role in providing direction, feedback, accountability measures, and coaching during the team development process of forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

Virtual or geographically dispersed work teams (GDTs) are a way for organizations to leverage the SKAs from workers located in all parts of the world. For such programs to be effective, top-level and other managers must give their full support and encouragement.

Members of these teams communicate electronically, so they rarely or never meet face to face. Thus, the supervisor's ability to communicate, build commitment, and encourage collaboration is fundamental to the success of these teams.

3. Employee engagement is the level of emotional commitment the employee has to the organization and its goals. Morale is a composite of feelings and attitudes of individuals and groups toward their work environment, supervision, and the organization as a whole. Morale can vary from very high to very low and can change considerably from day to day. Engagement is a more stable characteristic that is driven by the level of support, encouragement, and opportunity provided by supervisors and managers. Everyone in the organization should be concerned about engagement, although it is primarily the direct supervisor who is, and should be responsible for creating a climate that encourages engagement. Morale can be influenced by factors from outside the organization as well as by on-the-job factors. Morale, engagement, and teamwork are not synonymous, but high morale usually contributes to high productivity. The converse is also true; employees with low morale seldom put forth their best effort. Further, individuals with high levels of engagement who assume leadership positions on teams can positively influence the engagement level and productivity of the entire team. Workplace spirituality is an effort to improve employees' personal lives and mental outlook.

Downsizing and corporate restructuring during the past decade have created a legacy of fear among workers. Supervisors must be aware of employee needs, feelings, and perceptions because they impact morale. In general, a supervisor's attitude and behaviors can significantly influence employee engagement and morale.

4. Perceptive supervisors who regularly interact with employees can detect changes in engagement by monitoring employee behaviors and such key indicators as absenteeism and performance trends. The attitude survey is another method of assessing engagement and, when used over time, monitoring trends that reflect engagement changes in the workforce. When possible, supervisors and higher-level managers should correct problems that have been brought to their attention through the survey. A participative approach is desirable when considering attitude survey data, in which the supervisor discusses the results with supervisors and employee groups and encourages them to recommend changes and improvements.

5. Supervisors adopt the counseling role when they deal directly with employee performance problems that are influenced by personal problems. If these problems are not addressed, employee morale, work quality, and productivity can be negatively affected. When a supervisor recognizes an employee performance problem, it is important to use empathetic listening, reflective questioning, and direct communication, and refer the employee to additional sources of assistance as directed in established employee support policies. Sound interviewing and communication practices are the foundation of counseling.
6. Supervisors should be aware of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the company's related policies in case an employee requests a leave

of absence due to personal sickness, childbirth, or other family medical concerns. To help employees with personal and work-related problems a supervisor would not be competent to handle, some organizations have employee assistance programs (EAPs) and wellness programs. EAP efforts typically help employees solve problems that detract from job performance, with the goal of restoring those employees to full capabilities that meet acceptable work standards. Wellness programs aim to promote and maintain proper physical condition and other personal or health habits that will tend to keep employees healthy and productive on the job. Paid time off (PTO) programs are increasing in popularity as employers recognize the need of employees to take time off for personal reasons rather than solely for illnesses and vacations.

KEY TERMS

Attitude survey (p. 428)	Friendship group (p. 410)	Synergistic effect (p. 415)
Collaborative workplace (p. 415)	Groupthink (p. 408)	Task group or cross-functional team (p. 409)
Command group (p. 409)	Hawthorne Studies (p. 411)	Teamwork (p. 415)
Counseling (p. 430)	Morale (p. 420)	Virtual or geographically dispersed team (GDT) (p. 417)
Counseling interview (p. 430)	Organizational development (OD) (p. 429)	Wellness program (p. 433)
Employee assistance programs (EAPs) (p. 432)	Paid time off (PTO) program (p. 434)	Workplace spirituality (p. 426)
Exit interviews (p. 428)	Special-interest group (p. 410)	

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

1. What are some of the most common reasons for forming work groups? What are some factors that make a work group cohesive? Is work-group cohesiveness always desirable? Discuss.
2. Consider a team (work group) of which you are presently a member.
 - a. Describe the group dynamics of this team. Use Tuckman and Jensen's stages of group development to identify the current stage of the group.
 - b. Is your team successful? Why?
 - c. What are some reasons that your team might not be achieving to its full potential?
 - d. What steps should you be taking to make the team more successful, that is, a high-performance team?
3. Imagine that you are located in El Paso, Texas, with responsibility for managing a customer-service call center. Your team members are located in El Paso; Calcutta, India; and Teresopolis, Brazil. What are the strengths and shortcomings of using GDTs to provide customer service? Suggest specific leadership and team-building strategies you will use to facilitate the development and performance of your team.
4. Define and differentiate between employee morale and employee engagement. What are the factors that influence employee engagement? Morale?
 - a. What is the direct supervisor's role in building and maintaining employee engagement?
 - b. What should a supervisor do to minimize the influence of external factors on an employee's work?
 - c. Discuss the impact of downsizing on employee engagement and supervisory responses to the effects of downsizing.
5. Picture yourself as a newly hired X-ray department manager in a regional health care system. During your first few weeks of conversations with employees, you notice an undertone of fatigue and frustration and you notice productivity dropping. What steps can you take to identify the causes of this low engagement, and how might you go about improving the climate of your workplace?
6. Discuss the use of employee assistance programs (EAPs) and wellness programs. What should a supervisor do when an employee requests a family or medical leave?

EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT 11: Team Assessment

1. Describe the most effective team with which you have ever been associated.
 - a. What did you like most about being a member of that team?
 - b. Why were you able to perform successfully on the team?
 - c. What did the team leader do to blend the team members into an efficient and effective group?
 - d. Provide specific examples to illustrate how team members used feedback to help you grow, develop, and improve.
 - e. Have you ever been part of the team or group that, in retrospect, you wish that you had never been a part of? What are the major differences between this team and the one described in (a) above?

PERSONAL SKILL BUILDING

PERSONAL SKILL BUILDER 11-1: Is this the best way to get people on board your team?

In this skill building exercise, you are assigned the role of Don Brockman, the newest member of Lighthouse Financials HR team (refer to this chapter's You Make the Call!)

1. Discuss why morale may not be high in Lighthouse Financials' HR department.
2. Do you think that the employees in the HR department can be an effective team? Why or why not? If not, what must management do to get HR professionals to function as a team?
3. Please think back to the information in Chapter 5 ("Leadership and Followership"). Develop a list of the concepts and principles of leadership that might be useful to help Charlie do a better job of supervising his team and building a more effective HR team.
4. Would you want to work for a manager like Charlie? Why? Why not?

5.



INTERNET ACTIVITY

Please go to this link to see Alan Cavaiola's study (www.shrm.org/1013-Cavaiola-personal-problems-at-work.)

- a. What are the potential impacts of dissatisfied team members for the organization?
- b. After reading this chapter's You Make the Call! and Cavaiola's study, would you want to work for Charlie? Why or why not?
- c. Cavaiola's study found that high achievers were often dissatisfied. If the senior leadership of Lighthouse Financials becomes aware that dissatisfaction occurs among various teams in the organization, what actions would you recommend they take?

PERSONAL SKILL BUILDER 11-2: The Law Is the Law!

Most of us would like to work for an organization that is family-friendly.

1. Review either your university's, employer's, or another organization's handbook or policy manual to determine what their policies and procedures are for handling employees' personal and work-related problems.
2. If the organization has an employee assistance program (EAP):
 - a. What are the procedures for a supervisor to follow when they suspect that an employee's personal or work-related problems are hindering job performance?
 - b. What assistance services are available for your referral?
 - c. Do the policies provide procedures regarding the steps the supervisor should take if the employee's on-the-job performance does not improve?
 - d. If so, what actions should the supervisor take?

3. The EEOC provides fact sheets to help supervisors and employees understand the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), ADA, and workers' compensation compliance. Managing leaves of absence is complicated enough for the supervisor without having to consider state law. See Joanne Deschenaux, "Managing Leave of Absence in California Is Complicated," *HR Magazine* (June 2011), p. 23.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT QUESTIONS: (a) Does the California law make the supervisor's job of managing and scheduling employees easier or more difficult? (b) Is the California law more or less in line with the concepts and examples for effectively supervising employees in *SuperVision*?

PERSONAL SKILL-BUILDER 11-3: Technology Tools—Virtual Team Collaboration



INTERNET ACTIVITY

Imagine that you meet a group of three new friends while on vacation in Cozumel, Mexico, over spring break. While hanging out at the beach, you come up with a great idea for a new kind of low-profile, water-resistant headphones that would be perfect for the beach.

The discussion continues throughout the week. On the last day of the trip, you exchange numbers so you can keep working on developing a prototype and business plan for the idea. Once you leave Cozumel, you will become a virtual team. What technology tools could help the team collaborate to make the headphones a reality?

Thousands of software applications exist to bring people together for virtual work. You may already be using some of them in your day-to-day life. Hassan Oman, Senior Program Manager at Cisco and part-time webpreneur, has curated a list of productivity applications he feels are the “ultimate” virtual team collaboration tools.

Visit the list of tools here: <http://www.thecouchmanager.com/2013/05/> or use your Internet browser to find another list of reviews of “virtual team technology tools.”

