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Forget Professional Development Courses: Time Management is All About Energy

by Brady Wilson

Many times, I've seen business leaders send their employees off on time management courses in the hopes that the training will help increase engagement and productivity. I've seen those exact same leaders show bewilderment when the training doesn't seem to have any impact — or worse yet, results in employees being less engaged and less productive.

Why is this happening?

Traditionally, organizations have believed that, to create higher-performing workplaces, employees must:

- **be more committed and dedicated to the cause**
- **stay later and come in earlier**
- **make more of an effort — that is, “try harder” (such as by learning new skills)**

In other words, organizations seem to think that sheer determination is the key to helping employees perform their absolute best. Now, I'm not going to lie: time management courses can be helpful. But when a person is depleted of energy, all the skills and know-how in the world won't be able to help them. That's because wherever you see high performance, you will see the efficient management of energy. It's time that business leaders start looking at time management differently — through the lens of brain science.

Understanding the Executive Function

First, a little science lesson. The brain is, inarguably, a very powerful organ. It controls how we think, feel, behave, perceive and understand the world around us.

Moreover, within the brain lies a remarkable central processing unit called the “executive function” (EF). Capable of astonishing levels of value creation, the EF enables us to:

- ✓ **Process:** analyze, predict outcomes and problem-solve
- ✓ **Focus:** memorize, pay attention and verbalize
- ✓ **Self-regulate:** maintain impulse control, self-monitor and cognitively flex
- ✓ **Initiate:** prioritize, plan and decide

But wait, there's more! The EF also helps us:

- **Think strategically:** addressing systemic issues, uncovering root causes and predicting the downstream implications of decisions and actions
- **Collaborate broadly:** influencing and aligning stakeholders across the organization
- **Communicate clearly:** providing context, making meaning, harmonizing competing priorities and resolving conflict

“It's time that business leaders start looking at time management differently — through the lens of brain science.”

- **Execute decisively:** drawing out the best information possible, making a call and closing the loops to ensure complete follow through has been achieved

Directly or indirectly, every one of the above capabilities is related to our ability to manage time and be productive.

Gas Guzzler

Science shows that the brain is also one of the most fuel-hungry organs in the human body — which makes sense, given that it houses the very important EF.

The body's use of fuel is judicious. It

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considers safety a necessity, and self-actualization a luxury. When the body's energy tank runs low, the brain prioritizes the use of fuel: giving first dibs to things like autonomic responses (blinking and breathing), immune and digestive systems, balance and locomotion and flight/fight safety features.

When we are low on energy, our base-level thinking continues to function. However, the mind's "power tools" fail to operate: those tools that enable us to think strategically, collaborate broadly, communicate clearly and execute decisively.

How this Shows Up at Work

Here are a couple real-life examples I've seen throughout my career, which further demonstrate how essential the executive function is to time management.

- **On an individual level:** A manager or employee is driving to work, thinking "I need to have that tough conversation with Ellen." However, resolving conflict requires the ability to pay close attention, maintain impulse control and come up with solutions — all enabled by the executive function. If that person already feels run down and low on energy, they may put the task off until the next day — even indefinitely. By the time they get to work, they may still be determined to be productive; but determination just won't cut it. Depleted, they may check their email, watch a YouTube video, organize their office or drop in on a colleague — anything but one of those value-adding activities that requires so much of one's energy.
- **On an organizational level:** Knowledge workers without well-fuelled brains are unable to think innovatively about how to get to root causes and fix systemic issues. Lacking energy, they may allow unaddressed concerns to fester and simmer; or resort to quick fixes, workarounds and reactive firefighting that only provide "band-aid" solutions. This can lead to ongoing depletion into the system, eventually requiring multiples of additional energy, time and mind-space from everyone in the organization.

Despite all this, given the choice of whether to "generate energy" or "get stuff done," most organizations and managers ignore the former and obsess about the latter. As a result, our workplaces are filled with people who are engaged, but they are not energized.

How to Energize the Executive Function

Here are three ways organizations can help reinvigorate the executive function, and make time management easier for their employees.

1. **Minimize distractions:** Like any technology, the brain itself has a limited amount of "RAM." As a result, when people's focus is continuously split between multiple responsibilities or cognitive tasks, the impact is intense mental exhaustion.

Minimizing distractions that interrupt employees in the middle of "flow" can make a positive difference on employee performance. If minimizing the number of

employee tasks is impossible, consider holding fewer meetings.

2. **Combat negative thinking:** The emotional part of the brain is much more powerful than the rational part. We feel before we think.

