



Chapter Outline

What Is Leadership?	234
Utilizing Power	236
Improving Communication With Leadership Theories	239
Hiring the Right Team	243
Following Up and Following Through	246
Communicating About Your Team	246
Dealing With Difficult People	248
Giving Feedback	251
Managing Your Public Image	259
KEYS to Excellence in Leadership	260
Executive Summary	262
Discussion Questions	263
Terms to Remember	263

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Gain a clear understanding of what constitutes leadership and power
2. Understand the relationship between leadership theory and communication
3. Develop communication strategies for hiring quality employees and leading effective teams
4. Provide feedback as a means to motivate team members and develop difficult people
5. Use the KEYS process to develop professional excellence as a leader

chapter 10

Leadership and Conflict Management

Fourteen workers at a law firm in Florida found themselves jobless after they decided to wear orange-colored shirts to work on the same day.

Employers at the Elizabeth R. Wellborn law firm called the 14 employees into a conference room and said that management took the coordination of their shirts to mean they were staging some sort of protest. Although several employees denied the claim, they were all jobless at the end of the day. Some of the group contended they had established a custom of wearing orange shirts on payday Fridays, to promote a feeling of togetherness when they would go out as a group for drinks. Mailroom worker Yadel Fong told reporters that the perception of a protest was wrong and that employees were conducting business as usual (Farnham, 2012). The management at the law firm did not feel inclined to argue though, and since Florida is an “at will” employment state, the employees can be fired for any reason the employer deems necessary. The workers were understandably frustrated, and the law firm now finds itself facing heavy criticism from the public.

The preceding example shows a severe lack of communication between employees and management. While some workers felt that wearing the same-color shirt promoted togetherness and cooperation, management took the move as a sign of protest or unrest. Because there was no effort to explore what the exact reason was for all the workers to wear orange shirts, the law firm lost many employees for no good reason. It is vital for leaders in the workplace to practice good communication skills and keep

a pulse of the attitudes of their employees. A poor understanding of your employees' working environment can lead to decreased productivity, poor job satisfaction, and the loss of quality workers.

Leading with professional excellence is crucial to all bosses in the workplace. Knowing exactly what leadership entails and how to use the power given to you will aid in developing a happy and productive work environment. In this chapter, you will learn about different leadership theories and how to create an effective team from the very beginning. The key to tying all this together is communicating effectively with your employees.

What Is Leadership?

To develop professional excellence as a leader, you must have a firm grasp of what constitutes leadership. To understand what leadership is, we must first understand what leadership is not. Although leaders may possess some desirable personality traits, be charismatic, be born into a family of leaders, or have a job title such as manager or executive, true leadership is not defined by any of these things. Let's explore each of them more closely for a better understanding of why they don't equal leadership.



We emphasize that leadership is something that takes work—leadership excellence demands constant attention and self-evaluation.

Leadership is not a trait. A **trait** is a distinguishing characteristic or quality that's part of individual character; traits are often seen as inborn or genetically based. For example, some people have the personality trait of being extroverted or outgoing, while others are introverted, less outgoing, or shy. In the 1920s and 1930s, scholars focused on determining the traits that make up a leader, exploring which traits all great leaders share, as well as traits that differentiate *leaders* from *followers*. Scholars studying the leadership traits concluded that there are indeed traits that distinguish a leader from a follower (Barbuto & Gifford, 2012; Mann, 1959; Stogdill, 1948). The traits thought to make up a great leader were many (see Table 10.1). But if you begin to compare various leadership traits to the leaders, you will quickly

see that great leaders are not all alike, and the traits they possess can vary greatly. In addition, both leaders and followers have many of these leadership traits. Furthermore, these leadership traits have been criticized for biasing traits that male leaders display while ignoring traits predominantly possessed by female leaders (Powell, 2012; Rosener, 1997).

Extending from the leadership-as-traits approach is the notion that charisma or birthright equals leadership. Definitions for **charisma** include characteristics such as magnetic charm, allure, and the supernatural or magical ability to appeal to followers. "Charisma

Table 10.1 Leadership Traits

Physical traits	Young to middle-aged, energetic, tall, and handsome
Social background traits	Educated at the “right” schools and socially prominent or upwardly mobile
Social traits	Charismatic, charming, tactful, popular, cooperative, and diplomatic
Personality traits	Self-confident, adaptable, assertive, and emotionally stable
Task-related traits	Driven to excel, accepting of responsibility, having initiative, and being results-oriented

Source: Allen (2002).

is, literally, a gift of grace or of God” (Wright, 1996, p. 194). History is full of charismatic leaders who possessed confident, assertive styles that drew loyalty and support from followers. There is no doubt that charisma is a wonderful characteristic for a leader to possess. Yet charisma alone doesn’t make a great leader, nor is the lack of charisma a mark of poor leadership. There are many great leaders who will never be labeled as charismatic. Conversely, there are many people who possess charisma but never ascend to leadership excellence.

Leadership has also often been seen as a **birthright**. The thinking here is that if there are certain inborn traits that make a great leader, then those traits will be passed on from parent to child. Monarchies are based on the notion of birthright. In some cultures, subjects believed that their kings, queens, czars, or chiefs were superior to the rest of the population. In extreme cases, they were elevated to god-like status. Similarly, many business empires are passed on from one generation of a family to the next with the belief that each new generation will bring with it the drive and skills of the business founder. Alas, this concept of leadership is also flawed. Within every monarchy, there are examples of leadership excellence and failed leadership all in the same family tree. In the Roman empire, Claudius and Nero illustrate this point. Claudius, due to a disability, was viewed as a poor choice for emperor—but in the end, he proved to be an effective leader. Under his rule, many public works were built and Rome expanded its territories into Britain. However, his grandnephew and successor, Nero, holds an infamous place in history for being a horrible leader. He is remembered for his extravagant lifestyle and cruelty and for “fiddling while Rome burned.” The same holds true in the business world. Conrad Hilton may have built one of the most prestigious hotel chains in the world, but his granddaughter Paris clearly has a different take on leadership than her grandpa did.

In the United States, the break from the English monarchy and the establishment of an elected government reinforced a link between leadership and **job title**. The person who’s hired or voted into the leadership role gets the title. Those with the leadership job title lead, and the rest follow. In fact, during the Industrial Revolution, the idea that “management thinks and workers work” was developed, two-way communication was stifled, and managers literally told employees, “We don’t pay you to think.” Again, a little reflection

on your own experiences should help you spot the weakness with the notion that job title equals leadership. Do you know people with leadership titles who are poor leaders? Do you know people without leadership titles who are excellent leaders? Leadership skills and leadership titles are not mutually exclusive. Remember, leadership is something that team members share regardless of title.

If leadership is not a trait, a matter of charisma, a birthright, or a job title, what is it? **Leadership** is “a dynamic relationship based on mutual influence and common purpose between leaders and collaborators in which both are moved to higher levels of motivation and moral development as they affect real, intended change” (Freiberg & Freiberg, 1996, p. 298). As you study this definition, the role of communication should be clear to you. According to this definition, *change* is dependent on a dynamic relationship, mutual influence, and a common purpose. As you’ve already learned, you can’t have a *dynamic relationship* without effective communication. In addition, *mutual influence* and *common purpose* both rely on two-way communication. Furthermore, having leaders and *collaborators*, as opposed to leaders and followers, again implies the need for effective communication. By examining this and other definitions of leadership, the role of communication becomes clear—it’s intrinsically woven into every facet of leadership excellence. Everyone has leadership potential, and by utilizing the KEYS process for communication excellence, you can unlock your leadership potential.

This chapter focuses on specific communication skills that you’ll need to achieve leadership excellence. The areas that can make or break you as a leader include utilizing power, improving communication with leadership theory, hiring the right team, following up and following through, communicating about your team, giving feedback, dealing with difficult people, and managing your public image.

Utilizing Power

Let’s review for a moment our discussion of superior–subordinate relationships from Chapter 6. **Status** is a person’s rank or position in an organization. Typically, the **superior** (supervisor/employer) is the higher-status person and the **subordinate** (employee) is the lower-status person. Typically, people who hold a higher status have more years of experience, training, knowledge, and rank than do those with lower statuses (this may not always be the case). For example, a doctor has the leadership title and status over the nursing staff. This title and status hold true even if the doctor is right out of medical school and the nursing staff is full of veteran nurses with years of experience and hands-on training.

Job title is about status, but as we discussed in the last section, job title does not equal leadership. True leadership is about power. Both professional and personal relationships have a power dimension. So to better understand the role of power in your relationships and the resulting communication, let’s look at the five types of power as defined by John French and Bertram Raven (1968): legitimate power, coercive power, reward power, expert power, referent power, and connection power.

Legitimate power is based on a position of authority. The manager has legitimate power over the department budget and employee schedules. While a position/job title may give someone legitimate power, it doesn’t mean that person exercises that power.

