

Jordan Local Governance & Development Program

Management & Supervisory Skills for Municipal Managers

**Developed for Local Governance and
Development Program (LGDP)**

Module 3: Managing the Performance of Others

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Managing the Performance of Others**

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Leading Effective Group Meetings

Meetings have been found to be the key point for intervening in organizations to realize their synergistic potential – to get them doing the right things, to get them focused, and to get them working together to affect positive change. This means problem analysis and problem solving, innovative team-based planning, and decision analysis and decision making.

Meeting could be defined as “A gathering between two or more people, that share common interests and goals and wish to meet at a single place. Some sort of interaction and understanding could be developed between them to share information, discuss common matters, to take a decision regarding a specific issue or all of that together”

When a Meeting is effective?

A meeting is considered effective when it achieves its goals in the shortest possible time, so all participants are satisfied.

Effectiveness of a Meeting could be judged by:

- 1- Achieving the Meeting goals & objectives
- 2- To finish within the shortest time possible
- 3- Achieving accord between all participants

Team Meeting Functions

Team meetings have different functions and an effective team leader will attempt to balance these different functions in order to achieve concrete results as well as develop the capacity of the team. The following are the major functions for a leader to incorporate into meetings.

information sharing	Status reports, explanations of issues and situations, descriptions of new regulations or procedures
Decision Making	Determine course of action, choose between options, approve specific proposals
Problem Solving	Issues, situations, opportunities that have no clear solutions, requires further definition, discussion, brainstorming
Feedback	Not decision-making or giving approval, but merely giving input or feedback either to the leader, a task force, or individual members
Training	Learning new skills and knowledge, or improve current skill level; using presentations of new information, group exercises, studies
Planning & Coordinating	Set action plans, determine schedules, coordinate activities among the team

Ineffective Meetings

Meetings can be ineffective sometimes, and many people who attend regular meetings complain from its ineffectiveness. One specific survey which included 635 participants showed that 75% are not happy with the effectiveness of meetings they attended. And this could be contributed to at least one of the following reasons:-

- **Group - thinking and weak interaction:**

When everybody is on a joiner level and does not dare to open the discussion, no one expresses his or her opinion or objects to what is happening or what is being decided.

- **Avoiding the real problems:**

When the group fails in dealing with the real problems in meetings, and sometimes, members will only reveal the problems for others to deal with, and they will avoid taking the responsibility of such revealed problems

- **Weak motivation for the group members:**

There is no commitment from the group members, everyone attends the meeting because they have to, but no one believes in the group's ability in making a difference or inducing a positive change.

Exercise: Mention some of the other issues in meetings you attend, or how meetings could be ineffective?:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Meeting Essentials, Techniques and Tools

Meeting Tips:

- Set a meeting Agenda
- Define the Goal/ Goals of the meeting
- Define the Participants
- Set the time (Day, Date and Hour of the meeting)
- Set the location
- Documentation – Minutes of Meeting

Every leader needs to have the tools and methods to lead productive group meetings. Below are listed several suggestions and ideas of how to manage structured meetings:-

Agendas

Meeting agendas are usually necessary for group meetings to stay on track. Some specific techniques that may be helpful:

- 1- Prepared by leader with input from members of the group so he can give priority to urgent or important matters
- 2- May be distributed before the meeting; reviewed and discussed at beginning of meeting
- 3- Include meeting purpose or objectives
- 4- Include time frames which is suitable for the for the discussed issues, also to take into account that the time allocated to each topic on the agenda is equal to the importance and complexity of the topic
- 5- list responsible person for each agenda item
- 6- list products or deliverables that will be achieved at the meeting
- 7- Total clarity
- 8- brief and concise

Time Management

- ♦ start every meeting on time
- ♦ end every meeting on time – if extra time is needed, ask for group's permission
- ♦ Give enough time to each participant to give their participation and feel good about the meeting results
- ♦ use a timekeeper for agenda monitoring, but probably not the team leader

Participation

- ♦ start every meeting with an activity to get everyone immediately involved in the meeting
- ♦ state and post the specific meeting objectives and circulate it to all participants to be able to prepare before the meeting

Space

- 1- Arrange space to facilitate group discussion
- 2- seating arrangements to make sure all participants are able to communicate easily in the meeting
- 3- Provide all presentation tools, and use flip charts to visually process information
- 4- Make sure the place is properly Air-conditioned/ Heated and there is sufficient lighting
- 5- Availability of toilets

Ground Rules

- ♦ take time to define the team meeting behaviors and norms expected of members, the whole group should be aware and agree to these guidelines
- ♦ print and distribute to all members and refer to them periodically; revise as appropriate
- ♦ To the right is an example of a set of ground rules that a group might develop. What would you add to this list?