Moreover, the brain will not allot us the resources to do something unless we are convinced it is possible. As a result, when people feel negative, this depletes their energy and makes them significantly less productive. But according to science, it is not our capability but our belief in our capability that makes us effective.

The good news is that negative thinking and unhelpful beliefs can be overcome by strengthening the anterior cingulate (the "clutching mechanism") between the emotional and rational parts of the brain. In other words, there is a way to train the brain to suppress and better control unwanted feelings, and to shift more easily into goal-oriented (rather than emotionally-oriented) behaviours.

3. **Make meaningful connections:** Science shows that when you have meaningful, face-to-face conversations that demonstrate value, respect and care, this releases three high-performance hormones in the brain: dopamine (which enhances pleasure, cuts pain and increases creativity), oxytocin (which increases bonding and trust, and decreases stress) and serotonin (which reduces fear, tension and worry).

Even within just two minutes of talking, conversation can stimulate and boost the executive function, forming a feel-good energy cocktail of connection, calm, concentration, creativity and curiosity.

It's Time to Look at Time Management Differently

Without energy, the ability to manage one's time is simply not possible. And not only that: without energy, entire organizations are missing out on opportunities to do more things, and to do them faster and better than they ever thought possible.

But by understanding and honoring how the human brain works, business leaders have an opportunity to better equip employees toward being more productive, and create organizations that make the most efficient use of time. ■

about the author

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How to Catch Résumé Lies Before Hiring

Question: In today's competitive job market, we typically have no shortage of qualified candidates for open positions. However, during the interviewing stage (or worse, after a hiring), it sometimes becomes evident that an applicant has seriously exaggerated his or her qualifications. Due to the time and expense of screening, interviewing and hiring employees, we cannot afford to be duped. Do you have some practical advice for spotting résumé lies?

Answer: Hiring would be a lot easier if you could believe everything you read in a résumé, but résumés don't always represent the truth. Here are some clues for spotting red flags on résumés:

- ✓ **Dates.** If there are dates missing, something's probably wrong. Maybe the applicant just doesn't pay much attention to detail, in which case you probably don't want to hire him or her anyway, but maybe he or she is actually lying or trying to cover up something.
- ✓ **Chronology.** If the chronology of employment is left out altogether, the worker is possibly trying to cover up something. If you decide to give an applicant the benefit of the doubt, be sure to ask about a missing timeline.
- ✓ **Omitting employer names.** Some résumés are suspect because there are no employer names on them, just a general type of job. You need to know the name of the company, where it is located and the specific job title the employee held.
- ✓ **Overstating performance.** It's not always easy to tell when an applicant is puffing up his or her performance beyond reality. Some tipoffs are: unnecessary adjectives ("superlative driver"), fluff words or phrases or exaggerated personal feats.
- ✓ **Education.** While it may not matter where someone went to school or what kind of degree he or she has, it does matter if he or she lies about this information. The easiest thing to do is check the applicant's history with the school.
- ✓ **Incorrect work background.** It's essential for supervisors to call previous employers to make sure the employee worked there.

There are two other areas to evaluate that could tip you off to problems:

- **Demeanor.** Sometimes you need to interview the applicant before you can detect falsehoods in

a résumé. You need to be able to look someone in the eye and ask questions. Obviously, no supervisor is going to hire someone without an interview. But don't let a stunning résumé keep you from evaluating the applicant realistically.

- **Background.** For certain occupations, you should always run a background check. You don't want someone you can't trust working for you. What if a background check reveals that, even though the rest of the résumé is true, one year unaccounted for by this applicant was spent in jail? Not only has this applicant lied, but he or she has a past that you cannot overlook. Recent laws, however, may limit your ability in what you can use in a background check when hiring someone. Check your state laws for any guidance on this matter. ■



How to Make Efficient Meetings a Reality

Question: My company has a culture that seems to encourage staff meetings. While I appreciate the benefits of collaboration, I'm also concerned that so much of my time (and that of my employees) is tied up in meetings — time that could be better spent elsewhere. So my question is this: If regular meetings are a must, how can we minimize the time spent while maximizing the results?

Answer: It sounds as though you have "hit the nail on the head." Periodic staff meetings can be important, but you don't want your workers to become bogged down in meetings for too long or production will suffer. Here are a few ways to keep the meeting moving:

- **Announce the purpose of the meeting ahead of time.** Let attendees know whether the meeting will be informational, training-related, problem-solving or brainstorming. Ask them to submit issues and concerns beforehand so they can be placed on the agenda.
- **Use the agenda to give attendees the highlights of what you want them to know.** This way they won't spend time taking excessive notes and will be able to pay more attention to you.
- **Start your meetings promptly.** Start the meeting when you say you will so that everyone knows you mean business. This also shows a respect for others' time.
- **Set time limits.** On your copy of the agenda, indicate how long you expect to spend on each item, allowing time for questions. Stick to these limits as closely as possible. ■



Four Innovative Ideas that Can Improve Staff Morale

You can't put your finger on it, but you know when morale is on the decline. Sometimes the problem is a general malaise with no apparent cause. Other times workers are

worried about a possible downsizing. Perhaps something like an accident on the job may have resulted in a feeling of dread.