Coercive power refers to the ability to control another person's behavior with negative reinforcement, while **reward power** describes control over another person's behavior with positive reinforcement. Clearly, a person with legitimate power has both coercive and reward power over subordinates. For example, a manager could reward an employee with a good schedule and a raise or punish the employee with an undesirable schedule and no raise. But people with legitimate power are not the only ones who have coercive and reward power. Anyone who can offer positive or negative reinforcements has power. So the staff member who can process your paperwork quickly versus slowly and the administrative assistant who can choose to squeeze you in or make you wait for a meeting with the boss both have coercive and reward power.

Expert power is based on one's superior expertise in a specific field. In our fast-paced, increasingly specialized world, it is no wonder experts are given power. You may recall the *Saturday Night Live* skit on expert power. The skit begins with a song: "Nick Burns, your company's computer guy. He's gonna fix your computer, and then he's gonna make fun of you." Why would Nick Burns make fun of his coworkers? He finds their lack of knowledge about computers irritating. The coworkers put up with the abuse because they need him. Without Nick's knowledge, they can't do their jobs. He has expertise that gives him power over them.

You give **referent power** to someone because you want that person to like you. You may feel a connection to that person, or you may wish to be like that person—either way, it gives him or her power over you. High school peer pressure is a form of referent power. Kitt has been a member of the accounting firm for years. She's organized, highly knowledgeable, and excellent with customers. Kitt has a positive attitude about life and has found a healthy balance between work life and home life. While she has never taken a leadership title, many of the young accountants look to her as a role model. They follow her lead and seek her advice because they have granted her referent power.

Connection power is based on the old expression, "It's not what you know but who you know." Having a connection to people in positions of power or having a strong support system definitely acts as a source of power. If the CEO's son works in the mailroom, he will likely be treated differently than the other members of the mailroom staff.

Examining types of power reveals a critical difference between managers and leaders. *Manager* is a title, which brings with it legitimate power. **Managerial functions** include important duties such as being in charge of and responsible for various goals and functions in an organization. It also involves supervising subordinates. Leaders may be managers, and they may have legitimate power, but neither is a requirement for leadership. **Leadership functions** include influencing and guiding followers as opposed to subordinates, as well as being innovative and creating a vision for future direction. Leaders often have multiple types of power, with referent power likely in the mix.



Leaders face both positive and negative confrontations. Leadership excellence is about turning those negatives into positives.



Step Back and Reflect Rosa's Review

Read the following passage about Rosa, and answer the questions that follow.

A regional manager could not make sense out of the dramatically different ratings that were given to Rosa, the administrative assistant for the western office. Some members of the team had given her extremely high ratings, while others had given her extremely low ratings. The written comments ranged from “She is glue that holds us together” to “She plays favorites, deliberately delays projects, and should be fired.” How could they be talking about the same person?

During her annual review, Rosa explained the office dynamic as follows:

I have worked here for 15 years, and I know how everything is run. I know the procedures like the back of my hand. The problem is, some people don't care about the procedures. They don't listen to me when I tell them they are doing it wrong, and then they want me to fix their messes. That's not my job. Another problem is timelines. I am busy, and I will get to things when I get to them. But poor planning on their part does not equal a crisis on my part. Plus, when I have bailed them out or dropped everything to help them, they are never grateful. They have no respect for me or my job.

Now I will bend over backwards for the people who follow the rules and respect my time. And you know what, those people are always grateful. They give me thank-you cards, take me to lunch, and remember my birthday. They see me as part of the team, not “the secretary.”

Step Back and Reflect

1. What went wrong?
2. What types of power are coming into play in this office?
3. Does Rosa have power in her position?
4. Is Rosa's behavior professional?
5. How could the regional manager improve the communication using the KEYS process?

Now that you understand the different types of power as well as the difference between status and power, it is important to apply this knowledge to the KEYS process. *Know yourself.* Begin by asking yourself, “What kind of power do I possess? How does my power affect my communication interactions? How do I react when communicating with coworkers or supervisors who possess each of the types of power noted above?” When *evaluating the professional context*, ask yourself, “What kind of power do various members of my workplace exhibit? How effective are the legitimate leaders and people with status? What are their strengths? How could they improve?” Make it a habit when *your communication interactions occurs* to *step back and reflect*. Ask yourself, “How does power affect communication in my workplace?”

Ineffective leaders rely solely on their legitimate power to motivate others and fail to take into account the power of other members in the workplace. As you achieve professional excellence, you will reflect on the role power plays in all your communication interactions.

Improving Communication With Leadership Theories

Just as understanding theories on power can improve your communication as a leader, so too can studying leadership theories. Over the past century, scholars have studied leadership-developing theories and models designed to help us understand what effective leadership is and train us to be better leaders. Implementing the knowledge and insight contained in various leadership theories is a must if you ever plan to excel as a leader.

Imagine yourself at a fork in the road. Each path before you represents a different choice you could make as a leader. If you select the wrong path, you may never find your way. If you select the right path, you will still have a journey ahead of you, but your chances for success will improve dramatically. Each leadership theory discussed in the following section will help you select the right path for communicating as a leader given your team, your task, your situation, and your vision. Let's begin by reviewing various leadership theories developed through the years.

Behavioral Theories

As we noted above, the traits approach to leadership was among the first formal attempts to study leadership. But when it became clear to scholars that leadership was more than merely a list of traits, they began to turn their attention to the behaviors of leaders.

In elementary school, you were probably taught three leadership styles: authoritative, laissez-faire, and democratic. Under the **authoritative** style, the leader makes all the decisions with little input from the team. With the **laissez-faire** style, the team makes the decisions with little input from the leader. (*Laissez-faire* is a French expression meaning "allow to do.") In the **democratic** style, the leader follows the will of the people, or at least the majority of the people, with decisions often being made through voting. While these terms create a classification for leaders based on behaviors, they were designed as broad categories for explaining systems of government, not as a formal study of leadership behavior.

Fortunately, behavioral theorists such as Douglas McGregor did develop categories for leaders that were based on research into leader/manager behavior. McGregor (1960) observed two very different leadership styles that he labeled **Theory X** and **Theory Y**. The differences between Theory X managers and Theory Y managers are derived from their opposing views of employees. Theory X managers believe that

- the average employee dislikes work;
- because most employees dislike work, they must be controlled, directed, and threatened so they will perform their job duties; and
- employees prefer to be told what to do, avoid responsibility, have little ambition, and value job security above all.

On the other hand, Theory Y managers believe that

- the need and desire to work is as natural as the need and desire to play or rest;
- controlling, directing, and/or threatening are not the only means for getting employees to perform their job duties;
- the average employee is motivated by achieving goals;

- the average employee not only accepts responsibility but many times seeks it; and
- the average employee's full intellectual and creative potential is not utilized in most organizations.

What can you learn from studying McGregor's work that will make you a better leader? Managerial attitudes about employees have a direct effect on communication style. It should come as no surprise that Theory X managers have a very different communication style from that of Theory Y managers. Theory X managers support a top-down communication. The vast majority of information flows down the organizational chart from managers to employees in the form of commands. Since employees are seen as disliking work, rewards and punishments are used to keep them motivated. The idea that managers think and workers work stems from Theory X's roots in classical management theories.

Those subscribing to a Theory Y style of management support two-way communication. The Theory Y manager acts more as a facilitator or a coach working to empower employees. He or she seeks employee feedback and insight. Employees are encouraged to take part in decision making.

So which communication style is more effective: (a) the top-down style of Theory X or (b) the two-way communication of Theory Y (see Table 10.2)? It actually depends on the situation. There are times when the authoritative communication styles associated with Theory X are a must for effective leadership. Think about an emergency situation: A building is on fire; a platoon is under attack; a patient has been wheeled into the ER with life-threatening injuries. Having the senior-most person take charge and begin barking orders as the rest of the team perform their duties with speed, without question, is not only appropriate but necessary in these examples. This realization led researchers to the next wave of leadership

theories, known as the situational leadership approach.



Leadership is about bringing people together.

Table 10.2 Self-Monitoring: What Is Your Attitude About Work?

- Do you subscribe to the Theory X or Theory Y style of management? Why?
- Do you believe people inherently dislike work, or do you believe work is as natural as play?
- Have you ever worked for a Theory X manager? Was this style effective or ineffective?
- Have you ever worked for a Theory Y manager? Was this style effective or ineffective?

