

The Simple Six:

Keys to Employee Retention

I know, another article on retention in health care. One of about six billion, and counting. Is there really anything new out there on the topic? One has to wonder, though, why so many consultants and authors are spending so much time on a topic that seems to have been around for eons. I've been involved in health care for twenty two years. One of the earliest lessons I learned was from the director of nursing of the facility in which I worked. We got into a conversation about turnover and she put it simply and succinctly; ***Turnover is a cost of doing business.*** Simple, to the point, and unfortunately, self fulfilling. It seems that many today accept that age-old adage that turnover is inherent in the system, that it is simply part of the day-to-day operation. This belief permeates many levels of the organization, beginning, not with the front line professionals we bemoan turning over, but, interestingly enough, with the executive level and slithering its way through all ranks, until it reaches the front lines, where it becomes obvious that there is little expectation that the newly hired housekeeper is going to be any different than the twenty seven that came before her.... A short-timer.

Turnover has certainly receded from its peak a few years ago. What was once a triple digit national average in long term care and around 50% in acute care a few years ago, has made its way all the way down to the mid 80's and mid 40's, respectively. Of course, add in the oft cited nursing shortage, and this level of turnover presents many of the same challenges of a few short years ago. Maun-Lemke has spent over twenty years working on this very issue, and it continues to be one of the main consulting thrusts of our business. The question that many have is....why? Why does this continue to be an issue? Many theories, but too few answers. Is it the low pay? The difficult type of work? The complexity of regulations? Increasing acuties? Solar flares? Global warming? One possible answer lies in the Simple Six.

First of all, let me jump on the bandwagon of other consultants and speakers. This talented group of "experts" have been telling you for years that it isn't the pay. Study after study has confirmed that pay ranks no higher than third on a list of priorities in health care job satisfaction and as low as eleventh. Most put that ranking somewhere around sixth. Money isn't the issue. Never has been. When someone leaves you for a quarter an hour, they aren't leaving for the money, they just needed a good reason to quit so that you weren't angry with them. Money is easy to blame. "I'd stay, but I can't pass up the money". Offer to match it, and they'll probably tell you that they've already committed and can't break their promise to the new employer. The truth is, they aren't leaving the facility, they're leaving you. The Gallop organization puts it clearly, people don't leave companies, they leave supervisors¹. The reason we keep talking about turnover and retention is that it is easier to ignore it and allow it than it is to change the very behaviors that cause it.

The Simple Six.

In our research, we've identified six areas that contribute significantly to turnover. While there are literally dozens, most cases of turnover can be linked to one or more of the following. While they are presented in no particular order, I'm going to start at the very point I believe the perception begins, at the top. I know, risky territory. It kind of goes along with don't bite the hand that feeds you. While gently tiptoeing on the eggshells of the corporate board room, one of the Simple Six keys to retention is ***providing strong leadership***. Preferably from a manager, rather than a coup-driven co-worker. Leadership, simply defined, is the ability to take people where they wouldn't or couldn't go without you. Nowhere in our definition of leadership does title or rank come into play. We hope the two go hand in hand, but they are not a mutual requirement. Check out MaunLemke.com and you'll find a number of programs that address the need for front line leadership, beginning at the charge nurse level and progressing both ways, from team leaders to CEO's. Supervisory skills training, management training, leadership training. If your organization is not involved in all three (or some combination of them), retention is going to suffer. This doesn't mean catching a seminar at the annual convention, either. Just as a physician prescribes multiple doses of antibiotics to cure an infection (small doses over time), so, too, should this training be in multiple doses. Charge nurses don't want to be in charge? Fine, don't make them be. But if you want to allow them to "opt out" of leading, you need to provide an alternative, like a unit manager who may or ***may not*** be a nurse. If clinical skills and leadership skills are rarely found together, then hire for the leadership skills and put a talented manager in charge of your unit. You'll figure out a way to make the numbers work, if you are truly committed to reducing turnover.

Next in line comes the choices that we make in ***selection***. I know, beggars can't be choosers. You only have so many applicants to pick from, so you try to do the best you can. If the applicant can pass a pee test and has no outstanding felony warrants, they're hired. Viola', you've got a new Director of Nursing! Part of this revolving door is driven by what you've hired in the past and what your reputation in the employment community in your market area will allow you to attract. Biker bars don't start out being biker bars (sorry to you Harley Heads), they kind of evolve into them. The bar owner probably didn't start out consciously trying to attract one crowd or another. He just serves whoever comes through the door. Virgil, fresh off the "Twilight Poker Run" is running low on hydration therapy and opts to stop in to the "Dew Drop Inn" for an icy mug of Bud. His Harley still steaming from the sweat that dripped on the tailpipe as he strapped his brain bucket on the back of his bike attracts other riders, drawing them in like moths to a flame. Soon, a dozen bikes sit outside and a dozen bikers lay claim. In time, this becomes their regular hangout. Not that it is bad, but if the bar owner wonders why there are fewer and fewer businessmen and women stopping by for a glass of Chablis after work, all he has to do is look in the parking lot.