Whatever the trigger, decreased morale invariably results in reduced productivity. Then workers feel depressed about how little is getting done and morale sinks even lower. The cycle will continue unless the supervisor can step in and revitalize the team.

There are several methods for improving sagging morale. You may need to try more than one technique, but you'll see positive results when your workers pick up on your concern:

1. Schedule individual conferences. Even if the morale problem is department-wide, isolate each worker in a 10-minute conference and ask if there is anything about the job that he or she wants to discuss. Let the worker know that you're doing this with each employee because you're concerned about morale and that if the worker requests confidentiality, you will grant it. You may learn that some rumors are going around that are eating away at morale or workers may just need to get some gripes off their chest.

After you've had the individual meetings, hold one large meeting. Again, keep it short and quickly sum up what you learned. You might say something like, "What I hear is that you're all worried about your jobs. While I can't predict the future, I know I've been pleased with our progress as a department." Chances are you'll be pleasantly surprised by the renewed vigor you see in your team.

2. Assign a new project. Even the best department can get bored with the same old thing. Your staff may just need to be stimulated. Is there a special project your workers could prepare or some special task that your department could receive credit for? This would make them feel more involved with work in general, especially if you make sure they are recognized for the extra work they've done. Also, when they do get back to "the grind," it won't seem so "old-hat." They may even welcome it!

3. Encourage participation. One of the best ways to motivate an employee whose morale is low is to get that worker actively involved in decision-making. For example, we know one supervisor of a construction crew who has a knack for spotting minor degradations in morale. That's because he knows that the downward spiral moves fast once it gets going. If this supervisor sees a worker getting a little lackadaisical with the nails,

he quickly goes to that worker, whips out the blueprints and says, "What do you think about this ductwork? Can we work it according to the plans?"

The worker, a bit flattered at being asked, starts to think. The supervisor can actually see the worker's attitude improve while the thinking is going on. "They want to be more than robots," the supervisor says of his employees. "They want respect, so I give it to them." When that worker returns to his hammer, he's invariably more accurate, the supervisor reports.

4. Be of good cheer. Sometimes supervisors are their own worst enemies. You may not realize that you're walking around all day with a glum look on your face. Employees pick up all kinds of messages from this kind of body language, however, and none of these messages are good. They range from "my supervisor doesn't like me" to "something bad must be coming down." On the other hand, if you have a pleasant expression, look workers in the eye, ask how they're doing and are friendly in general, you'll find that everyone around you is in a better mood. ■

Navigate the Budget Jungle with these Tips

Everyone is trying to squeeze more profit out of work. This takes ingenuity because cost managers have already whittled costs down to a bare margin. But that doesn't mean you can't improve your bottom line even more.

Here are some ways you can lower your costs and get more out of your budget:

- **Negotiate with vendors.** Vendors want to make more money, so they raise their fees. You need to get them to keep their fees the same or get them even lower. Call and say, "I am under a mandate to lower my costs by 10 percent. Is there anything you can do to help me?" Remember, you are in a position of power here. Of course vendors want to make more money, but they don't want to lose work to the competition. Try to keep negotiations friendly — you'll be more successful that way.
- **Be a penny-pincher.** Supervisors who are faced with trying to cut \$10,000 from the budget may not understand the concept of nickel-and-diming, but it works. The key is to focus on small things. For example, if you usually take your department out to a restaurant every Friday, why not have a potluck meal instead? Remember that even if your budget requires some belt-tightening, morale need not take a hit.
- **Generate business.** This may involve getting more customers via marketing, stepping up production so that more customers can be accommodated faster or improving customer service. These are not necessarily tasks that "someone else" is supposed to do — everyone can pitch in. And if everyone helps, including supervisors, the bottom line will improve. ■

Add Coaching to Your Motivational Arsenal

The goal of every supervisor and manager should be to get the best from every employee. This can be a difficult challenge since each individual may respond to a different type of motivation.

Suppose you've tried various motivational techniques and you still feel as if a particular employee has more to offer. He or she may already be your star performer, but you believe you've only scratched the surface. When this is the case, it's probably time to add one more tool to your motivational arsenal — coaching.