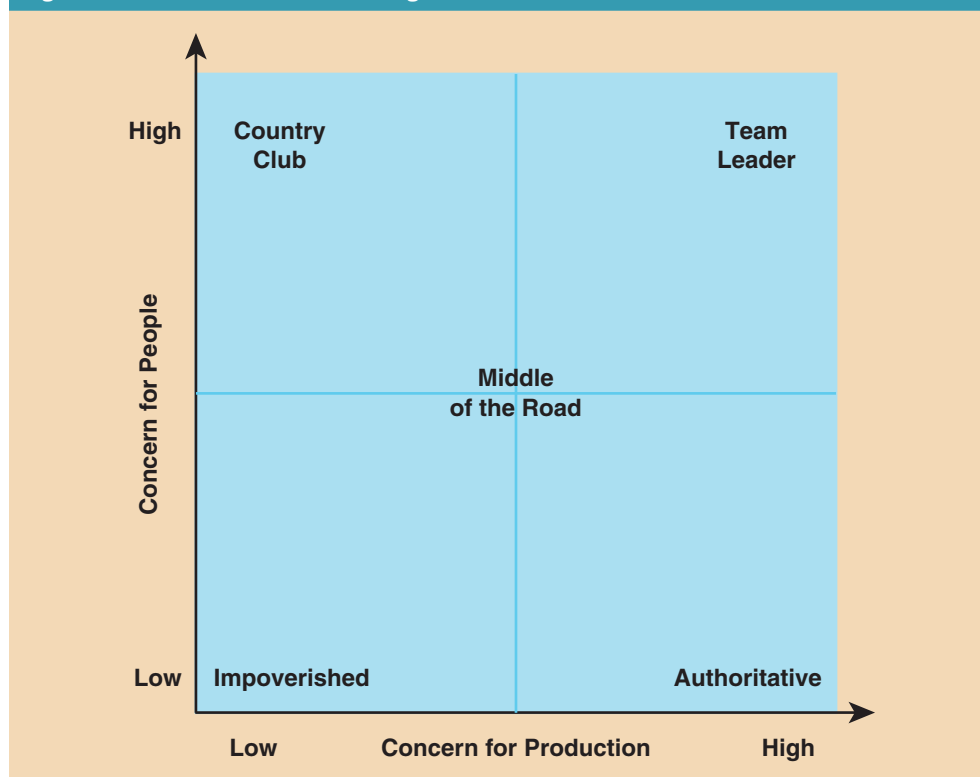
Situational Leadership Theories

According to Sadler (1997), one of the major limitations of the traits approach was its failure to take into account the importance of the situation. This same limitation holds true for the work of McGregor. However, researchers such as Blake and Mouton, Fiedler, and Hersey and Blanchard studied the impact of situation on assessing leadership effectiveness.

The **Managerial Grid**, developed by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (1964, 1978), includes five managerial styles: impoverished, country club, authoritative, middle-of-the-road, and team. Unlike researchers before them, Blake and Mouton's model incorporates two dimensions: concern for people and concern for task (see Figure 10.1). The impoverished manager has a low concern for both people and task. The country club manager has a high concern for people and a low concern for task. The authoritative manager has a high concern for task and a low concern for people. The middle-of-the-road manager has a moderate level of concern for both people and task, while the team manager has a high concern for both people and task.

What can you learn from studying Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid? When selecting an effective leadership style, you have to consider multiple factors. Be careful not to make the mistake of glancing at the grid and thinking that team manager is the best way to lead. There may be times when the task at hand is small or less than urgent, so an effective leader might use the country club style to increase the cohesion of the group. At another time, the task might be urgent, opening the door for an authoritative style—it depends on the situation.

Figure 10.1 Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid



This idea was reiterated and expanded on by other researchers, such as Fiedler. According to Fiedler's **Contingency Theory**, there's no best way for managers to lead. Excellent leaders assess the situation and then select the leadership style and accompanying communication style that best fits the situation. When assessing the situation, Fiedler reports the need to look at three factors: the leader–follower relationship, the task structure, and the position power (Fiedler, 1997; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Wisse & Rus, 2012). Let's say that Christy and Michael are both trying to determine how best to lead their respective teams. Christy has a positive relationship with her team, and they share a history of mutual respect. The structure of the task is clearly defined, and she has strong position power because the executive team has given her the funds and the order to get the job done. Michael has just started his position, so there is little history or trust between him and the team. The task at hand is somewhat ambiguous. Furthermore, this initiative is Michael's idea. It has not been mandated by the executive team, so he has little position power. How should Christy communicate with her team? Should Michael use the same style as Christy since she has the kind of relationship with her team that he wants with his team?

Before you give any advice to Christy or Michael, you should first review Hersey and Blanchard's (1977) **Situational Leadership Theory** (see Table 10.3). According to this theory, leaders should take into account task behavior, relationship behavior, and level of maturity/readiness of the followers to select the most effective communication style.

Table 10.3 Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Styles

- **Telling** (high task/low relationship behavior/low level of readiness): Leader provides detailed instructions; a useful style with new employees, when things must be completed quickly, or when employees lack motivation.
- **Selling** (high task/high relationship behavior/moderate level of readiness): Leader works to persuade the team to support the task; involves two-way communication, but the leader is still in the position of authority.
- **Participating** (high relationship/low task behavior/moderate to high levels of readiness): Leader facilitates the discussion, and the decision making is shared between leaders and followers, the main role of the leader being to facilitate.
- **Delegating** (low relationship/low task behavior/high level of readiness): Leader assigns the task or identifies the problem, but the team is empowered to develop and carry out the plan of action.



Know Yourself



Evaluate the Professional Context



Your Communication Interaction Occurs



Step Back and Reflect

Based on Hersey and Blanchard's work, which leadership style should Christy use with her team? Which style would work best for Michael given his task, his relationship, and his team's readiness? As you can see, the research of situational leadership scholars will allow you to better *evaluate the professional context* as you work your way through the KEYS process to professional excellence as a leader.

Transformational Leadership

One final area that must be addressed is that of transformational leadership. **Transformational leaders** are defined as leaders who articulate a goal or vision to an organization and then inspire followers to make that vision a reality, requiring them to transcend their own personal interests for the good of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Wright, Moynihan, & Pandey, 2012). Transformational leaders are often known for being charismatic. In addition, their leadership style can be characterized as empowering, which helps develop innovative thinking and initiative among followers. Be warned—the effectiveness of transformational leaders is difficult to measure (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Wright, 1996).

What you learn from this research into transformational leadership is that truly outstanding leaders in the 21st century have a vision of where their teams and/or organizations are heading and communicate that vision to their teams. They also empower their teams, allowing them to become a part of that vision.

Hiring the Right Team

Leadership should be something that you share with the other members of your team. You will be acting as a coach, so you should be engaged in the recruitment process. It's highly unlikely that you'll be placed in a leadership position that allows you to select your entire team or department; it just doesn't work like that. You will most likely accept a leadership position and begin working as the titled leader with a preexisting group. Developing this group into a team may be challenging. Our point is this: You must begin by developing the players you have been given. Over time, some of those players will leave or your organization will grow, and you'll have the opportunity to hire new team members. Leaders with professional excellence know that hiring is a process that begins long before the first candidate arrives for an interview and lasts long after orientation and training. Let's review each step in this process from a leader's perspective.



Leadership excellence focuses on hiring the right people.

Developing the New Employee Profile

When hiring opportunities occur, it's incredibly important that you, as the leader, participate in every stage of the hiring process. It's also important to get the rest of the team involved. So begin by framing the problem as a challenge facing the team—there's a vacant position that must be filled. If someone has left an existing position, there's a tendency

among status quo groups simply to place an advertisement for that identical position. In contrast, innovative teams use the vacancy as an opportunity to evaluate team duties and needs as they currently exist, not as they were written years ago. As companies grow and change, so do the duties of their employees. In addition, according to McGregor's Theory Y, each new team member brings with him or her a host of skills not being utilized.

As the leader with professional excellence, you should facilitate a discussion about the opportunities this new position creates and what the team really needs. This may be the time when some current team members shift their duties, allowing them to put some of their underutilized skills to work. It also might be the time to add new skills to the team.

As the team evaluates which skills will be needed, make certain that people skills and attitude are part of the conversation. As a professional, you should not only pay attention to your own people skills and attitude—you should also pay attention to the people skills and attitudes of those hired into your team. If you make a hiring decision based solely on technical training, you'll be making a terrible leadership error. Successful organizations focus on how people skills and attitude contribute to a positive organizational culture with enhanced employee and customer satisfaction (Gilbert, Carr-Ruffino, Ivancevich, & Konopaske, 2012; Krapels, 2000). When hiring new employees, you must be certain the employees have all the following: the competencies needed for the position, an openness and excitement about training and developing new skills, a positive attitude, career goals that will fit into your organizational culture, and, most important, professional excellence.

During the Interview

Once the position has been advertised, the interview questions must be drafted. You may or may not be responsible for drafting the questions, but as the leader, you should always review the questions, giving your input and ultimately your approval. When drafting and/or reviewing questions, keep your purpose in mind. What are we looking for in a candidate? Then ask, how do these questions inform us about those skills or qualifications? Let's say you need an employee who can work under the pressure of a short deadline. You could ask, "Do you work well with deadlines?" Any smart interviewee will answer, "Yes, I do." So a better question might be, "Tell me about your experience working under deadlines." As the interviewee provides examples, you can probe each situation to determine how successfully he or she really functioned. This would also be a good question to ask professional references to verify the information the interviewee gave you.

During the interviewing process, professionals set the tone. As the leader, you may not be the one conducting the initial interviews. Yet you should meet with all potential team member(s) *before* they are hired and engage in open dialogue with others who will be participating in the interviewing process about the importance of hiring people with professional excellence.

When conducting an interview, it's important to remember that everyone gets nervous—you should take the first few minutes to help put the interviewee at ease. Make some small talk and allow the interviewee to get comfortable with you and the setting. This will create an environment in which you can see beyond the nerves to the true potential of this prospective team member.



Evaluate the Professional Context | Hire Only Nice People

Read the following passage about Paul, and then answer the questions. As you read, focus on evaluating the professional context.