Okay, I know, I'm generalizing, but the same is true in hiring. Raise the bar, don't lower it. It will take a few months of pain, but it will result in attracting the quality you are

looking for. Only when the target for selection is ONLY those who meet a higher standard can you hope to attract that level of applicant.

Once the proper selection has been made, proper placement, specifically, *scheduling* that fits their lifestyle must follow. This gets a bit dicey, as we are so inculcated into the traditional staffing patterns that it is almost impossible to change. In some cases, I would agree, but too many times I see the following scenario. A nursing assistant applies for an open position. She would prefer days, but since the only open positions we have are for evenings, she takes the job, with the promise that as soon as a position on days comes open, it's hers. Four months later, that position opens, but we just hired someone who is *really good* and she can *only* work days. Forgetting our earlier promise, the position is filled from the outside, and the evening shift nursing assistant is on the fast track to fast food. My colleague and friend Dale Lind, Executive Director of Waterman Village in Mt. Dora made it a point that any person considered for evening or night shift work had to demonstrate a history of success on those shifts or describe a lifestyle that is conducive to it. When an applicant wants hired, they'll agree to just about anything, including a shift that doesn't really fit their needs. We make the mistake of believing that they'll either "grow into it" or we'll move them to days when we can. Busting up central scheduling, split shifts, Baylor plans, self scheduling and a host of other creative ideas that challenge the status quo are becoming more common place.

Of course, it doesn't matter when they work, if you can't keep them past *orientation*. Every day we hear stories of employees not making it past the first break! Passionate, progressive orientation is essential in an individual's decision to stay or go. In fact, 75% of all employees make a conscious or subconscious decision on how long they are going to stay in an organization within the first two days. Orientation has a lot of components, and we can't go into much depth here, but consider these as highlights.

1. Everyone MUST go through orientation before they are scheduled on the floor. No exceptions. Every "reason" in the book can be given why this ONE time we'll make an exception and make no mistake about it, a year from now, no one will go through orientation anymore. This has to be absolutel.
2. Make it competency based. Don't move from one subject, topic or item until people can prove a competency for the things you are asking them to learn. The objective is not to "get through all of the material" but to actually TEACH the material. In health care, we are not in the habit of expecting competency. For those who are asked to complete CEU's for their licensure, what is the requirement for credits when attending an approved seminar? ATTENDANCE.... Not even consciousness. You can sleep through the seminar, as long as you signed in at the beginning and sign out at the end. You have your CEU's. This isn't good enough. You want your new employees to actually learn something about you. Make sure they learn.
3. Make it Values Centered. In fact, the first thing you teach in orientation is values. What is your mission? What are your core beliefs or values? What is your culture like and what are important attributes of a good employee? What are your expectations, behaviorally as well as performance wise? What is your history? What makes you tick, as

an organization? What keeps you awake at night worrying about and what makes you swell with pride knowing about the organization. This is what people buy into, not policies, procedures, rules and regulations. Start with VALUES.

4. Teach relationship skills. Most people assume that because a new employee was able to talk their way into being hired, they know how to communicate. Most people assume because they've been to Walmart and experienced a "greeter" they understand customer service. Those would be poor assumptions. Teach relationship skills (to everyone, by the way, not just new hires) such as; Communication, Customer Service, Conflict Resolution, Diversity, Teamwork, Managing Stress, Leadership Skills and more. We suggest that you spread this out over three months or even six, if need be. The key is, never stop training on relationship skills.

5. Mentor. Whether it is for a week, a month or a year, every new hire needs ONE person they can turn to when they have a question without fear of feeling stupid. ONE person they can rely on to ease them into the routine and ONE person they can count on to have their back when the old lions try to eat their young. That person is a mentor. There are volumes of information available online about developing a mentor program. Done right (and of course, we want you to do it right) they truly do pay for themselves, over and over again.