While mentoring is a great way to work with an employee over the long run, coaching is a better approach when working on specific tasks or skills that can be measured and monitored.

Follow this plan to get started coaching your workers:

- **Identify the employee you want to coach.** A big part of coaching is working on a one-on-one relationship with the learner. Be careful about selecting someone with whom you may have a personality clash. Also, try to select someone who wants to be coached. After all, you will be spending a lot of time with this individual. The last thing you want is to be wasting that time.

Once you have selected your learner, meet with him or her and discuss particular areas in which he or she has opportunities to grow and learn.

Narrow these ideas down and write them out as specific goals. Then attach a timeline to the goals. For each goal, write down milestones so that you are able to check progress along the way.

- **Figure out what approach you will take.** Remember that every individual learns differently, so there is no one-size-fits-all strategy. The key is to adopt a style that suits the employee. For example, one employee may learn best by reading a technical manual, while another employee may learn best by working hands-on with a machine or equipment. Find out what style works best for your learner, then figure out how you can best facilitate it.

Since people tend to know which style works best for themselves, determining the preferred approach may be as simple as speaking with the employee.

- **Do some coaching.** Simply telling the employee to

learn something is not coaching. Coaching involves interaction and a hands-on, one-on-one approach. You need to meet with your learner frequently and do some real coaching. Sit down with that individual and discuss what he or she has learned. Ask plenty of questions. At the same time, listen and allow the learner to ask questions. Your role is to teach something, not to simply be a taskmaster.

One good method is to sit down with your learner and clearly explain something that you want him or her to learn. Next, demonstrate the skill or task. Work slowly so that your learner is able to understand. Watch for signals. If your learner looks confused, stop and review. Next, give a quick review of what you just showed your learner and ask him or her to give it a try. Be there to offer support and to coach along the way. If your learner misses a step or does something incorrectly, you'll be right there to correct him or her.

- **Provide feedback.** Don't wait until the day the learner is supposed to be finished to suddenly heap on a bunch of negative feedback. You should be talking along the way. In fact, there should be feedback at every coaching session. Sometimes that feedback may consist only of saying, "Nice job," but try to be more helpful than that.

Keep your criticism constructive and keep your praise specific. Tell your learner exactly what he or she is doing right and wrong. Coach him or her on the things that need improvement. Show the right way to perform the task and give your learner a chance to demonstrate it back to you.

- **Build up slowly until the big ending.** Don't wait until the goal date of a learning experience being completed. Touch base along the way at the milestones. More importantly, however, give your learner opportunities to demonstrate his or her newfound abilities.
- **Be patient.** Your learner is going to make mistakes. Nobody's perfect. Your job is not to get angry or frustrated, but to use the mistake as an opportunity to learn. Learning how not to do something can be almost as helpful as learning how to do it.

It is also not your job to go in and fix mistakes. Part of the learning process is to learn by doing, so give your learner some room. Allow him or her to make mistakes and correct them by him- or herself. If your learner needs help, he or she will ask. But remember that helping is not the same as doing it yourself. ■



Getting the Most from Temps

When you have a temporary worker filling in for an employee who is out on leave, are you getting the most you can from that worker? You should be. This isn't a time for heavy training. The temp should already be trained for the position he or she was put in. Although the temp might be very skilled at his or her job, he or she may lack the motivation necessary to be productive.

If a temporary employee isn't working out, you can simply tell the staffing agency, who should be able to send you a replacement as quickly as possible. But if the problem is simply an issue of motivating the temp to work harder, it's your responsibility to see to it that something is done.

The following is a list of some very powerful motivating tactics you can use that will benefit your company while improving the morale of the temporary worker:

- ✓ **Make the Worker Part of the Team.** It can be very disheartening for a temporary worker to always feel on the "outside." Fortunately, there are some simple ways to get the temp involved in your department.

For example, make an effort to include the temp in conversations in the lunchroom. Invite the worker to staff meetings. Even if the worker doesn't seem to participate with enthusiasm at first, he or she will know that an effort is being made to include him or her, so he or she won't go home every day feeling left out. The employee will look forward to going to your office each morning and contributing his or her skills to the job.

- ✓ **Assign Meaningful Work.** Some supervisors don't give "real" work to temps for fear that they won't do it the right way, or that it will take too much time to train them to do it the right way. It just seems easier to give the worker some self-explanatory "busy work." However, this will only make the temp feel useless and the supervisor will complain because the worker isn't motivated to do the job.

