

Our *Essentials* series examines the few items that sit at the core of responsibilities critical to your success. *Supervision Essentials* focuses attention on those skills and practices that will increase your effectiveness in managing your team.

### Take Care of Yourself

Actions speak louder than words, and you can only ask people to do their best when you give your best. Taking care of yourself – mind, body, and spirit – gives you the focus, energy, and integrity to lead your team. We bring all of who we are to every situation we face, so we must care for all aspects of who we are. We may divide mind, body, and spirit in our analysis of self, but in reality, they are inseparable. Each of us walks a path – intentionally or unconsciously. Place yourself on a path to healthier, happier, more productive living.

Next step: Take the next incremental step on your path (e.g., discipline your diet or exercise or calming practices).

### Set Clear Priorities

Great teams narrow their scope, focus attention, and deepen their roots. As a result, they produce excellent work in a timely fashion and have fun doing it. This begins with clear priorities. To set priorities, list all items (decisions to make, problems to solve, projects to implement). Then evaluate the list three times: first by Seriousness (impact on mission), then by Urgency (how soon we must start), and finally by Growth (change in concern over time). You may use High/Medium/Low or a number ranking. From this three-way prioritization, the highest priority(s) will present itself. Finish with a gut check – “does this sound right to everyone?”

Next step: Prioritize the work in your inbox, and then share with your team and prioritize the team’s work together.

### Trust & Conflict

Trust is basis upon which we work together and conflict is the healthy debate of critical issues. Conflict that manifests as interpersonal problems (e.g., gossip, dislike, acting out) indicates a lack of trust, so it all begins by building trust on your team.

You trust who you know and you trust those who are trustworthy. So, as team leaders, we need to get to know our staff. Learn about their lives and interests and get to know their stories. Acknowledge important occurrences in their lives (e.g., birthdays, anniversaries, births, deaths). Next, trust them with assignments so they can demonstrate their trustworthiness. Allow them to make mistakes and fix them. Support their development.

Exercise trust by asking opinions and discussing critical organizational issues. Facilitate discussions so that opinions and positions are shared in ways that respect other’s opinions. Much of this is done through modeling the type of respect and vulnerability that you wish to see in the staff.

Next step: Build trust by scheduling activities (e.g., staff meeting exercises, social events) in which staff gets to know one other.

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## Managing Others

Managing others works hand-in-hand with building trust. Once the team has set clear priorities, we then move to carrying out the tasks required to address those priorities. Leaders set clear expectations – who does what by when – as part of the daily work (job description) and project work (delegation). Provide needed training, but, unless procedures are subject to external regulation, let the staff members determine for themselves how they'll accomplish the work. Check-in early and often to ensure staff are on the right path. Provide frequent positive feedback (more than you think is necessary) to reinforce desired behaviors and encourage success.

Next step: Check-in with staff to ensure each clearly understands expectations.

## Sub-Standard Performers

Individuals under-perform for one of three reasons. In 90% of the cases, expectations are not clearly understood. In the rest of the cases, the individual either requires additional training or instruction, or the individual is distracted by some concern(s) at work or home (e.g., workplace politics, sour collegial relationship, health concerns for self or family member, other strained relationships). In the rare case, the individual deliberately sabotages the organization or tries to get away with under performing.

Next step: Talk with a sub-standard performer and ask them what they understand to be their assignment. If they clearly understand the details of their assignment, then ask about how they plan to accomplish it. If training and instruction are satisfactory, then ask what is keeping them from doing the work.

## Continually Learn

Leaders learn. Great teams continuously improve. Establish a practice and expectation that you and your staff will continually learn. Encourage people to follow their interests and present what they learn to the team. Examine what areas in your current job could stand some improvement. Explore what experiences would help the team gel and work better together.

Next step: Think and behave as if your own professional growth and development is your responsibility...because it is!

## Further Resources

ONEplace offers *Management Track* workshops, Peer Learning Groups, Direct Assistance and much more to help you develop your professional skills and capacity. Call 269-553-7899 or email [ONEplace@kpl.gov](mailto:ONEplace@kpl.gov) for more information.