6. Make sure orientation is consistent. Everyone who goes through the process must learn the same things. The worst thing a new hire can hear is "I don't know who told you that, but they never taught US that." Anytime you overhaul your orientation program (which should be reviewed every year or two) there will be a brief period when new things WILL be taught, but make sure they are an improvement, not an adjustment made to create "shortcuts" to a quicker out.

The next step, and there is an additional resource in pages below, is *eliminate negativity*. Contrary to the feeling many managers have, MOST of your staff isn't negative! In fact, research shows that, on average, only about 3% (up to 7% in some studies) are chronically and retractably negative. Those are the ones that we need to eliminate. This is probably the most pervasive disease in an organization. Because we have allowed, in many cases, negativity to run rampant, there has been "creep"... so there are more who are infected, but many of those are curable. We need only focus on the "carriers" of the disease. The "typhoid Mary's" who are infected others. To do this.... read the Zero Tolerance Policy outline below. It can be done.

And, last but not least, *allow* the workplace to be *F.U.N.* For some, this is going to be a test of everything they have ever known about leadership and management. Yes, contrary to some, work can (and should) be fun! This is in stark contrast to the management philosophy of "the beatings will continue until morale improves." While few managers *actually* think that way, there is still, in some circles, a belief that work should NOT be fun, that's why they call it W.O.R.K.!!!! Data suggests that only 1 in 4 Americans actually *enjoy* their work. This gives us a wonderful opportunity to make a difference. This secret is probably the easiest and cheapest, because it really only takes a handful of people strategically empowered to create *spontaneous* fun to infect the building. Yes, the planned, organized, budgeted annual holiday party is good, but a well timed riddle

contest for the night shift with a traveling trophy to the winner can do more than a summer barbeque with badminton. Just, kidding, what beats badminton? Okay, you make you own fun, but trust us, it makes a difference. The nice thing is, the Administrator, CEO, DON or any other leader does not have to BE the fun, they just have to allow the fun. Encourage it. Empower it. Trust us, there are fun people in your building. Take the governor off their throttle and let them run. They'll take care of it for you, and it won't cost you much.

Self Scheduling

“The Poker Chip Method”

Self scheduling can be a fun and effective method of empowering front line professionals (C.N.A.'s, housekeepers, laundry aides, dietary staff, staff nurses, etc.) in creating and becoming accountable for their work schedules. There are a number of criteria that must be identified in advance and someone overseeing the process, at least early on, in order for it to be effective. Once ingrained in people's mind, it often becomes the only way people want to be scheduled! No method is perfect, and you can expect a few bumps along the road, but we encourage managers to let the front line professionals work out the kinks, rather than jumping in and mandating changes from the top down. Establish the guidelines and then let the teams work things out on their own within those guidelines.

Suggestions:

1. Do not attempt to configure the entire building for self scheduling all at once. Select ONE unit, the smaller the better, and infuse them with the idea and process. An example of this would be the C.N.A.'s on day shift on one nursing unit. Once they have piloted this process and worked out a system that works for your organization's culture, then let that team teach it to other another team and work with them until the next unit is up and running and so forth. It would be recommended that the first pilot team successfully complete three months' schedules without any hiccups (it may take four or five months or longer to get three in a row without major controversy!).
2. Identify the criteria the pilot team needs to meet, such as:
 - a. # of hours of coverage per shift. For instance, if the standard staffing level for that unit and that shift is 6 C.N.A.'s, (and it is an 8 hour shift) then each shift each day, all seven days, must have 48 hours of coverage.
 - b. Acceptable level of overtime. Zero overtime is, many times, just not realistic, but excessive overtime is not necessary, either, unless there is an extreme staffing shortage. If there are adequate numbers of staff to fill all of the necessary positions for all seven days in the week, then overtime should only be an issue if someone calls out and needs to seek a replacement, putting that replacement in an overtime position. This needs to be monitored. Individual states may have specific definitions for overtime, so be sure you know the specifics for your state. For instance, some states only recognize overtime if it is more than 80 hours in a pay period. Some recognize more than 40 hours in a calendar week (Sunday through Saturday, for instance) or some recognize more than 8 hours in a day, regardless of the hours in the week or pay period.
 - c. Accountability. There should be specific steps to ensure that individuals are held accountable for the schedule they have chosen.
 - d. Time allowed to create the schedule. Obviously, if it takes a team of 10 or 12 individuals three or four hours each pay period to create a schedule, this is not acceptable. The first month or two may be an exception, but long term,