1. Consider the interactions you will need to have with the team as you work on your design and business plan. Will you need to have video conferences? Share documents? Manage a timeline? Instant message?
2. Visit Oman’s Ultimate List of Virtual Team Technology Tools here: <http://www.thecouchmanager.com/2013/05/21/>
3. Explore at least ten different tools. Click the links and read the specifications of the different applications.
4. Create a work plan for the next year that incorporates at least five different technology tools from the list and, if applicable, your experience. Using Microsoft Excel or a Word table, show the monthly timeline, what tools you will use, and what you will accomplish with each tool. Along with the work plan, write a 200-word assessment of what you think the biggest challenges will be for the virtual team and suggest ways to overcome them.

TEAM SKILL BUILDING

TEAM SKILL BUILDER 11-1: Dealing with People Who Make Your Life Difficult—“The Deadweight”


This is another in a series of skills exercises that introduce you to people who might make your life difficult.

1. Read the following statement from Chandra Morris, a pet shop employee:

I love working at the pet shop—mostly. I enjoy what I do, but I do not look forward to coming to work when I’m scheduled to work the same shift as Jay. Jay goes around as if nothing is ever wrong and nothing has to be done on time. Yesterday, I arrived at work at 8:00 A.M. to get things organized for our opening at 10:00 A.M. Jay was supposed to be here at 8:00 A.M., but he didn’t show up until 9:15 A.M. We’re supposed to clean cages and feed and water the animals. Every morning, I end up cleaning the cages by myself. Jay said it was too early in the morning for him to deal with animal droppings. He says he’ll get around to it later, once he wakes up. I asked him if he could start filling food and water bowls while I finished cleaning cages. To my surprise, he actually started filling the bowls. At 9:30 A.M., the phone rang, and Jay answered it. We’re not supposed to answer the phone until after 10:00 A.M. as the message system clicks in to tell people our hours of operation, but it was Jay’s girlfriend. After he talked for about 15 minutes, I asked Jay if he would hurry up and feed the animals as we were about ready to open the store. He said not to worry about it, that it would get done.

I should have known better. As I opened the doors at 10:00 A.M., the customers started to come in. Jay got off the phone, but he didn’t finish his duties. I proceeded to answer the customers’ questions and work the cash register until my shift was over at 4:00 P.M. I’ve asked Jay if he ever worries about losing his job because of the lack of effort, and his responses have included, “What? Me worry? No way!” and “Don’t sweat the small stuff. Everything works out in the end.”

I’ve talked with the other employees, and they have expressed the same concern. During the week, there are only two of us on duty, so we have to work as a team to get everything done. I have lots of responsibility, including opening and closing the store, but no authority. I’ve reported my concerns to the owner, Aaron Minnick, but he only says, “Figure out a way to work together.” I’m starting to feel like the Lone Ranger. It’s always the same thing: Every time I’m scheduled to work with Jay, I end up carrying the entire load.

2.  Using the Internet, find at least three sources of information for working with people who fail to carry their loads. Carefully review each site for suggestions on how to deal with this type of person.
3. Pair students into groups of three or more. In the group, each student should share his or her research finding for how to cope with someone like the deadweight.

- After reviewing the research findings and discussing the possible courses of action, the group must reach a decision as to how Chandra Morris should deal with Jay—the dead-weight.
- Evaluate the role of the leader—the owner, Aaron Minnick—in getting members of the team to play the game so that all can be winners.
- As a group, write a one-page paper explaining how this exercise increased your working knowledge of coping with the behaviors of this type of difficult person.

TEAM SKILL BUILDER 11-2: Thinking Outside the Box—Advantages of Teamwork



- Your instructor will randomly organize the class into a team of four to six persons.
- Each team should decide how it will arrange these three identical pieces into one figure that forms a triangle. Compare your team's final solution with the solution that the instructor will provide.
- At the conclusion of the exercise, each member of the team should list the advantages and limitations of working as a team on this project as opposed to doing it as an individual.
- Each group should select one individual to be its reporter. The reporter should take notes and report what the group decided was the major benefit of working as a team on this project and the major obstacle the team faced in completing the task. Your instructor will then develop a composite listing of the advantages and limitations of team problem solving.
- In conclusion, analyze the dynamics of your team.
 - Were you satisfied with the solution your team developed?
 - How did you arrive at the solution?
 - Did anyone just sit there and refuse to participate? If so, why?
 - What were the patterns of communication within the group?
 - Did the group work well together?
 - Who was the person with the most influence?
 - Did you feel welcome in the group?
 - Did you personally make an effort to involve everyone in the process?
 - Would you like to work with this group of individuals on another project? Why? Why not?

Source: Adapted from QCI International, from QCI International's Timely Tips for Teams, a monthly Internet newsletter (November 2004).

