

Crossroads

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Good managers get a better job done

"Working with people is not a skill most people have. And, in general, nobody cares how you supervise as long as you get the job done," says Donald Huffmire, PhD, associate professor of management at the University of Connecticut. Yet, when Ford Motor Company made quality, teamwork and employee involvement priorities—three essentials of good management according to Huffmire—it turned the company around and they began taking market share from General Motors.

You can measure good management, Huffmire says, in increased productivity and better performance.

Huffmire will be teaching management for local road supervisors at the spring T.I.C. workshops April 19–May 19 around the state. His program and handbook, *Successful Supervision for Local Road Supervisors*, focus on the specific problems and techniques of managing road crews and local road systems. His presentations in Michigan, Massachusetts, Alabama and other states have received high praise from local officials.

Make quality and service top priorities. The top job of a manager is to prioritize quality and service to the public. "When you go out to fix a pothole or repair a fence, do it right the first time or you'll waste time going out and working on it again," Huffmire says. You should also make sure you interact favorably with the public and provide them with quality service.

Involve everybody and develop teamwork. Autocratic management, where decisions are made in isolation and dictated from the top, causes problems. These include poor morale, lower productivity, absenteeism, lower job satisfaction, tardiness, arguing, and conflict. When you emphasize teamwork and involve the rank and file in setting priorities, developing objectives, solving problems, and making decisions, many of those problems disappear. People also want, and can handle, more authority for making decisions on their own.

Cross-training helps improve performance, Huffmire says. It motivates workers because they like to do different jobs and improves productivity because you can cover jobs when someone takes time off or leaves.

Recognize and reward performance. Most supervi-



sors don't give nearly enough recognition for good performance, according to Huffmire, partly because appraising performance is difficult. To do it, you and the worker need to agree on clear, short-term, achievable performance objectives and on how they'll be measured. You need to check on how the work is going. And the supervisor needs to help the worker do the job well—by providing training, proper equipment and supplies,

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▶ T.I.C. updates *Crossroads* list

We mail *Crossroads* and workshop announcements to over 4000 people. Some of you may no longer want to receive our mailings. When we send you our mailing list inquiry, please let us know if we should take your name off the list. Thank you.

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Interactive video, new training tool

People have said it for years: why not use video game technology for teaching? Well, it has finally arrived. Streets and highway workers can learn about construction zone signing and about controlling snow and ice through interactive video. The T.I.C. now has interactive compact disk (CD-I) players and disks available to loan to Wisconsin municipalities.

"Other states have given these courses excellent reviews," says Steve Pudloski of the T.I.C. "We are inviting local streets and highway agencies to try them out."

There are two courses now available on CD-I: Traffic Control in Construction Work Zones and Snow and Ice Control. The Traffic Control course has three teaching modules, two instructional ones and a self test. The first, Highway 101, presents a plan view and photo simulation of closing one lane of a two-lane highway. The student uses a hand held controller like a simple TV remote control to point to each sign emplacement on the road. A voice and words on the screen explain what is needed and why.

The second module, Highway 201, uses similar techniques to introduce a four-lane divided highway with two lanes closed and a crossover. The third module is a self test. Right answers are reinforced and incorrect answers are explained by a voice and visuals. The whole course takes about 45 minutes on average to complete.

Over 1000 users at ten T² centers around the country have evaluated these courses. Tests showed that CD-I is an effective training method and users rated them positively. Reasons for liking the method involved being able to go at their own pace, getting immediate feedback and being able to interact with the program. Users appreciated the explanations given by the program and found the CD-I easy to use. Research reports from Wyoming and Pennsylvania found the programs most effective in introducing new employees to the topics or as a refresher for current employees.

"We're inviting people to help us pilot test CD-I in Wisconsin in the next six months," says Pudloski. If the pilot program is successful, the CD-I disks and players will become part of the T.I.C. Video Library. If you are interested in the pilot testing program, the T.I.C. asks you to be responsible for:

1. Pretesting employees
2. Providing a site, a TV screen or video monitor, and enough time for the training
3. Administering a post test and evaluation form to employees
4. Paying the return shipping costs
5. Your management evaluation of the CD-I training experience



Steve Pudloski demonstrates the T.I.C.'s new Compact Disk-Interactive video training course.

"Training in general promotes increased efficiency, greater safety, and a more satisfied workforce. This exciting new tool makes training easier," says Pudloski.

To find out more about being a pilot test site for CD-I training, contact Steve Pudloski at 608/262-8707. A video tape of the satellite course demonstrating CD-I is also available.

Good managers

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for example. "The supervisor should be trying to help people do a better job," says Huffmire.

Supervisors' performance should also be reviewed. "Upward appraisals are very useful," he says. Managers should be recognized for doing a good job and told when they are not, and who better to do that than the people they manage.

Manage conflict effectively. Ignoring conflict is no good, according to Huffmire, yet most managers don't know how to resolve problems between workers. "You have to get them together, get all parties listening to each other, and help them work out an acceptable solution."

Plan for the short and long range. Planning reduces costs. Every hour spent in planning will save 3-4 hours in getting the job done, Huffmire says. Instead of letting crises or politics dictate what you do, decide in advance what is to be done, how, by whom, where, and when. Include all employees in setting objectives, developing a budget, and determining schedules.

Other topics include responding to complaints from employees and the public; handling alcohol, drug and emotional problems; and working with elected officials.

*These are just some of the basics Huffmire will cover in his T.I.C. workshops. Look for the flyer coming in mid-March. If you aren't a **Crossroads** recipient, use the form on page 7 to request one or call 800/442-4615.*