- this should be done very quickly. Some variations can actually be done over the course of the pay period, as a team member completes their shift each day.
- e. Acceptable levels of agency, if at all. Ideally, there would be no agency use needed, but if this is currently the practice, then eliminating it all at once may be disastrous. This could be a weaning process, which would have to be spelled out in advance.
 - f. A conflict resolution process. Prepare (or have the team prepare for you) how to handle conflicts if they arise. Inevitably, someone, sometime, is going to be upset at the process and may try to sabotage it or subvert it. Know how you will handle these things in advance.
 - g. Acceptable call off procedure. If the individual is expected to find their own replacement or if there is an individual who finds their replacement, etc., this needs to be identified. There are some methods for encouraging people to find their own replacement as well as to pick up shifts for their colleagues when asked.
 - h. Other specifics, as needed.
3. Make sure that there is a reward for getting this right and doing it well. This can be as simple as a free soda for each team member once they get this going or a free meal ticket. The initial pilot team is going to have to be creative and willing to work through some headaches, so let them know there will be a reward of some sort. \$30 worth of subs and sodas or pizza or salads can go a long way to making people feel that they accomplished something. Throw a party for them.
 4. Make scheduling a game. We often suggest poker chips. This works as follows:
 - a. 100 plastic poker chips can be purchased for about \$5 at Walmart. A 100 piece package contains 50 white, 25 red and 25 blue chips, and would be sufficient for a single shift (days) for a single unit with as many as 7 aides scheduled per shift (56 hours) for a two week pay period. The colors do not matter, unless the team wants to allow partial shifts, or different colors are used for week days and weekends, etc., in which case more than one set may need to be purchased.
 - b. Each member of the pilot team receives a poker chip with their name, initials, or a specific code on it, *for each shift they are expected to work* during the scheduling period (it can be a two week pay period, 2- two week pay periods or it can be a calendar month, whichever the team is comfortable with). For instance, if a full time C.N.A. is expected to work five 8 hour shifts each week, they would be given 10 chips with their unique identifier on them for a two week pay period. If an employee has agreed previously to work at least three 8 hour shifts each week, they would be given 6 chips, etc.
 - c. Place a large “calendar” on the table with the dates of the scheduling period open. This can be hand drawn on a piece of poster board if you wish, it does not have to be professionally printed. If resources exist to do so, then go ahead, but don’t worry about what the board looks like. It just has to have the 14 days (with date and day name on it) so that people know what they are agreeing to do. Each square should be at least 2.5” x 2.5” so that the chips can be placed inside of the boundaries of the square and the day and date can

still be seen. Most poker chips are approximately 1.5” in diameter, so they will not overlap onto other days. This is important so that the chips do not get confused.

- d. Identify the order in which each team member is allowed to take a turn. We suggest that each team member is allowed to place ONE chip on the calendar per turn, so that it is fair to everyone. If a team member only works 3 shifts per week, they would stagger their turn, so that they might place a chip on the calendar in rounds one, three, five, ect., but not during rounds two, four or six, etc. This way, part time employees do not select all of their shifts in the early rounds and force full time employees to take less preferred shifts in later rounds. Negotiate what is acceptable in advance of beginning so that everyone is comfortable with the process.
- e. If there is a *requirement* to work some weekend shifts, it is suggested that the team utilize white chips for week days and red chips for weekends. Some facilities mandate that staff work every other weekend, or two weekend days per pay period. In this case, then, a full time C.N.A. would be given 8 white chips with their name or initials on them and two red chips with their initials on them (if two shifts per pay period are required of everyone). Only white chips can be placed on week days and the red chips can be placed on weekends. For those who wish to work *more* than two weekend days per pay period, they are allowed to place white chips on the weekends, if this works out, but ONLY after everyone’s red chips have been placed and only if shifts are still available.
- f. Once the required number of chips are placed on a day (for instance six chips indicated six staff members scheduled that day) then the day is “CLOSED”. A blue chip may be placed on top of those days, if blue chips are not being used for anything else, or some other identifier that the day is filled. Once a day is filled, a record keeper (perhaps the scheduling coordinator) removes the chips and records the individuals who selected that day on the official calendar. This can be done at the end of all rounds, so that any negotiations or trades can be made by the team members before the final schedule is certified.
- g. If split shifts are allowed, then the team may choose to use white chips for week days, red chips for weekends and blue chips for split shifts (identifiers can be placed on hours of a split, such as 7 am – 11 am and 11 am – 3 pm). The same process may be used for placing chips, but an individual may be allowed to place two split shift chips (blue, for instance) during their one turn.
- h. Near the end rounds (which should not take more than 10 if a two week pay period is being scheduled) there will be shifts that people may not wish to work, but those shifts are the only ones left. Everyone MUST place all of their chips on the schedule!! No one is allowed to remove someone else’s chip without their agreement so that they can work the days they want! If the only days left are unpopular, then we encourage team members to “negotiate” with their colleagues and make trades, swaps or deals!!!