Paul was the branch manager of a car rental chain. Although the chain had thousands of branches all over the globe, Paul's branch stood out. Their customer satisfaction scores were exceptionally high. Their turnover was very low. They had promoted a record number of entry-level employees into managerial positions throughout the corporation. When problems arose, such as low sales or budget cuts, the team members worked together to address issues, as opposed to bickering and backbiting. To what did Paul attribute the success of his team? He attributed it to the "nice" factor.

When Paul interviewed potential employees, he made sure they met all the qualifications listed in the job posting, and then he asked the deal-breaking question: "How would you describe your personality? What kind of person are you?" If they gave an answer that included the word "nice" or a self-description that translated into "nice," they were still in the running. He would also check references, always asking, "Would you describe so-and-so as a nice person? Why would you describe him or her this way?" He would then ask various members of the staff who had interacted with this potential employee to describe their interactions. Of course, he was looking for interactions that would indicate a "nice" quality. Once he hired a new employee, he would provide him or her with an orientation and training process that included frequent reminders that "we hire only nice people around here."

Questions to Consider

1. What do you think of Paul's hiring strategy?
2. What qualities will you look for when you hire new employees?
3. How will you know if a candidate has these qualities?
4. Should "nice" be a goal when developing a professional context?

As you learned in Chapter 4, interviewees are also assessing the organization to determine if they even want this position. As the leader, you must be sure you and your team treat all interviewees with professional excellence.

After the Interview

A leader with professional excellence makes certain that new team members feel like part of the team from Day 1. You should make it a point to greet all new employees on the day they arrive. In addition, you must make certain they will be properly oriented and trained. Training and orientation may or may not be part of your job duties. Regardless, you must make sure new employees are given the tools they need to succeed. As we discussed in Chapter 3, those tools include an understanding of the organizational culture and their job duties. Assign training duties—don't just think training will magically occur—and follow up to make sure the new employee is getting what he or she needs to succeed.

Following Up and Following Through

Excellent leaders know the meeting does not end when they say “adjourned.” As we discussed in Chapter 7, teams must allow for innovation and shared leadership. To achieve these goals, team members should leave most meetings with homework—send them out to explore information. Allow them time to incubate so they can brainstorm more effectively. Give them tasks to complete as the team accomplishes its goals. Remember, excellent leaders don’t do all the work alone. Excellent leaders involve the team so they, too, can share in the leadership, which will make your job more manageable.

To achieve this, you must follow up after each meeting. A poor leader makes one of two mistakes. First, some poor leaders assign homework but then fail to ask about the results at the next meeting. If this occurs once or twice, team members will stop participating and will not bother to do the things you have assigned. The second mistake is “taking care” of team members who don’t perform their duties. If tasks are assigned but the team members fail to perform those assigned tasks, they must be held accountable. Poor leaders see that an assignment has not been done and just do it themselves. This teaches team members that they are not accountable or responsible, and the leader will end up doing most, if not all, of the work.

As the leader, you must create a “follow up and follow through” norm within your team. To begin enacting this norm, send out an e-mail thanking the team members for their participation in a recent meeting, state the homework to which each team member has agreed, and remind them of the next meeting time. By doing this, you have reaffirmed in their minds what they have to do for the next meeting. Let’s say this team meets once a month. Two weeks before the next meeting, send out a reminder to each team member saying, “You are on the agenda for our next meeting.” Then, ask if there are any additional items they would like included on the agenda or if they need any supplemental materials. One week prior to the meeting, send out the agenda, and be sure to list the name of each team member who will be reporting during the meeting. Also note areas in which the entire group should be prepared, and be ready to discuss. During the meeting, call on each person even if he or she isn’t prepared. Make the individual responsible for saying, “I did not do my assigned task.” Do not remove that person from the agenda. Make him or her accountable. This will set up a norm in which you follow up so team members follow through. As a result, your meeting will be more productive and everyone can share in the leadership.

Communicating About Your Team

As we discussed in Chapter 6, no matter how many times you say, “This is confidential,” “What happens in this room stays in this room,” or “This is just between us,” information still leaks out. Somehow, some way, gossip almost always finds its way to the informal communication network (aka the grapevine). So you can rest assured that the way you communicate about your team will get back to your team. And your message, positive or negative, will have a major impact on the way you and your team interact. Furthermore,



Your Communication Interaction The Buck Stops Here

Read the passage below, and then answer the questions. As you read, think about ways the KEYS approach could help you improve **your communication interaction** if you were in a leadership position.

On the desk of President Harry S. Truman was a sign that read, “The Buck Stops Here.” According to Mathews (1951), the expression “the buck stops here” is a play on the words of the common expression “pass the buck.” When people passed the buck, it meant they passed the problem or the responsibility to someone else. So “the buck stops here” was President Truman’s way of telling the American people he would take responsibility.

Questions to Consider

1. Do you believe the buck should stop with the leader?
2. As a leader, will the buck stop with you?
3. How does this attitude reflect the kind of professional excellence supported by the KEYS process?

the way you communicate about your team will have a major impact on the way others view you as a leader. When it comes to communicating about your team, follow two simple rules: When there are problems, the buck stops with you; when there are successes, you never take the credit. Let’s explore each rule in more detail.

If your team makes a mistake, if your department has a shortcoming, if something goes wrong in your department, or if there is an error, the buck stops with you. You’re the leader of that team; therefore, in a public forum, you assume responsibility for whatever the problem may be. Excellent leaders don’t make excuses. They take responsibility when their teams do not perform at the expected level. In doing so, you’ll earn the respect of your coworkers, supervisors, customers, and team. Your professionalism and integrity will be remembered. Watch an episode or two of *The Apprentice* if you want to see how unprofessional a leader appears when he or she starts blaming team members and pointing fingers because the team failed to meet expectations. Leaders with professional excellence acknowledge the problem, apologize if necessary, and correct the problem. Privately, some team members’ behavior may need to be addressed, but publicly, the professional leader stands up and takes responsibility.

On the flip side, when your team has met expectations, exceeded expectations, or had an outstanding performance, you don’t take the credit. In fact, you should publicly give credit to your team. You may be thinking, “Wait a minute. I have to take responsibility for the mistakes, but I don’t get credit for the successes. That seems unfair.” Fair or unfair, it’s a characteristic that all leaders with professional excellence must demonstrate. Don’t worry, others know that you led the team, and they understand that great teams are a product of great leaders. If it’s a team effort, the whole team should share in the praise, and you should be the first one cheering for them. Even if they are not there to hear your praise, it will get back to them. The results will lead to strong morale and loyalty from your team members.

Dealing With Difficult People

As consultants and corporate trainers, we often ask employees, “What is it like working in your department or organization?” The vast majority of them reply, “We are like a family.” The idea that employees and supervisors function as a family and/or a team is heavily promoted in corporate America. Since we already have explored the team metaphor, let’s use the family metaphor to examine an extremely important duty of every leader who aspires to professional excellence: namely, dealing with difficult people.

Meet Your Organizational Family

The family metaphor can have both positive and negative ramifications. To many supervisors, the thought of employees running around saying, “We are all one big, happy family here at Company X,” is wonderful. Let’s remember that families can be dysfunctional, too. In fact, even the most functional families have problems from time to time. So let’s begin our discussion by meeting some of the difficult people you might encounter in your organizational family.

Brother Steven is a **bully** (Bernstein, 2001). As is the case with most schoolyard bullies, Steven has a bad temper. He uses aggression and anger to get his way. Other family members allow him to have what he wants to avoid a blowup. Steven’s behavior also gets

him out of a lot of responsibilities, because no one wants to work with him or hold him accountable.

Sister Angela is a **sniper**. During meetings or discussions, she pops in with nasty comments meant to wound her targets. She’s full of sarcastic remarks and masks inappropriate comments with humor. Some of Angela’s comments include, “Who came up with that lame idea?”; “That’s a great suggestion coming from a blonde”; and “That never worked before, but I am *sure* it will work now.”

Aunt Madison is a **drama queen**. She loves to create drama in the workplace by starting arguments, gossiping, holding grudges, and the like. She will blow small things out of proportion for attention. Her communication includes angry outbursts, tearful breakdowns, and the silent treatment.

Uncle Jason is a **slacker**. He finds any excuse not to work. His excuses include, “I don’t know how,” “No one trained me,” “That’s not my job,” and “You didn’t tell me to do that.”

Cousin Kathy is a different type of slacker known as a **vampire**. She is more appealing than your run-of-the-mill slacker. When Kathy is around, there always seems to be laughter and fun, but in the end, others always do her work. Like a vampire, she draws you in and then drains you dry (Bernstein, 2001).

Cousin Paul is the office **grump**. A dark cloud follows him wherever he goes. He often rolls his eyes, breathes hard, and presents a bad attitude. He makes comments



It takes a leader with integrity to hold difficult people accountable for their actions.

such as, “I can’t believe we have to do this,” “This is stupid,” and “Why do I always have to do all the work?”

Grandpa is the **roadblock to change**. He doesn’t like change. In fact, he often refuses to carry out changes in his duties. Grandpa can be heard saying, “Back in my day” or “Things used to be different (or better) around here.”