SUPERVISION IN ACTION



The video for this chapter can be accessed from the student companion website at www.cengagebrain.com. (Search by authors' names or book title to find the accompanying resources.)

ENDNOTES

- For an expanded discussion of group processes in organizations, see Debra L. Nelson and James Campbell Quick, *Organizational Behavior: Science, the Real World, and You* (Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2011), pp. 292–324; John M. Ivancevich, Robert Konopaske, and Michael T. Matteson, *Organizational Behavior and Management* (Boston: McGraw-Hill Irwin, 2005), pp. 321–346; Steven L. McShane and Mary Ann Von Glinow, *Organizational Behavior* (Boston: McGraw-Hill Irwin, 2005), pp. 264–288.
- Leslie De Church and Jessica Mesmer Magnus undertook a meta-analysis of sixty-five studies of team cognition and its relationship to teamwork processes in their investigation, "The Cognitive Underpinnings of Effective Teamwork: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 95, No. 1 (2010), pp. 32–53. They found that team cognition has strong positive relationships to team behavioral processes, motivational states, and team performance.
- See a comprehensive discussion of the characteristics of groupthink, its precursors, and results in Roland Benabou, "Groupthink: Collective Delusions in Organizations and Markets," *Review of Economic Studies* 80, No. 2 (2013), pp. 429–462. See also Sallie Krawcheck, "Diversify Corporate America" *Time* (March 13, 2014), pp. 36–38.
- See Nelson and Quick, *Organizational Behavior*, pp. 304–310; or McShane and Von Glinow, *Organizational Behavior*, pp. 294–318. Also see Natasha Calder and P. C. Douglas, "Empowered Employee Teams: The New Key to Improving Corporate Success," *Quality Digest* (March 1999), pp. 26–30, for a discussion of empowered teams.

- Access the Web site <http://www.teambuilding.com> for information on teams.
- Go to www.3M.com for information on their self-directed team approach. See Dave Gray, "3M Is Podular" (<http://www.dachisgroup.com>), posted May 9, 2011; or Larry Edmonds, "The Self-Directed Work Team," *National Work Place Issues* (January 24, 2010) (<http://www.examiner.com>). To understand how Johnson & Johnson uses the team approach, see "What Makes Good Teams Better: Research-Based Strategies That Distinguish Top-Performing Cross-Functional Drug Development Teams," *Organizational Development Journal* 25, No. 2 (Summer 2007), pp. 179–186.
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 61. The National Employment Counseling Association (NECA), a division of the American Counseling Association, provides employers with education and resource links related to employment and workforce counseling. Visit the NECA Web site at <http://www.employmentcounseling.org>. See Marianne Minor, *Coaching and Counseling: A Practice Guide for Managers* (Seattle, WA: Crisp Publications, 1989).
 62. Local newspapers regularly list bankruptcies filed by individuals, families, and businesses. While these listings, like police reports, are often reviewed out of sheer curiosity, employers who scan them for workers' names can gain valuable insights into employee struggles outside of the workplace and be prepared for possible impacts on job performance and the need for counseling or other intervention.
 63. Eligible employees covered under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) must be granted up to a total of twelve work weeks of unpaid leave during any twelve-month period for one or more of the following reasons: for the birth and care of a newborn child of the employee; for placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care; to care for an immediate family member (spouse, child, or parent) with a serious health condition; or to take medical leave when the employee is unable to work because of a serious health condition.
The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) updated the FMLA effective January 16, 2009. See the FMLA Web site (http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/ndaa_fmla.htm) or FMLA Final Rule Web site (<http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla>).
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 - Also visit the following Web sites:
American Council on Drug Education (<http://www.acde.org>)

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (<http://www.drugfree-workplace.gov>)

Drug-Free America Foundation (<http://www.dfaf.org>)

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism (<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>)

National Institute on Drug Abuse (<http://www.nida.nih.gov>)

65. Ibid.

66. Towers Watson Global Benefits Attitude Survey (GBAS) reached this conclusion by surveying over 5,000 U.S. workers in 2013. The survey found that stress, the number one risk factor (reported by 78% of respondents), has its roots in the lack of work-life balance, technologies that make workers available 24/7, inadequate staffing, unclear job expectations, and low pay increases, among others. The survey report is available at <http://www.towerswatson.com/DownloadMedia.aspx?media=%7BF71EA970-260B-4CAB-A4C9-EA53BDAED77B%7D>. The seven risk factors have dire consequences, as together they have forced the United States to near the bottom in rankings of many health areas including injuries and homicides, drug-related deaths, obesity and diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, and disability, according to the National Academy of Sciences report, "U.S. Health in International Perspective: Shorter Lives, Poorer Health" (January 2013), available at http://sites.nationalacademies.org/DBASSE/CPOP/US_Health_in_International_Perspective/index.htm.

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