- i. If turns are being taken and the order is kept, then everyone should have equal opportunities to choose days that they would like to work and will be equally forced to choose days they don't necessarily want to work. As long as it is fair, as in everyone has the same opportunities, then no one can complain.
 - j. Once the schedule is finished (all chips have been placed) then the schedule is recorded and everyone signs off on the schedule they just prepared. This way, everyone is on record that they accepted this schedule. This is an important step. Because this is new for most people, there may be a tendency to "negate" the schedule the first time a conflict arises. This will circumvent comments like, "I never agreed to this schedule" or "This wasn't my choice" or anything similar. Each individual must understand that the schedule was completed with *their* choices and that they *agreed* to it at the end of the "game".
 - k. If insufficient staff exist to fill the schedule, then extra chips are first offered to those working fewer than 40 hours per week/80 hours per pay period, then to those who are willing to work overtime and then to those who work other units or other shifts if they wish to work unfilled slots on this schedule. It is our suggestion that only if after these options are exercised and there still remain unfilled slots should agency be utilized. While overtime is costly, it is often cheaper than the fees agencies charge for the same position. Even if the costs are comparable, it is our belief that the extra money is better served giving to the good staff you currently have than to an agency.
5. Variations:
- a. The order for taking turns can be identified at the beginning of the game based on things such as:
 - i. Length of service. If this option is chosen, then a record of length of service should be written out and the pattern rotates, so that everyone has a chance to go first at some time. For instance, if 10 staff are involved, the individual with the most time in goes first for this scheduling period, second longest goes second, third longest goes third, etc., through the 10th person. The next pay period, the person with the longest time goes to 10th position, 2nd position moves into first, third into second, etc. So that eventually, the 10th position will eventually have their opportunity to place a chip first.
 - ii. Attendance/Timeliness. The individual with the best attendance/timeliness is given first opportunity, second best goes second, etc. This promotes timeliness and attendance. If you show up and show up on time, you get to chose first.
 - iii. Mutual agreement. The team can simply pick for themselves who goes first, second, third, etc. This works only if you have a strong cooperative culture on that team.
 - iv. The order can rotate within the specific pay period. For instance, the order can be chosen as above, but for the second ROUND of the schedule, 1st goes to 10th and 2nd moves up to 1st, etc. This requires

some coordination and may be confusing, but this does provide some variation within the current scheduling period.

- b. Once the first scheduling period is completed, (a two week pay period, for instance) each time an individual completes a shift they are scheduled for, they are given ONE chip to place on the NEXT scheduling period's calendar. Team members who do not work their scheduled shift (call off or absent) will not be able to place their chip on the calendar for that missed shift until the end of the pay period. This encourages everyone to work the shifts they are scheduled for. The calendar can be kept somewhere that it is accessible, but under a watchful eye so that no one can switch chips while no one is looking.
- c. If an employee picks up an extra shift in replacement of a colleague, they may be allowed to place TWO chips during their first turn on the next schedule as a reward for picking up the shift. This may be unlimited, so if an individual picked up three unscheduled shifts (and worked all of their scheduled shifts – remaining within the overtime guidelines or with approval of supervisor, etc.) then they could place two chips in the first three rounds they are allowed to place chips for. If they are part time, they may be allowed to place chips in consecutive rounds rather than having to skip rounds. In essence, create an advantage for those who work all of their shifts and then go above and beyond helping others.
- d. Individuals are encouraged to swap with colleagues, as long as it does not create overtime for themselves or others.

Supplies needed:

1. Poker chips
2. Felt tip markers to mark the chips with.
3. Labels ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch round stickers work nice to label the chips with each team member's initials or a number that is assigned each team member, etc.).
4. Large calendar - the desktop calendars available in most office supply stores work well, as does a large calendar white board laid flat or a poster board with the calendar drawn in.
5. Recording calendar. This is done once the chips have all been placed so that there is a hard copy available. This may be done on a computer or hard copy, whichever is preferable.
6. List of rules (as agreed upon by the team members and managers)
7. Refreshments. Be specific, however, if this is only for the first few scheduling periods or if this will be provided every time. If refreshments are a regular part of this process, then let them know.