Grandma can be a **distracter**. While she may mean well, she often leads the team on tangents. Her examples, comments, and questions are longwinded and stray from the purpose of the meeting.

Nephew Robert is a **patient**, turning his coworkers and sometimes even bosses into his counselors. He brings personal problems to work and discusses them on company time. His personal life often impacts his attendance and performance on the job.

Finally, there are the nieces. Niece Elaine is the **team player**. Niece Marie is the **star**. Both nieces are hardworking and dependable. For Elaine, the goal is to complete her tasks, get along with her coworkers, and serve her customers. As for Marie, she shares Elaine’s goals, but in addition, she wants to take on extra duties, learn more, and advance in her career. Unfortunately, in many organizations, both nieces are rewarded for a job well done with extra work and little praise.

It’s quite likely that your workplace will have a different mix. For example, none of these labels is gender specific. You can have female grumps and bullies as well as male drama queens and stars. You may not have all these family members in your workplace, and you may have some others we didn’t mention. Even worse, you may have one person who embodies several (or all) of these dysfunctional roles.

So take a moment to reflect on your workplace. One important step in achieving professional excellence, even with difficult people, is *knowing yourself*. As our 86-year-old neighbor often says, “A skunk never smells its own tail.” In other words, everyone around the skunk knows he stinks, but the skunk doesn’t have a clue. You don’t want to be that skunk, so take a long, hard look at yourself and determine which family member best represents you. You may come to realize that while most of the time you are a star, on occasion you can be a bully, slacker, or gossip. None of us is perfect, so we all have qualities that can at times make us difficult to work with. That’s okay as long as you know your own weaknesses and actively seek to control and improve them.

Once you’ve identified your role(s) in the organizational family, reflect on the rest of your group. Who makes up your organizational family tree? How do the different family members positively or negatively impact your work environment? How effectively or ineffectively do you communicate with each type of family member? As a leader, what have you done or what will you do to foster professional excellence within all members of your organizational family? Remember, communication is a process, and even if the other person is behaving in a way that’s less than professional, you must still work to maintain professional excellence. Furthermore, as the leader, you must work to develop professional excellence for all your team members, both functional and dysfunctional (see Table 10.4).



Workplace bullying is a serious problem that shouldn’t be ignored by anyone in leadership.

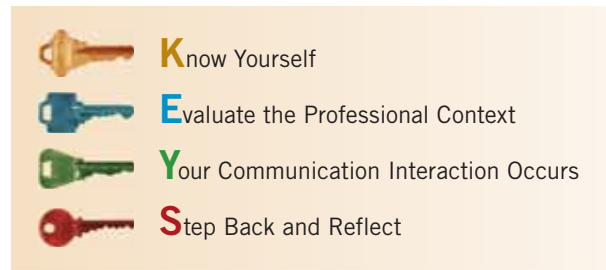
Table 10.4 Making Criticism Constructive

	<i>Constructive Criticism (The Dos)</i>	<i>Destructive Criticism (The Don'ts)</i>
Address issues in a timely fashion.	Talk to the employee within a week of the issue, sooner if the issue is deemed urgent.	Don't wait until the next annual evaluation.
Discuss the issue in a private setting.	Schedule a meeting—in a neutral location if possible.	Don't talk to the employee in front of coworkers or customers.
Hold the discussion at a time when no one will be rushed or interrupted.	Allow enough time to fully discuss the issue. Turn off cell phones, pagers, etc.	Don't cram a 60-minute meeting into 15 minutes. Don't show disrespect by answering a phone during the meeting.
Focus the conversation on one issue.	Keep the meeting focused on the issue at hand. Hold multiple meetings if there are multiple issues.	Don't hit the employee with a laundry list of things he or she is doing wrong.
Keep comments focused on behaviors.	State behaviors that can be measured: "You have been late to work six times in the past 4 weeks."	Don't provide commentary on the behavior: "You are obviously not a morning person."
Make comments specific, not general.	Both problems and solutions should be specifically and clearly defined: "As stated in our dress code, you cannot wear shorts or T-shirts to work."	Don't give general or vague communication: "You need to dress better for work."
Focus on solutions.	State the behavior and then ask, "How can we improve this situation?"	Don't tell an employee what he or she is doing wrong without any discussion of ways to improve.
Set clearly defined goals for improvement.	The meeting should end with a measurable goal/solution in place.	Don't end without a plan for improvement.
Allow and encourage the employee to participate actively in the problem-solving and goal-setting process.	At every point in the conversation, ask the employee for input and truly listen to that input.	Don't do all the talking.
Follow through by providing support when needed.	Identify things the employee needs to improve, such as training or mentoring.	Don't miss opportunities to develop employee skills.
Follow up on the progress.	Immediately schedule a follow-up meeting to discuss progress.	Don't forget about the issue until it occurs again.

Leader as Parent

If the department or organization is like a family, then, metaphorically speaking, the leader is a parent. Again, this can have both positive and negative ramifications. On the positive side, good parents are understanding, focus on developing their children, and serve as role models. The same holds true for good leaders. A good leader understands employees' duties, workloads, constraints, and goals because he or she is open to giving and receiving feedback. Good leaders also develop their employees. If you have a quality employee in your organization, a star or even a team player, you should work to retain that employee. Clearly, he or she will not stay in the same job forever, so you should coach that employee, helping him or her advance within your organization. A big part of developing employees is giving them proper training and then empowering them to take on assignments and responsibilities. Finally, good leaders serve as **role models**. Telling employees that customer service is important and then failing to display it yourself is the mark of an unprofessional leader. "Do what I say, not what I do" is ineffective with children and adults. A leader with professional excellence makes certain that his or her behavior reflects the values and attitudes he or she wants everyone on the team to emulate.

The leader as parent metaphor also has some negative ramifications. First, leaders may begin treating employees like children. This can result in the leader making excuses when employees don't perform their duties. Second, the leader as parent may make all the decisions for the group and fail to share leadership. *Father Knows Best* was a clever title for a 1950s sitcom, but it is no way to develop a team in the 21st century. Leadership must be shared. The third negative ramification of leader as parent comes when leaders begin to feel as though they cannot fire their employees, since you cannot fire your children. As we will discuss in a moment, learning to reprimand or fire employees is something a leader must do.



Giving Feedback

Can this family/parenting metaphor help in your quest for professional excellence as a leader? The answer is a resounding "yes." Anyone who has watched *Supernanny* knows that many valuable leadership lessons can be learned from good parenting. How can the Super Nanny take a house full of unruly kids and whip them into shape in a week? By being an excellent leader. Unlike the parents, the Super Nanny is not afraid to lay out the expectations, provide feedback, and follow through with consequences. Good behavior is rewarded, and bad behavior results in a trip to the naughty chair. Although putting a naughty chair in your workplace will not work, the underlying principles will. Leaders with professional excellence set expectations; provide feedback for praise, accountability, and motivation; and enact consequences. A leader with professional excellence understands how to use feedback to mentor stars as well as to turn difficult family members into team players.

The good news is, laying out expectations, providing feedback, and following through with consequences works for all types of difficult employees, as well as star employees. You don't need to become a psychologist who analyzes each type of difficult employee and then develops a plan that fits his or her psychological profile. Instead, you must make sure everyone understands what's expected of them in terms of both job performance and professional behavior. You must provide constant feedback, praising those employees who meet expectations and reprimanding those who fail to meet them. You must follow through, which can mean a bonus, a reprimand, or termination. Let's take a closer look at feedback as it relates to each of the principles noted above.

Setting Expectations

Parenting metaphor or no parenting metaphor, the first thing any leader must do is set clear expectations for performance and professionalism. In today's diverse workplace, you cannot assume that others share your vision of excellence in performance or professionalism. Furthermore, trying to impose a standard on others is almost certain to fail. When you assume a leadership position, hold a meeting in which you discuss performance and professionalism with your team. What are the rules and regulations laid out by the organization? How has the team worked in the past? What should stay? What can be improved? How do they see excellence in performance and professionalism? How do you visualize excellence in performance and professionalism? Through this discussion (or series of discussions), you and your team will collectively develop a vision of excellence in performance and professionalism that meets your expectations as a leader and simultaneously earns the support of the team.

What if you're already in a leadership position? Is it too late to set clear expectations for performance and professionalism? No, of course it isn't. Select a time that marks a new phase for your team, such as after the completion of a big project or at the beginning of the new fiscal year. Then hold a retreat in which you celebrate the team's past successes and begin setting new goals for the future. As part of this discussion, address the questions on professionalism and performance noted above. In the end, you can't expect success from your team if they don't know what success looks like. Excellence in professionalism and performance must be clearly defined.

Providing Feedback Regularly

Once the expectations for performance and excellence have been clearly defined, you must discuss them on a regular basis. These discussions should become a part of your team meetings. In addition, you must give feedback on performance and professionalism to individuals both publicly and privately.