Team Ground Rules (example)

- ☐ ***One conversation at a time***
- ☐ ***Listen actively and be receptive to the views of others***
- ☐ ***Participate actively in the discussions***
- ☐ ***Aim for group consensus***
- ☐ ***Address the issue, not the person***
- ☐ ***Keep discussion relevant to the subject matter***

Documentation

- ♦ Appoint a person as a note-taker to document all ideas of the group members and points they agree on etc.
- ♦ summarize results of the meeting, either in the form of minutes, or a more helpful technique is to develop a follow-up report of what was decided at the meeting, what assignments were made, what due dates are critical, etc.
- ♦ Minutes of meeting could include:
 - Committee/ Group name
 - Meeting Number
 - Date and Place
 - Attendance
 - Absents & Apologies
 - List of everything discussed in the meeting, this could be in one of the following forms:
 - Literal listing of everything discussed
 - Concise listing of everything discussed
 - Listing decisions only
 - Decisions and recommendations
 - Responsible person to execute each recommendation and time frame
 - Suggestions
 - Place and Location of next meeting
 - Signature of chairperson, secretary and all participants
- ♦ use a team "notebook", a small booklet that includes relevant information about the team, including reports, minutes, etc.

Use Sub-Groups For Specific Tasks

- ♦ task forces or work groups can carry out projects or assignments between meetings
- ♦ clearly identify roles and responsibilities, and deadlines before chartering a task force

Exercise (1): Developing More Effective Meetings

Each team will discuss the particular problems and issues with their assigned “meeting”, and develop practical suggestions of tools, methods, and techniques that could be used to produce a more effective meeting.

- 1- Meeting of Municipality or Section Staff
- 2- Meeting of Municipality Managers
- 3- Meeting of committees
- 4- Public meeting with the local community
- 5- Meeting of planning committee to execute a project

The Meeting:

Subjects covered in the meeting:

-
-
-
-
-

The most difficult challenges the meeting is facing:

-
-
-
-

Ways and methods to deal with challenges and problems:

-
-
-
-
-

Team Meeting Skills

If a team is to be successful, it must pay close attention to two areas: task behavior and maintenance behavior. Task behaviors help to accomplish the task at hand. Maintenance behaviors help to create and preserve healthy and cohesive group relations. A group that gets the job done but hurts relationships among its members in the process is not truly effective.

Listed below are specific task and maintenance behaviors that contribute to group success. They should be practiced not just by the leader, but by all of the group's members. When a good balance between the two is maintained, the group will not only accomplish its objectives, but will build a team better able to take on the challenges of the future.

TASK BEHAVIORS

- ♦ **Initiating**: Proposing tasks or goals, defining a group problem and suggesting a procedure or idea for solving a problem.
- ♦ **Seeking Information or Opinions**: Requesting facts, seeking relevant information about a group concern, asking for expressions of feeling and seeking suggestions or ideas.
- ♦ **Giving Information or Opinions**: Offering facts, providing relevant information about a group concern, stating one's opinions and giving suggestions and ideas.
- ♦ **Clarifying and Elaborating**: Interpreting ideas or suggestions, clearing up confusion, defining terms, indicating alternatives and issues before the group.
- ♦ **Summarizing**: Pulling together related ideas, restating suggestions after group discussion and offering a decision or conclusion for group reaction.
- ♦ **Consensus-Testing**: Probing to see if the group can agree on a decision, and sending up a "trial balloon" to test a possible conclusion.

Maintaining & Sustaining BEHAVIORS

- ♦ **Listening**: Paying attention to other members' ideas, opinions and suggestions, not interrupting others and focusing on others when they speak.
- ♦ **Harmonizing**: Attempting to reconcile disagreements, reducing tension, and getting people to explore differences.
- ♦ **Gatekeeping**: Helping to keep communication channels open and facilitating the participation of others.
- ♦ **Encouraging**: Being friendly, warm and responsive to others and openly accepting others' contributions.