Guidelines for Zero Tolerance Policy

“Eliminating Negativity in the Workplace”

Negativity in the workplace can be caustic. Allowing even a few hardened complainers can infect countless others and spread negativity throughout the organization. It can result in low morale, job dissatisfaction, and if allowed unchecked, can impact resident and family satisfaction, as well. The objective of a Zero Tolerance policy is to provide the management and staff of an organization the tools to identify and correct negative behaviors, and if necessary, take specific steps to eliminate not only the behaviors, but the individuals who consistently fail to abide by the policies mandates.

Recommended steps:

1. Identify specific criteria to aid in the identification of positive, proactive staff members who are respected by their peers and exhibit appropriate behaviors at work.
2. Based on those criteria, select a task force of front line professionals (7 – 12) to assist in the creation, education and implementation of the policy.
3. Provide guidance in overall structure of the policy, but do not “write” the policy for the task force. The role of management is to oversee the process and provide resources to the task force, but not to dictate the specific terms or process.
4. Provide education to task force on appropriate employment law standards so that the policy meets legal and HR related requirements.
5. Provide ample support so that the task force may complete their task.

Sample timeline:

Week 1: Develop criteria and select task force members

Week 2: Assemble task force and lay out guidelines and prospective outcomes

Weeks 3 – 6: Task force gathers regularly to define specifics of policy

Week 7: HR/Management review of proposed policy

Weeks 8 – 10: Task force revisions, as needed

Weeks 11 – 14: Task force develops implementation strategy and training curriculum

Week 15: Task force presents to all staff guidelines of the new policy and timeframes for education and implementation.

Weeks 16 – 20: Task force provides individual departments with preliminary education and discussion of policy and ramifications.

Weeks 21 – 24: Trial implementation of policy – no penalties for infractions, reinforcement of appropriate behaviors

Weeks 25 – 26: Policy review and revision, as needed

Week 27: Presentation of revised policy to all staff. Identification of full implementation date

Week 30: Implementation

Weeks 31 – 40: Observation and modification of policy. (work out the kinks)

Week 41: Finalization and full implementation.

Seven Steps to Conflict Resolution

Conflict is defined as, “Any behavior between two or more individuals which prevents work from getting done”. This means that every time we experience a “hiccup” in our daily routines, it is not conflict. Focus your efforts on resolving those issues which actually prevent work from being completed.

- 1) **Everyone in the organization must be taught the rules and must agree to abide by the rules of conflict resolution.** The first step to making sure the organization runs smoothly is to make sure every individual knows these rules and agrees to abide by them.
- 2) **All conflict must be resolved at the source.** Following a hierarchical structure communication pattern reduces the probability of positive resolution.
- 3) **Conflicts are resolved one at a time (on time).** There is a tendency to let issues build and mount until the last straw is reached, when a flood of conflicts come forth. In this chaos, no conflicts can be adequately resolved. Make sure you focus on only one issue at a time. If a number of issues exist, agree to work through them individually.
- 4) **Address behaviors, don't attack individuals.** When a person feels he/she is being attacked, personally, the natural reaction is to defend (become defensive). By addressing a behavior, instead of attacking them personally, the focus becomes changing a behavior, not changing a personality. For example, attacking a person would sound like, “I hate the way you made me feel”, whereas addressing a behavior would sound like, “When you (do, say, behave, act, etc.) this way, I feel (angry, upset, demeaned, etc.)”
- 5) **Everyone must practice polite rules of communication.** Remember, he who yells first, loses. In no situation does name calling, demeaning statements, threats or raising a voice contribute to peaceful resolution. Each party deserves an opportunity to share their position, UNINTERRUPTED, in a positive, respectful environment.
- 6) **If conflict cannot be resolved, it must be managed.** Conflict that goes unresolved only builds and grows until an explosion. If there is no meeting of the minds, the agreement must be reached that, as adults, we agree to disagree on this subject and also commit to working together in spite of the disagreement. If agreeing to disagree doesn't work, and it usually doesn't, then agree to avoid the issue. It becomes off limits.
- 7) **If an outside party is sought (supervisor), both parties must agree that the decision of the third party is binding.** The decision of the third party is final and must be accepted by the parties in conflict. Before a third party commits his/her

time and energy to helping others resolve their conflict, it is important that the third party know, in advance, that their time won't be wasted. Courtesy dictates that both parties agree, in advance, that they will heed the advice/decision of the third party.

BONUS #8!

You don't get to decide what offends someone else, they do. If someone is offended, whether you think they should be or not, they are offended. It is your responsibility to apologize for offending them. It is perfectly acceptable to explain that you had no intention of hurting their feelings or causing an offence, but that you are sorry that you did.