Poor leaders often fall into the **annual feedback trap**. Because many leaders are extremely busy and/or because they are conflict avoidant, they save all their feedback for the official **performance appraisal**. It is common for organizations to require some type of formal, written evaluation to be conducted with employees once a year. This performance appraisal usually involves an interview and a written summary of the employee's strengths and weaknesses on the job. Annual performance appraisals are a useful communication tool. This tool provides an opportunity for leaders to learn about employees'

long-term goals, which can be used for mentoring purposes. In addition, it's an opportunity to praise strengths formally, as well as a time to lay out action plans for improving weaknesses. But the annual performance appraisal is only one of many communication tools used by excellent leaders. Feedback exchanges should be held often between you, as the leader, and your team members. No one should have to wait an entire year to be praised. In addition, no behavior that warrants improvement should go an entire year without being addressed.



The best leaders provide honest feedback that helps employees improve and develop professionally.

Praising Team Members

In terms of praise, a leader with professional excellence should give praise daily. You must make a habit of letting employees know they are valued. Your team members should be complimented on a job well done every time the job is done well. Major successes or accomplishments should be marked with a celebration of some type. In fact, celebrating successes should be a part of the organizational culture under your leadership. In addition to publicly praising and acknowledging success, take time to privately acknowledge outstanding performance and professionalism. For example, Margie keeps a pack of thank-you cards in her desk. When an employee or coworker goes the extra mile, she then can immediately send that employee a handwritten note thanking him or her for those efforts or congratulating him or her on the recent success. It doesn't take her a lot of time to do this, but the gesture is meaningful and makes Margie stand out as a leader.

Holding Team Members Accountable

In an ideal workplace, once the expectations are laid out, all you ever need to do is praise employees for meeting and surpassing those expectations. Unfortunately, we have never met anyone who is in an ideal workplace. This means that just as you must learn to praise success on a regular basis, you must also learn to hold others accountable when they fail to meet expectations in performance or professionalism.

Unlike praising, which should be done both publicly and privately, holding someone accountable should be done only privately. There are two reasons why privacy is so important. First, discussing someone's shortcomings or weaknesses privately shows respect for the other person. Rather than embarrassing the other person in front of his or her coworkers—or worse yet, customers—you can create a comfortable environment in which you can talk honestly and work toward a solution. It is really a matter of saving face. **Face-saving behavior** is both verbal and nonverbal communication that honors and maintains the other person's sense of self-respect in a given situation (Clare & Danilovic, 2012; Ting-Toomey, 1990). When you show the other person respect, he or she saves face. This makes that person more open to engaging in improvement. If you disrespect the other

person, he or she loses face. As a result, the other person may feel the need to disrespect you or ignore your comments in an attempt to reclaim face, becoming less likely to engage in improvement.

Second, discussing shortcomings or weaknesses one-on-one in a private setting increases the chances that the message is heard. For example, Jane makes a habit of taking long lunches. Her boss, Steve, has noticed this behavior as well as the frustration it is causing among her coworkers. At the next team meeting, Steve states, “I have noticed that our punctuality is becoming a problem and some of you are beginning to make tardiness a habit. Let’s all try to make sure we are on time for the start of shifts and after our lunches and breaks.” Following the meeting, Steve’s star employee, Dana, comes up to Steve and apologizes: “I know I was late for work one day last week when my battery died in my car. I am so sorry.” Steve assures her that the comment was not directed at her, but she still seems upset. As for Jane, Steve’s comments rolled off her back. In fact, she did not even realize they were directed at her. Had Steve met with Jane one-on-one, she would have realized he was talking to her and Dana would not have become unnecessarily upset.

As you begin to increase the amount of feedback flowing throughout the team, the question “How do I (or we) improve?” will inevitably come up. Telling someone he or she has done something wrong or needs to improve, without discussing how, is the mark of a poor leader. Take your typical toddler as an example. We dare say that all toddlers at some point in time throw a temper tantrum. Why? They throw tantrums because they are angry and they do not know any other way to express that anger. An experienced parent knows that to stop the tantrums you must teach the toddler not only that this behavior is unacceptable but also how to handle anger in a more productive way. Seasoned parents can often be heard saying, “Use your words when you are upset.” The same strategy holds true with adults. You must let them know if a behavior is unacceptable, and then you discuss how to improve. For example, if you tell an employee, “You need to take more initiative,” the results will most likely be disappointing. The employee needs specific instructions about what your expectations are and what he or she should be doing. You may be thinking, “That’s silly. They just need to take more initiative. It is self-explanatory.” Actually, it is not self-explanatory. Let’s look at Charles’s case.

Charles had been “written up” in his last evaluation for not taking initiative. Charles walked out of the performance appraisal completely confused. In the beginning, he tried to take initiative, but every time he tried to do something on his own, he was told it was the wrong thing. After a while, he quit trying and just waited until someone told him what to do; then he did what he was told and did it well. He had no idea what his supervisor wanted or how to improve. Fortunately, Charles’s supervisor, Stephanie, realized her mistake and developed a means for improving that was specific and clear. All **performance improvement plans** should be specific and clear (see Table 10.5). So in Charles’s case, he was told as soon as he completed one task, he should approach Stephanie for his next task. She did not want him to begin a new task unless she okayed it, nor did she want him to stand around waiting until she noticed he was not busy. For the next few weeks, Charles tried this approach. Stephanie noted a lot of improvement in his performance, and she praised his success. She also held a follow-up meeting to discuss his progress and listen to his feedback. During this discussion, Stephanie learned that Charles felt uncomfortable, as though he was interrupting her, every time he asked for a new task. He also was concerned that when she was busy, he was left without anything to do. Stephanie listened

Table 10.5 Lessons From Parenting Chart

- Set clear expectations for performance and professionalism.
- Discuss performance on a regular basis.
- Provide honest feedback with concrete examples.
- Develop means for improving that are specific, clear, and measurable.
- Develop individualized means for motivating.
- Focus on one area of improvement at a time (never more than three).
- Follow through. Make sure consequences to positive and negative behavior are clear and enacted.

to Charles's feedback and used the information to change her communication with all her employees. Instead of giving each person one task at a time, she began assigning multiple tasks at once, trusting the employees to complete their lists and then come to her for more assignments when they were done.

Discussing improvement plans with employees is much more effective than simply telling employees what to do. This two-way communication flow will allow for improvements in your leadership and for individual differences among your team members. No two people are alike, so there is no cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all strategy for improving and/or motivating others.

Motivating Through Feedback

Leaders with professional excellence develop individualized means for motivating. Individualizing motivation is part of the KEYS process, which requires you to evaluate your audience. What motivates employees to continue to give outstanding performances and reach high levels of professionalism? What motivates employees to improve their areas of weakness? It depends on the individual person in question. The only way to determine what will motivate the individual is to ask him or her.

Although there are many theories on employee motivation, we have found the **Goal Setting Theory** (Locke & Latham, 1984) to be the most effective. According to this theory, goals are not merely assigned; rather, the leader and the team member develop the goal(s) together. Goals must be clear and specific, allowing both parties to have a shared expectation of what is expected. Goals should also be challenging yet attainable, increasing the likelihood for both growth and success. Finally, feedback must be frequent as team members work to achieve their goals.

Discussing an area that needs improvement or defining a goal should mark the beginning, not the end, of the communication on that subject. Leaders with professional excellence immediately schedule a follow-up meeting in which the employee can discuss his or her progress, questions can be answered, and additional support can be provided. The number of follow-up meetings must be determined on a case-by-case basis, but additional meetings should be called immediately if any signs of poor performance return.

Enacting Consequences

Part of the feedback process includes discussing consequences to both positive and negative behaviors and then making sure those consequences are enacted. For example, Sally was named “Employee of the Month” for April. For this honor, she was supposed to receive a prime parking spot for a month and \$500. She did get her parking spot, but it was now August and she had yet to receive the money, which she had planned to use for a vacation. Her boss’s failure to follow through made Sally feel demotivated instead of valued and honored.

Failure to follow through is the major reason why there are so many difficult people in the workplace. Despite repeatedly demonstrating unprofessional behavior, many leaders fail to hold these people accountable. As a result, they continue to act in ways that violate clearly defined standards of professionalism and performance, without consequences. Providing feedback, holding people accountable, and following through with consequences are critical leadership responsibilities, yet many leaders fail in these areas.

Giving someone negative feedback and holding him or her accountable is uncomfortable for most of us, but excellent leaders realize it is a necessity (Kuntz & Gomes, 2012; Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2005). Without honest feedback, employees cannot improve. If your team members are to grow and develop, they must come to understand the areas that are holding them back. By providing them with honest feedback, you are providing them with a service. Failure to provide honest feedback is a disservice. Furthermore, if the behavior in question has negatively impacted other team members, the work environment, or customers, then it must be stopped, because it is making everyone uncomfortable. If you ignore it, you will be fostering a negative work environment and you run the risk of losing your star employees.

One tool that can help you give negative feedback and hold others accountable is scripting. **Scripting** is the process of mentally rehearsing what you will say during the discussion. As part of scripting, you will anticipate the responses of the other party and think through what you will say to those responses.

When you are giving negative feedback and hold someone accountable, you should be direct. Don’t beat around the bush or make irrelevant chitchat. You also should focus on facts and observations while avoiding judgments. So you should say, “You cut Ross off midsentence,” as opposed to saying, “You’re rude,” or you should say, “You spoke so quietly, it was hard to hear,” as opposed to saying, “You’re afraid.”