- ♦ ***Compromising***: Settling differences through mutual concessions, admitting error. And seeking workable alternatives.
- ♦ ***Checking Procedures and Group Norms***: Checking to see whether the group is satisfied with its procedures, suggesting alternative procedures and testing whether group norms contribute to group cohesion and productivity.

Exercise (2): Assessing Team Leadership Behaviors

Directions:

- Match each piece of dialogue with the team leadership behavior it best illustrates. Each piece of dialogue has one behavior that best fits it, and each skill is used only once in the exercise.
- Every Skill/ Behavior must be used only once in this exercise
- Do this individually first, and then in small groups.

Participant Skills

A. Initiating
B. Seeking Information or Opinions
C. Giving Information or Opinions
D. Clarifying and Elaborating
E. Summarizing
F. Consensus-Taking

G. Listening
H. Harmonizing
I. Gatekeeping
J. Encouraging
K. Compromising
L. Checking Procedures and Group Norms

- _____ 1. "I think some of us are taking a lot of these questions more personally than we should. Maybe we should postpone making a decision until our next meeting."
- _____ 2. "I would like to shift the Council's attention to the potentially negative consequences of the alternative we are considering."
- _____ 3. "Wouldn't we work more efficiently if we formed sub-committees rather than try to do all of this as a Council?"
- _____ 4. "It's frustrating not having an option that will be equally popular with all citizens of the municipality – which is all the more reason to make sure our decision reflects the kind of thorough assessment we've been doing so far and keep on doing it."
- _____ 5. "When Khalid says the cost of the first project will be greater, he means there will probably be a need for hiring a consultant."
- _____ 6. "How do we compare the cost of these alternative development projects?"

- _____ 7. "One thing I heard the secretary mention that I don't think we're taking into account adequately is the need to collect data before undertaking the infrastructure project."
- _____ 8. "What I hear the Council saying is that we need to take a vote for deciding whether to join set up a special task force – is that right?"
- _____ 9. "So far, we've been discussing the feasibility of different resource mobilization schemes, and have identified some interesting possibilities that we should look into some more."
- _____ 10. "I think we can monitor the education and health services by activating the Standing Committees. I've heard that these committees have been very effective in other municipalities."
- _____ 11. "Ahmad, you've had some recent discussions with community leaders in your district, how do think they would respond to some of the changes in our development plan?"
- _____ 12. "I think you've made a good point Ahmed, and we need to make sure we keep it in mind as we proceed."

Problem Solving Process

A manager needs to systematically analyze the tough, work-related problems that are faced on a daily basis. These include:

- Quality of work being performed in the work unit
- Productivity, how much work is getting done
- Continuously improving processes, procedures and practices
- Following rules, regulations and policies of the organization
- Maintaining cost and workload efficiencies

A systematic process enables the manager to sort out the different variables, separate symptoms from root causes and generally simplify a complex situation. The manager needs to have a system for analyzing and solving problems when:

- ◆ The decision is irreversible
- ◆ The decision is very important to the work unit or the organization
- ◆ Time or other resources available are especially limited or valuable
- ◆ The decision maker (the manager) is highly accountable to the organization
- ◆ Critical information required to solve the problem is complex, or ambiguous, or unfamiliar

A basic system for analyzing work-related problems follows the following five steps;

- 1. *Defining the problem; separating the symptoms from the causes***
- 2. *Gathering relevant facts and data***
- 3. *Considering alternative approaches and solutions***
- 4. *Taking the Right course of action, based on the analysis***
- 5. *Following up with corrective action to ensure success***

Exercise: Identify three work-related problems that you face in your work unit.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Exercise (3): How Creative Are You In Your Problem Solving?

Mark a number from 1 – 10 on the line. A 10 means "I always use that approach," and a 1 means "I need to think about doing that."