Gosh Wally, why is everybody staring at me?

A Lesson in Diversity

Imagine if “Leave it to Beaver” were filmed today. Many of our perceptions of how life should be were strongly influenced if not outright developed by what we saw on television in the 1950’s and 1960’s. The stunning success of “Leave it to Beaver” was due, in part, because it presented a safe and comfortable view of “normalcy”. That idealistic view may have been a bit naïve, however, by today’s standards. It presented a clean, white, male dominated, homogenous society. While this may have been a majority position in the 1950’s, it really didn’t serve society well, as it predisposed several generations (and continues today) that America should be..... a clean, white, male dominated society.

Diversity in today’s workforce is a reality. Many would cite the changing demographics and the movement away from what made America great. Bi-lingual application forms. English as a second language training for the new workforce. Culture Clash. Disintegrating patriotism, loyalty, pride, and homogeneity. This position, largely driven by the myths that permeated our culture in the middle of the 20th century, is not and has not been accurate, for quite some time, in fact.

How would “Leave it to Beaver” be different if it were filmed today? Well, to begin with, the family unit would probably look the same, but would have been formed quite differently. Just look at Ward. Obviously much older than June, he would probably be on his second marriage. In fact, he would probably be on his second family. Wally and Beaver would be only two of his children. His others would be grown and living in another geographic area. June, always the fashion diva, would probably lose the string of pearls and dress for a business suit and briefcase. She would most likely be a working mother.

Wally, while still the caring older brother, would probably dress much differently than he did. Gone would be the straight legged slacks and pressed shirts, replaced with a baggy tee shirt and idiot pants. You do know what idiot pants are, don’t you? They’re the pants young men wear today that hang 9 inches below their waist. I call them idiot pants because they look like idiots wearing them. Mothers, embarrassed that their 15 year old sons are showing their underwear, buy them long tee shirts to cover what they can. It is still easy to tell they’re wearing idiot pants, though. Just look between their knees. If you see a zipper.... Idiot pants. Trust me, there’s nothing for the zipper to do down there.

Beaver would still be loveable, although would probably have different friends. In three years, only one black actor appeared, a maid. There was only one episode where an

Hispanic family was portrayed, and they didn't speak English. That was the extent of diversity in the series. While minorities were just that...minorities... the images that we grew up on painted a slightly incongruous picture of reality. We assumed that to be normal, we had to be just like the Cleavers.

This has led, at least in part, to a number of myths about diversity. First of all, we assume that America used to be a largely homogenous society, and it has "changed" in the last 30 years. Let's take a look at some of those myths and see how accurate they really are.

First, let's look at the belief that *America has historically been an English speaking, anglo-saxon society*. This myth is driven by the belief that America was settled in 1620 by the Mayflower, and that originally, we were a nation of Pilgrims. Any history buff can point out the fallacy in this myth. While the "colonial" region of America may have been founded by the Pilgrims, much of America was already being colonized. St. Augustine, Florida, in fact, is the oldest city in America, founded in 1565. Forty two years before Jamestown. Fifty five years before Plymouth rock. Settled by the French, overtaken by the Spanish, not an English speaking Pilgrim in sight. Of course, that assumes that the nearly 2,000 separate Native American nations who inhabited North America were all savages that didn't really have any claim to the country. Clearly, America is and always has been, a diverse nation. Walt Whitman sums it up:

Here is not merely a nation, but a teeming nation of nations.

Second, let's deal with the position that *When my ancestors immigrated to America, they had to learn the language*. Very few Americans can trace their ancestry back to the Pilgrims, if we assume they are the origin of our modern day society. In fact, few Americans can trace their lineage back to England. We are a nation of immigrants. French, Irish, German, Polish, Slavic, Spanish, Russian, Greek, Armenian, you name the country, they came here. Of course, this isn't even to mention the Africans who were brought here as slaves. By 1860, there were over 7 million blacks in slavery. While many did learn the language, most of the first generation immigrants did not speak English for a very long time, if at all. It was the children of immigrants who learned to speak the language, many teaching their parents.

Third, we have to tackle the belief that *European countries are mostly homogenous, we should be, too*. While that may have been true at one time, the Roman Empire made sure that most of Europe was a hodge podge of race, ethnicity, culture and peoples. In fact, homogeneity was largely confined to Asian countries up until the middle of the 20th century. European countries have seen widespread cultural integration, and with the European Union making travel between countries not much different than our traveling between states, this trend will continue.