Remember, the ultimate goal is to create improvement in the other person’s behavior. Therefore, whenever possible, use the unite strategies we discussed in Chapter 7. You and your employee are trying to solve the problem together. State the problem as you see it, and then listen. Together, come up with solutions that meet the expectations of professionalism and performance your team has developed.

Firing Employees

Unfortunately, even if you lay out the expectations, provide honest feedback, and give support, some people will not meet the expectations of professionalism and performance needed to continue working for your team. If that is the case, then you are responsible for firing that person. For some of you, firing another person will be very difficult, but as a leader, it is your responsibility. There is no reason to feel guilty if you followed all the steps noted above. In the end, it is the other person’s choice not to live up to the clearly defined expectations and his or her choice to face the consequences.

Harvard psychologist Dr. Martha Stout (2005) claims that 1 in every 25 people is a **sociopath**. This means that they have no conscience, feelings of guilt, shame, or remorse. If you have someone like this on your team, there's nothing you can do to develop him or her into a productive employee. Don't worry; not every difficult employee on your team is a sociopath. He or she just may be in the wrong job. Nevertheless, as the leader, you must look out for the good of the rest of the team, and sometimes firing that bad apple is what is best for the bunch.

When you step into a leadership role, familiarize yourself with your organization's termination policy. For most organizations, you must have documentation in order to fire a person. In other words, you must document expectations, your feedback, and his or her performance. As a leader with professional excellence, you will already have those things in place if and when someone needs to have his or her future freed up for new opportunities.



Unprofessional employees with negative attitudes can be especially challenging for employees and customers.

Putting It Together

We have spent much of this chapter discussing types of difficult people, as well as strategies for leading all types of employees—whether they be difficult or outstanding. Still, you may be questioning how defining expectations, providing feedback, and enacting consequences can lead to communication excellence for a diverse workforce. Don't you need a variety of different communication strategies to deal with a variety of personalities? No, not if you apply the KEYS approach to each phase of this process.

Let's say you have a department with many hardworking employees and a few stars, as well as a slacker, a drama queen, and a bully/sniper. Begin by *knowing yourself*. Maybe you are conflict avoidant. As a result, you tend to ignore the problems among coworkers that result in work not getting done due to unprofessional drama and slacking in the workplace. In fact, you may even blame the employees who bring the problems to your attention. During meetings, you avoid topics that will "set off" the bully/sniper, and when his or her negativity overruns a meeting, you say nothing. On the rare occasions when you have tried to provide feedback and constructive criticism, the drama queen declares, "Everyone picks on me," which causes the discussion to go off course and never reach a solution. As for the slackers, they both say they will improve, but that improvement is never clearly defined, you never follow up, and the negative behavior continues. You will never reach communication excellence if you allow this to continue.

Even if you are not conflict avoidant, you must still *know yourself*. If there are problems with your team, then you must take charge and address them. But this requires you to take some time to assess how your communication style has been adding to the problems with your team. Are you too busy to follow through? Have you failed to define expectations clearly? Are you indeed providing feedback? Are you better at communicating with one



Ethical Connection Nora's Leadership Dilemma

Please read the passage below, and answer the questions that follow.

Nora is a project manager for a large advertising firm. While her team has always performed at a high level, two recent hires in her group are making progress difficult and alienating other coworkers. Nora has tried all the coaching techniques available to her, but her problem employees still show no signs of improvement. Although firing employees has always been a last-ditch effort for Nora, she sees no other option but to let one or both employees go. However, one of the problem employees has been with the company for years and is approaching retirement; if the employee is fired now, she will lose her chance for a company pension and could have financial issues into her old age. Nora needs to find a solution soon, because one of her largest clients is rolling out a massive advertising campaign, and Nora's team needs to be working at their finest.

Questions to Consider

1. What is the ethical dilemma facing Nora as a leader right now?
2. What other communication skills might Nora employ when dealing with her problem employees?
3. What would you consider to be the most fair to the rest of the advertising team?
4. Outside of termination, what other options could Nora consider?

type of difficult person than with another? For example, do the tears of a drama queen have no effect on you, or do you excuse behavior when the tears come? Does a bully intimidate you, or can you hold your ground? Do you tend to hold slackers accountable, or do you push their work on your stars? You must know your own strengths and weaknesses as a communicator so you can factor those in when dealing with your teammates.

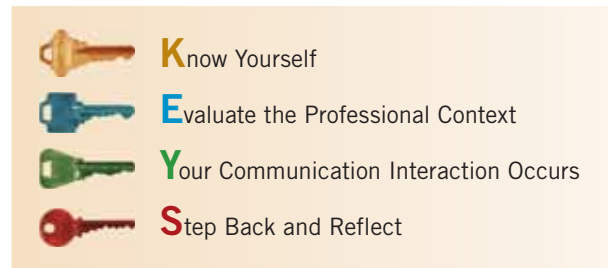
Next, you must *evaluate the professional context*. Think about the types of problems and excuses that occur due to the various personalities in your workplace. As the group is defining professional expectations, be certain that all these situations are discussed. Whatever the issue—gossiping, interrupting, negative attitudes, poor performance—discuss it as a group. Because this process is not focused on any one person, it will be easier to get a lot of issues out in the open. Once you have clearly defined, mutually defined expectations, you can quickly redirect any employee when you get to the providing feedback stage. As noted above, practice scripting prior to *your communication interaction*. Regardless of whether the bully/sniper tries to intimidate you, the slacker makes excuses, or the drama queen cries, you must remain focused on clearly defining the problem, developing a solution, and presenting the consequences. State the behaviors in question. Invite cooperation for solutions by asking, “How can we fix this situation?” And do not end the meeting until there is a clearly defined plan in place. At times, this will not be easy. You may have to make statements such as the following: “As a team, we defined respect as an expectation. I find it disrespectful when you call your coworkers names such as ‘Ding Bat,’ ‘Fatty,’ and ‘Baldy.’ This behavior is unacceptable. How can we fix this situation so that our work environment meets this expectation of respect?”

To help ensure success during the feedback sessions, review the steps for conflict resolution discussed in Chapter 7. When giving feedback, your ability to stay focused and not

become defensive or lead everyone on a tangent is critical. Stay focused on behavior, and redirect all conversation to that behavior: “Refusing to speak to a coworker about work is not acceptable. I can see that you two have issues outside work, but at work this lack of communication is unacceptable. Communicating with respect and professionalism is one of our expectations, regardless of personal issues. This cannot continue, so how can we—you and I—solve this problem? And I want our discussion to stay focused on your behavior, not your coworker’s.” Also, remember to use agendas in meetings, as discussed in Chapter 7. Agendas will help focus your meetings and control overtalkers and undertalkers.

Next, you should *step back and reflect* on all the communication that has occurred. You may find it necessary to discuss past communication interactions as part of the process: “I have noticed that this behavior has continued. In the past, when we have discussed it, I do all the talking and you say nothing. Today, I would like to change that. I would like you to lead the discussion. How can we solve this problem?” This will help you more effectively *know yourself* and *evaluate the context* as you move into the follow-up. But remember, you must follow up to either enact the consequence or praise the improvement.

Leading difficult people isn’t that difficult. In fact, the formula is simple. You must define expectations, provide feedback, and follow up. If you as the leader are consistent in these three functions, you will be on your way to leadership excellence regardless of the types of difficult people you encounter.



Managing Your Public Image

Take a moment and visualize a leader in your mind. What does he or she look like? What does he or she sound like? To excel as a leader with professional excellence, you must take time to reflect on your public image. **Public image** is the impression you give or present to others both verbally and nonverbally. Obviously, the public image you want to present is that of a leader with professional excellence. The way to ensure that this is the image you are actually presenting is through **impression management**—directing the formation of an impression, perception, or view others have of you (Ali & Gulzar, 2012; Goffman, 1971; Harris & Sachau, 2005).

A word of warning is needed here. Impression management is not and should not be about creating a false or deceptive public image. If you want to be viewed as a leader, you must act as a leader and display professional excellence on all levels. Impression management is simply a self-monitoring technique meant to help you put the KEYS process into action.

When it comes to impression management, we often think of clothing. In fact, we would be willing to bet that you have been told at least once in your life to “dress for success.” Why are dress and success linked together (besides the fact that they make a cute rhyme)? It is because clothing can convey your status within an organization (Key, 2012; Peluchette, Karl, & Rust, 2006). As noted in Chapter 4, for superiors, conservative, solid-colored, well-fitting, and well-made clothing often communicates power and success.

An old adage states you should dress for the job you want, not the job you have. This is good advice. Let’s say your goal is to become a manager. If shorts are permitted on the job

but the management team always dresses in business-casual wear, you should put away your shorts and get out your slacks. Dressing for the job you want may not be possible in some organizations. For example, your position may require you to wear a uniform that designates your position. If that is the case, then you should make certain you look like a professional in your designated attire. In fact, regardless of your position or career aspiration, you should always look like a professional. If your position requires a uniform or scrubs, make certain that everything is clean and neatly ironed. If your position requires more casual attire, you should still look professional and be in accordance with the dress code. Hair, makeup, jewelry, and shoes should also be selected with professionalism in mind. You do not have to spend a lot of money to look like a professional—after all, even an Armani suit looks unprofessional if it is dirty or wrinkled. Bottom line, attire is a part of your public image; therefore, dress in a manner that says “professional.”