- _____ 1. I don't accept my first good idea; I try to come up with several ideas, and then choose.
- _____ 2. I look for new relationships, new connections among ideas generated.
- _____ 3. I break big problems in sub-components, then tackle them one at a time.
- _____ 4. In problem-solving, I try many different approaches until I find one that works.
- _____ 5. I do a wide variety of creative activities in my leisure time.
- _____ 6. I stay relaxed and allow time for my thinking to mature, and possibly come up with new perspectives.
- _____ 7. I refuse to make decisions when I'm angry or under a lot of outside pressure.
- _____ 8. I practice taking calculated risks in my work and play on a regular basis.
- _____ 9. I am not intimidated by others' "put downs" or criticisms of my ideas.
- _____ 10. I read a wide variety of books, articles, etc. with a different viewpoint than my own.
- _____ 11. I practice positive thinking related to the issues and problems in my job; I look for the positive way out and do not complain or blame others.
- _____ 12. I spend time with people who have different viewpoints and opinions; I actually listen to them without getting into an argument.
- _____ 13. I ask a lot of questions and indulge my instinctive curiosity.
- _____ 14. I break my own habits regularly and avoid rigid, set patterns in my life.
- _____ 15. I practice a wide variety of objective, problem-solving techniques.

Decision Making

A decision is “a choice made form among alternative courses of action that are available, usually as an attempted solution to a specific problem or issue.”

The need for Decision Making is related to two kind of situations:

- Situations with opportunities to develop and expand
- Situation with certain weakness or issues to be addressed

Making decisions is a critical management responsibility. One way to look at decision making is through the lens of problem-solving. This suggests that leadership is concerned with deciding when an issue really becomes a problem, figuring out how serious of a problem it is, and finally how to solve it honestly and directly. While there are no hard-and-fast rules for leaders to follow in making decisions, we do know that certain qualities are essential to being a successful decision-maker. Here are seven of the most important qualities.

Analytical Mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Separating fact from fiction. ▪ Asking the right kinds of questions. ▪ A probing and questioning style. 	_____
Objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focused on the problem first, and on people's feelings second. 	_____
Judgment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forming accurate opinions about situations. ▪ Making a good evaluation. 	_____
Foresight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making good predictions about the future. ▪ Anticipating changes in the environment. 	_____
Impartiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unbiased approach. ▪ Weighing all aspects of the problem. ▪ Not letting personal bias enter into the decision. 	_____
Risk Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comfortable with making difficult decisions. ▪ Willing to be challenged and criticized. ▪ Taking thoughtful and calculated risks. 	_____
Conviction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sticking with your decision. ▪ Bringing others to understand your reasoning, if not agree with your decision 	_____

Decision Making Techniques

Effective leaders attempt to use appropriate decision making techniques in relation to the type of decision that needs to be made. On the next page are listed four effective decision making techniques, with suggestions on how and when to use them.

Decision Making Technique	How	Guidelines
<i>Autonomous</i>	Leader makes the decision, either on the basis of information already held, or after gathering information from the group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > the problem is less important for the group to deliberate > leader has sufficient information to make decision alone > there is privileged or confidential information the leader can't share
<i>Delegative</i>	Leader delegates task or issue to one or more individuals who are delegated the responsibility and the authority to make the decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > an individual group member (or committee) has the knowledge, expertise, or responsibility > the leader wants to develop the capacity of the group
<i>Consultative</i>	Leader shares the problem or issue with the group, who bring information and expertise to the discussion. The leader retains the right to make the final decision or to veto the input of team members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > it is important enough to spend time discussing in the group > the leader wants all the members to hear the input to broaden their support for the decision > the leader is training the group to share ideas and work together on making decisions
<i>Joint or Consensus</i>	<p>Leader and group share in the decision-making process. Voting is often used. Also consensus may be used, meaning:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. everyone has an opportunity for input 2. everyone feels heard by the group 3. everyone agrees to abide with the group consensus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > the problem is critical to the organization > there is no one expert – different members have different expertise and experience that could assist > ownership of all team members is critical to the implementation of the decision > the issue is sensitive outside the group and there must be a cohesive support for the decision

Decision Making In Groups

Another aspect of decision making is how decisions are made in groups or work teams. There is a trend in organizations today to involve committed stakeholders or employees in the making of key decisions that affect the operations of the organization. It is generally thought that better thinking can actually come from the group as a whole, that under certain conditions, groups can think better than the best individuals in the group. Four conditions are critical:

1. *Diversity of Opinion.* For a group to be wise it needs a “diversity of opinions”. This might be called the principle of inclusivity. A group needs to be inclusive of the perspectives surrounding the issue under consideration as possible, to guard against “groupthink”.
2. *Independent thinking.* For a group to be wise, group members’ opinions shouldn’t be easily determined or influenced by those around them. This guards against “herding” of the group towards a decision. Individuals need opportunity to express themselves, to share ideas without being dismissed. Good groups will learn to listen and learn from one another, to encourage others to have their opinions, their different perspectives, and to be able to share them without censure. Too much listening might persuade individuals toward the loudest or most vocal member of the group, so that also needs to be guarded against. But independence of thought is critical to wise decision making in groups.
3. *Decentralization of thinking.* This might be called the principle of interchange. Wise groups contain people who are able to specialize and draw on their own local knowledge and experience. This needs to be exchanged so that everyone can benefit from each other’s specialization. The more specific information and knowledge is exchanged, the more likely people will come up with good solutions. The scope and diversity of opinion is important. Groups need to ensure that decentralized local wisdom is exchanged with one another.
4. *Aggregation Mechanism.* For a group to be wise in its decision making it needs some means to turn private judgments into collective wisdom and decisions. It needs a way to collect and accumulate the summation of each individual’s wisdom to create collective wisdom. It needs good process and procedures for meetings and decision making activities.

For groups and work teams to be successful, to be wise, in its decision making, it needs to follow several guidelines:

- Recognize implicit assumptions with group members.
- Pursue genuine inquiry through meaningful dialogue.
- Closely examine the data around problems and decision points.
- Emphasize full exchange and even dissent over quick agreement to avoid false harmony.
- Guard against starting with a pre-set conclusion and then looking for a means to confirm it.
- Avoid premature frame-working or aggregating of opinions – let the dialogue continue until clarity is established and the group is ready to act.
- Use the role of “devil’s advocate” to guard against premature or artificial harmony or consensus.
- Allow individuals to be “idea champions” to elaborate and provide explanation around key issues being discussed.

Exercise (4): Using Different Decision Making Techniques

Experienced and effective managers will often use different techniques for making decisions, depending on the situation or the issue. Based on the above information, and working in small work groups, identify examples of issues or situations related to decision making within organizations in which each of the four techniques would be most appropriate.

Decision Making style : Autonomous:

The Situation :

⇒

⇒

⇒

⇒

Decision Making style : Delegative

The Situation :

⇒

⇒

⇒

⇒

Decision Making style : Consultative:

The Situation:

⇒

⇒

⇒

⇒

Decision Making Style : Joint or Consensus:

The Situation:

⇒

⇒

⇒

⇒

20 Axioms for Improving Employee Morale

1. The most dangerous policy in handling subordinates is to ignore them.
2. Workers are hungry for commendation; a "pat on the back" stimulates effort.
3. People resist change; tell workers in advance of changes which will affect them – surprises upset people.
4. Intelligent employees have the right to know the reasons that lie behind rules and policies and organizational setups.
5. Tell employees as much as possible about organizational plans and results; this adds interest and stimulates a sense of responsibility.
6. Practice the just-in-time technique of "catch them doing something right or important, and immediately praise them for it".
7. It is better not to have a rule, than to have a rule to which you permit frequent violations.
8. Every employee is entitled to thorough instruction in the duties he/she is to perform, the best methods to use, and the standards by which his/her work will be judged.
9. Criticism given in the presence of fellow staff is apt to be unnecessarily embarrassing and counter-productive at times.
10. Ambitious employees are eager to broaden their knowledge of operations outside their own work assignment – provide opportunity for them to do so.
11. An indirect method of praise is to ask the worker for his/her opinion of the methods or progress of a job.
12. Always provide a sympathetic ear for their grievances – not that you agree, but that you are willing to respectfully listen.
13. People generally respond better to requests than orders.
14. The belief that the manager is showing favoritism is highly destructive to morale.
15. Drive out fear! True employee cooperation is built on trust, not fear.
16. Everyone wants "a place in the sun." Every employee should have a feeling of pride in the worth of his/her contribution to the business.
17. Discipline should be consistent and timely.
18. Be willing to make promises to your people – and be sure to fulfill them!
19. Working conditions are critical to employee's satisfaction – make sure you're doing all you can to provide for efficiency, comfort, and security.
20. Selectively give individuals more responsibility and opportunities to demonstrate initiative.