Next, let's look the workforce. Many still cling to the belief that *the bulk of the workforce is white, male and English speaking*. I'm not sure this has ever really been the case, but it certainly hasn't been the case in the last 40 years. Since the late 1960's, women have outpaced men in growth and approach overtaking them entirely, in the next 30 years. In fact, in the next 10 years, only 15% of the population entering the workforce

will be white male. The remaining 85% will make the workforce more diverse than it already is. The point is simple, America has always been diverse. We speak of diversity as if it were a new dynamic, a change, or something that we've not had to deal with in the past. This simply isn't true. Diversity has always been a part of our fabric. What is making headlines is our apparent rejection of that diversity, or resistance in breaking those perceptions Ward, June, Wally and the Beaver instilled so many years ago into our psyche.

Another myth that bears exposing is that *It was simpler in the "good old days"*. Never has a society had as many conveniences as today. Inventions in the last 40 years have outpaced any other period in history. The industrial revolution brought about sweeping changes in the lifestyle and expectations of the working class. The technological revolution blew it apart, completely. Yet, we yearn for yesterday. We long for those good old days of our youth, when you could walk the streets without fear, neighbors knew neighbors and life was simple. The unfortunate reality is that this phenomena has been going on for generations. Benjamin Franklin, in the mid 1700's, wrote of the "good old days" in his *Poor Richard's Almanac*. It seems that it is more human nature than a decline in society that causes us to yearn for those days of yore. In fact, it is simply a desire to return to youth, rather than the time. The times of our youth, regardless of the era, were typically safe, because our parents made it that way, stress free, because the responsibilities of adulthood had not yet reached us. Carefree, simple, fun. In fact, the only time the past was ever *worse* than today is when we're describing it to our children as we attempt to convince them how good *they* have it. Oh, and by the way, we're just renewing that cycle. Forty years from now, our kids will remember how good we told them they had it, and will long for that time, again.

The bottom line is, today is what it is. It is the culmination of the sum of our history, not a changing demographic. It is the totality of our history, not the making of it, today. Diversity can be defined as *Recognizing and valuing differences in our employees and using those differences to make the organization more efficient and effective*. The differences have long been there. I guess what makes diversity such a hot topic is the difficulty in valuing those differences and using them to make our organizations strong. The interesting thing about the above definition is not that it is unique in its terminology, rather, its origin. That definition comes from one of the most homogenous institutions in America, the United States Military Academy at West Point. I guess if our military academies can embrace the culture of diversity and the valuing of differences, so can we.

Characteristics of a successful team

- 1) **Know your team members strengths and weaknesses.** Learning about your co-workers and exploring their hidden talents and strengths provides more opportunities for success as well as building respect for each other, faith in each other's abilities and lays the foundation for the "chemistry" successful teams have.
- 2) **Make it fun.** Teams are most successful when they create an atmosphere of fun. Nearly 40% of all productivity is directly related to how well an employee likes their job and enjoys their work. Fun is a critical element to this. A team that celebrates together, (has fun together), gets more done.
- 3) **Establish mutually agreed upon goals.** Two horses pulling a cart in opposite directions will gain no ground. Those same horses pulling together in the same direction can accomplish more than the sum of each horse, individually. The team must establish and agree upon goals for the team.
- 4) **Focus on making the goals happen.** What happens many times is that goals are written, but stuck on a shelf and ignored until next year. By keeping the goals in constant focus, and measuring progress toward goals, the team will not only accomplish much more, but feel better about the work they do, knowing it is contributing to a greater goal. Focus on outcomes (goals) not tasks.
- 5) **Orient new members to the team well.** The most important two or three days of a new team member's time with an organization are the first few days. It is during this brief period the people decide how long they will stay, whether or not they will like it, how they will fit in. By sharing the values of the organization and the goals of the team, the new member gains a better understanding of what the organization stands for. Share values, first.
- 6) **Delegate effectively.** A successful team relies on each member pulling his/her own weight. While management usually takes delegation as a vertical function, team members need to develop the ability to delegate horizontally, by asking for help. All members must learn and live by the "No Askie, No Helpie" rule. Simply stated, if you don't ask for help, you'll never get it. Ask.
- 7) **Communicate effectively.** There are many channels for communication in an organization. One element of making a team successful is the ability of the members to receive information (horizontally and vertically) and provide information (horizontally and vertically). Failure to communicate effectively can be tied to every failure in history. Strong communication skills is linked to every success. A successful team will learn to communicate well.