

# SUCCESSFUL

## SUPERVISOR

TECHNIQUES, NEWS, AND IDEAS FOR TODAY'S SUPERVISORS

### HELP THOSE WHO CAN'T MANAGE TIME

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### QUICK TIPS

## Develop into a diversity-mature manager

By LISA BEACH

If you're like many managers, you don't see diversity as "your issue." It's your boss's job or the CEO's job. But how *you* handle everyday work situations can make the difference between fostering and squelching a diversity-rich environment.

For example, what would you do about "John," a deeply religious man who brings his Bible to work and invites colleagues to join him at church services? Or how would you handle "Susan," a hard-working, single mother

who wants a flex-time schedule despite your company's lack of a flex-time policy? And what about "Maria," who speaks Spanish when talking with co-workers — even in front of customers?

While such touchy situations present a challenge, the "diversity mature" individual can handle them with confidence.

"Diversity maturity means that you possess the capability to exercise judgment and wisdom in responding to diversity mixtures," according to **R. Roosevelt Thomas Jr.**, who has a doctorate in business administration

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## Number of candidates needing remedial training rises; ways to evaluate available

Undoubtedly one of the most frustrating situations is when you've spent time with a candidate only to learn that he doesn't possess the basic reading, writing or math skills required to function in the job. **Ronald Page**, a psychologist specializing in corporate issues, says you can screen potential employees prior to the interview process.

"The basics are imperative to many job positions," he says. "A recent study done by the **Organization For Economic Cooperation and Development** determined that 20 percent of the groups it surveyed were functionally illiterate."

Set up a pre-interview screening session, using one of the following tools:

- **Paper and pencil tests.** A number of these are available in corporate manuals, books and other published

material can be easily adapted or altered to fit your company's criteria.

- **Internet tests.** These use simple mouse commands. Test answers are e-mailed to the testing base and results are returned within seconds.

- **Computer programs.** The prescreener can administer a literacy test and gain the same results as Internet tests, but instead of being scored by an outside source, it is scored by the program, in the company's office.

Page says the basic paper and pen evaluation tests are acceptable, but the Internet and computer programs provide a more accurate scoring system, proven adequate testing time limits and total fairness for every applicant. ■

*Dr. Ronald Page is an industrial organization psychologist and president of Page & Associates in Minneapolis.*

- **Acknowledge the outside.** If one of your employees wins an award for an activity outside of work, take notice! Put an announcement on the bulletin board. It will help co-workers learn more about one another and make employees feel appreciated.

- **Rotate, don't repeat.** If you find that injuries caused by repetitive motion may be in your future — your elbows are hurting or fingers are tingling from keyboard use — try to rotate the activities that exacerbate the discomfort. You can also try a good wrist stretch: With arms outstretched in front of you, weave the fingers of both hands together and rotate your palms so they face away from you.

- **Don't fake it.** If you don't have the time to really listen to what an employee or co-worker is saying, suggest that you get together at another time.

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

I am on the verge of firing an employee for poor performance. Yet I have a nagging feeling that I haven't done everything I can do to help her succeed. What I really could use is a checklist to go over to see if I've covered my bases.

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## You control your time

"I must govern the clock, not be governed by it."

—Golda Meir

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

## Poor management can cause substandard performance

If you are about to let someone go because of performance issues, you are wise to ask yourself if your management ability is at least partly to blame. Here's a checklist to review so you can make sure you've done your part to help the employee succeed. Does the employee:

- ✓ **Know what she should be doing?** Have you provided an accurate job description and specified the steps required to accomplish each goal?
- ✓ **Know how to do the job?** Have you provided appropriate and adequate training? Are you sure the training is effective?
- ✓ **Know why she should do the job?** Have you explained how the job fits in and benefits the organization and other departments or colleagues?
- ✓ **Think her way is better?** You should ask for input from the employee on how to do the job better, but redirect her and sell her on your idea if her idea doesn't work.
- ✓ **Have different priorities?** Explain the priority of each task as you assign it.
- ✓ **Think she is doing a satisfactory job?** Many employees assume that if you don't give feedback, they are doing fine.
- ✓ **Think she is being rewarded for not doing her job?** Are you assigning her easier assignments because she is a poor performer? Do you correct errors for her instead of holding her accountable and making her correct her work?

Be careful not to eliminate an employee who could succeed if only you would take a closer look at the situation. ■

### DEVELOP (continued from page 1)

from Harvard University. He is the author of *Building a House for Diversity: How a Fable About a Giraffe and an Elephant Offers New Strategies for Today's Workforce*. Thomas says that although a manager may have the necessary diversity skills, only a manager who effectively uses the skills is diversity mature.

How can you develop your knowledge about diversity and enhance your ability to deal with a culturally, racially and gender-diverse workforce? Thomas suggests following these guidelines:

- **Acknowledge your role.** To enhance your own diversity effectiveness, accept the responsibility to nurture diversity. When individuals work together, they help create an environment that allows *all* employees to perform at peak effectiveness.
- **Know yourself.** Examine your attitudes about diversity. Monitor your behavior to see how you respond to diversity issues.
- **Know your organization.** Get a clear grasp of your organization's vision, mission, key strategies and objectives.
- **Recognize the difference** between a genuine requirement and a preference, tradition or convenience. Base your decision to accept or reject a certain element of a diversity mixture on what the company needs, rather than what an individual likes. For example, if you need to hire a secretary, focus on the candidate's ability to do the job, not on race or gender.
- **Understand that complexity and tension** accompany diversity. Find ways to cope as you pursue greater diversity effectiveness.
- **Challenge conventional wisdom.** Let go of hindering stereotypes and concepts.
- **Continuously learn.** Challenge yourself regularly, and turn new concepts into habits.

Once you achieve this level of effectiveness, you'll reap benefits, both personally and professionally. "If you develop diversity maturity, you can use it at work or home whenever you encounter a diversity mixture — with spouse, children, co-workers or neighbors. That's a piece of *good news*," says Thomas. ■

Source: R. Roosevelt Thomas Jr., *Building a House for Diversity* (Amacom 1999).

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