Although it can enhance or deter your public image, clothing in and of itself does not make a leader. It is just one small part of your nonverbal communication that must be considered. Throughout this book, we have talked about verbal and nonverbal communication that conveys professional excellence; all those behaviors contribute to your public image. In a workshop, we once asked a group of leaders to evaluate the impression they were giving their teams. With just a little reflection, several leaders were shocked at the conclusions they reached.

Nancy had noticed that her staff always began their conversations with her with statements like, “I’m sorry to bother you. I know you are busy. I’ll just be a minute. I know you have more important things to attend to.” She realized she had unintentionally given the impression that communicating with her staff was not a priority. She also realized the potential problems that could stem from this impression, and she began to rethink her impression management.

Rob recalled asking his team to join him for lunch. He was surprised when they all assumed they had done something wrong and he was going to reprimand them. Clearly, he was not communicating enough praise, and the impression he was giving was that of dissatisfaction.

Stephanie noted a very different problem. All day long, her staff would pop in to chit-chat about non-work-related issues. Her office was like a break room. As a result, she had to come to work early, stay late, and work weekends to get her tasks completed. She needed to maintain openness about work-related issues but change the impression that she had nothing to do and/or was there as a friend, not a leader.

By stepping back and reflecting, these leaders were able to more effectively manage the impressions they were giving. Again, impression management is not about creating a false impression but about monitoring your communication so you can present a truthful and professional image.

KEYS to Excellence in Leadership

Think back to the management of the law firm at the beginning of the chapter. Do you think the management at the law firm showed excellence in leadership in the way they fired their employees? The lack of communication between employees and management cost 14 people their jobs and left a massive workforce depletion at the Florida law firm.



Know Yourself Reflections on Leadership Excellence

The following set of questions will help you gain a better understanding of your own thoughts and values on leadership. Answer each question thoughtfully, and then reflect on the results. How can this knowledge help you be a better leader and a better communicator?

- Who do you consider an excellent leader?
- How would you describe his or her public image?
- What does an excellent leader look like? Sound like?
- How does an excellent leader behave?
- When you walk into a room, do your associates think you look like a leader?
- What are your positive leadership qualities?
- What leadership qualities do you need to develop?

Think about how using the KEYS approach might have helped matters. The first step, *know yourself*, requires you to understand how you portray yourself as a leader and to assess if you would like working for a boss like yourself. Place yourself in your employees' shoes, and learn what is important and motivating to them.

The second step, *evaluate the professional context*, involves learning more about the environment of your company. Did management at the Florida law firm learn why their employees were wearing orange shirts? According to the fired employees, the orange-shirt theme was common and promoted togetherness; without knowing the context of the orange shirts, managers at the law firm made a drastic and possibly harmful decision.

The third step, *your communication interaction occurs*, appears to be a critical step that the managers ignored. Had management made the effort to talk to their employees about the orange shirts, they could have acquired more information, which might have saved 14 people their jobs. When placed in a leadership position, it is vital that you keep an open line of communication with your employees.

The final step asks you to *step back and reflect* and assess the communication interaction before reaching a decision. Always make sure that you have the most complete and unbiased information as possible before you make decisions that can affect both your and your employees' professional careers. Go over every segment of the interaction, and give considerable thought to how your decision can reflect on your position as a leader in your professional environment.

Do you consider yourself an effective leader? What are your expectations for professional excellence at work? Have you discussed it as a team? Are you comfortable giving feedback? Are you more likely to praise or criticize? *Step back and reflect* on your leadership. What would you most like to improve?



Know Yourself



Evaluate the Professional Context



Your Communication Interaction Occurs



Step Back and Reflect

Executive Summary

Now that you have finished reading this chapter, you can do the following:

Gain a clear understanding of what constitutes leadership and power:

- *Leadership* is a dynamic relationship based on mutual influence and common purpose between leaders and collaborators, in which both are moved to higher levels of motivation and moral development as they affect real, intended change (p. 236).
- *Legitimate power* is based on a position of authority. The manager has legitimate power over the department budget and employee schedules. While a position/job title may give someone legitimate power, it doesn't mean that person exercises that power (p. 236).
- *Coercive power* refers to the ability to control another person's behavior with negative reinforcement, while *reward power* describes control over another person's behavior with positive reinforcement (p. 237).
- *Expert power* is based on one's superior expertise in a specific field (p. 237).
- You give *referent power* to someone because you want that person to like you (p. 237).
- *Connection power* is based on the old expression, "It's not what you know but who you know." Having a connection to people in positions of power or having a strong support system definitely acts as a source of power (p. 237).

Understand the relationship between leadership theory and communication:

- Just as understanding theories on power can improve your communication as a leader, so, too, can studying leadership theories. Over the past century, scholars have studied leadership-developing theories and models designed to help us understand what effective leadership is and to train us to be better leaders. Implementing the knowledge and insight contained in various leadership theories is a must if you ever plan to excel as a leader (p. 239).

Develop communication strategies for hiring quality employees and leading effective teams:

- Leaders with professional excellence know that hiring is a process that begins long before the first candidate arrives for an interview and lasts long after orientation and training (p. 243).

- When hiring opportunities occur, it's incredibly important that you, as the leader, participate in every stage of the hiring process. It's also important to get the rest of the team involved (p. 243).
- Once the position has been advertised, the interview questions must be drafted. You may or may not be responsible for drafting the questions, but as the leader, you should always review the questions, giving your input and ultimately your approval (p. 244).
- A leader with professional excellence makes certain that new team members feel like part of the team, starting on Day 1. You should make it a point to greet all new employees on the day they arrive (p. 245).
- Excellent leaders involve the team so they, too, can share in the leadership, which will make your job more manageable (p. 246).

Provide feedback as a means to motivate team members and develop difficult people:

- A good leader understands employees' duties, workloads, constraints, and goals, because he or she is open to giving and receiving feedback (p. 251).
- A leader with professional excellence understands how to use feedback to mentor stars as well as to turn difficult family members into team players (p. 251).
- You must provide constant feedback, praising those employees who meet expectations and reprimanding those who fail to meet them. You must follow through, which can mean a bonus, a reprimand, or termination (p. 252).

Use the KEYS process to develop professional excellence as a leader:

- *Know yourself.* Before assessing your team, realize first what you bring to the table (p. 261).
- *Evaluate the professional context.* Realize a participating approach is more likely to succeed. Instead of making the meeting about your goals and your vision, stress the importance of shared leadership and teamwork, asking the team to collectively develop goals and a vision for the department (p. 261).
- *Your communication interaction occurs.* Offer feedback to your team, and give them the opportunity to give you feedback as well (p. 261).
- *Step back and reflect.* Avoid future conflicts. See what is working for you, and hold people accountable for their performance (p. 261).

Discussion Questions

1. What type(s) of power do you have as a student? How does that source of power impact communication with other students, professors, and administrators?
2. How can you use the information you have learned about leadership theories to develop your leadership skills?
3. Think about the last job interview in which you participated. How effective was the interviewer? What could he or she have done differently to improve the interview process?
4. What goals have you developed for yourself in your career and/or in your workplace? What motivates you to obtain these goals? In what ways does your motivation differ from that of other people you know?
5. Have you ever worked with a difficult person? If so, how did you communicate with this person? Was your communication effective or ineffective? Based on what you have learned in this chapter, how would you change your communication in this situation?

Terms to Remember

annual feedback trap (p. 252)	job title (p. 235)	scripting (p. 256)
authoritative (p. 239)	laissez-faire (p. 239)	Situational Leadership Theory (p. 242)
birthright (p. 235)	leadership (p. 236)	slacker (p. 248)
bully (p. 248)	leadership functions (p. 237)	sniper (p. 248)
charisma (p. 234)	legitimate power (p. 236)	sociopath (p. 257)
coercive power (p. 237)	managerial functions (p. 237)	star (p. 249)
connection power (p. 237)	Managerial Grid (p. 241)	status (p. 236)
Contingency Theory (p. 242)	patient (p. 249)	subordinate (p. 236)
democratic (p. 239)	performance appraisal (p. 252)	superior (p. 236)
distracter (p. 249)	performance improvement plan (p. 254)	team player (p. 249)
drama queen (p. 248)	public image (p. 259)	Theory X (p. 239)
expert power (p. 237)	referent power (p. 237)	Theory Y (p. 239)
face-saving behavior (p. 253)	reward power (p. 237)	trait (p. 234)
Goal Setting Theory (p. 255)	roadblock to change (p. 249)	transformational leaders (p. 243)
grump (p. 248)	role models (p. 251)	vampire (p. 248)
impression management (p. 259)		

Visit the Student Study Site at www.sagepub.com/keys2e to access the following resources:

- SAGE journal articles
- Video links
- Web resources
- Web quizzes
- eflashcards