The solution to this situation is to make sure the temp has work to do that actually needs to be done. You may get some unexpected bonuses from taking this approach. For instance, Jan, a supermarket supervisor, was happily surprised when a temp came up with a suggestion for getting the lettuce unpacked and on the shelf several times a day, instead of just once, so the display always looked fresh. The supervisor let the temp do the unpacking and lettuce set-up on her own. The temp felt trusted and responded by doing her job energetically and putting some extra effort into thinking about the work.

- ✓ **Apply Rules Fairly.** While it's true that the staffing agency is the temp worker's employer, you should

still insist on a certain level of performance. And although you may opt to limit the temp's range of assignments, you still have a right to expect quality work.

Depending on the anticipated duration of the assignment, a temp may be exposed to work that is normally handled by permanent staffers, but that is your decision. Generally speaking, the longer the assignment, the more the temp will be treated like a regular employee.

Of course, even a long-term term assignment is no guarantee that there will be continuity. Sometimes, temporary employees come and go for a variety of reasons, so you may find yourself having to retrain new temps periodically. As with any new employee (permanent or temp), there will always be a learning curve to some extent. However, regardless of which temp is assigned, it's not unreasonable to have certain expectations from day one.

For example, a temp employee must show up for work on time. Don't let him or her get away with things you wouldn't let your permanent workers do. This will only hinder the temp

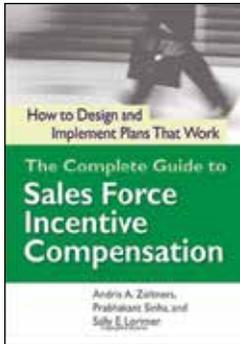
from being a productive worker and harm team morale in your entire department.

- ✓ **Be Flexible.** Sometimes, in order to get the most from a temp, you have to adjust the workload. Although this person has been trained for the job, he or she hasn't been trained in the many nuances the job may harbor. The worker needs some time to get the hang of things. Be patient and be prepared to alter some of your plans for this employee.

For example, you may realize that the temp's strong points lie in an area that you hadn't planned on using him or her for. This happened to Steve, a construction company supervisor, who needed a temporary worker when his bookkeeper went on maternity leave at tax time. He found a temp who could do the books, but it turned out that the temp's expertise was in computers. Steve had the temp get the company online with some good tax software, and he got one of his other office employees to help with the actual bookkeeping.

As a result, when tax time was over and the original bookkeeper came back from maternity leave, the company was all set to go with a simple computerized financial system. Had the supervisor stuck to his original plan, he would have ended up with the books being done in time for taxes, but he would not have gained a computerized help system. Because he was flexible, he was actually ahead of the game when his permanent bookkeeper returned. ■

"While it's true that the staffing agency is the temp worker's employer, you should still insist on a certain level of performance."



The Complete Guide to Sales Force Incentive Compensation

If you're like most sales leaders, your incentive program is a constant challenge, as you try to jumpstart sales, energize a geographically dispersed and autonomous workforce and motivate salespeople to achieve ambitious revenue goals. And

sometimes it seems like you just don't know what works; your products and markets are changing, the incentive program that was so successful last year no longer produces the desired results or perhaps the generous incentive program you created has yielded a corps of highly paid salespeople who spend most of their time on existing clients and minimal time generating new business — and threaten to walk away with your customer base if you scale back paychecks!

The Complete Guide to Sales Force Incentive Compensation is a practical, accessible, detailed roadmap to building a compensation system that gets it right by creating motivating incentives that produce positive outcomes. Packed with hundreds of real-life examples of what works, and what doesn't, this important guide helps you:

- **Understand the value of building an incentive plan that is aligned with your company's goals and culture.**
- **Avoid the common trap of overusing incentives to solve too many sales management problems.**
- **Measure the effectiveness of your current**

incentive program, employing easy-to-use tools and metrics for pinpointing its weak spots.

- **Design a compensation plan that attracts and retains successful salespeople, including guidelines for determining the correct pay level, the best salary incentive mix, the proper performance measures and the right performance payout relationship.**
- **Select an incentive compensation plan that works for your organization — then test the plan before it is launched.**
- **Set territory-level goals that are fair and realistic, and avoid overpaying the sales force because goals are too easy, or demoralizing salespeople by having goals that are too difficult or not fairly assigned.**
- **Create and manage sales contests, SPIFFs (Special Performance Incentive for Field Force) and recognition programs that consistently deliver the intended results.**
- **Manage a successful transition to a new compensation plan and build efficient administration systems to support your plan.**

Every year, corporations spend \$200 billion compensating their sales forces, with extremely mixed results. Make sure every dollar you spend is helping to achieve your goal of creating an empowered, effective sales force that drives your company's success. ■

Ten Minutes Can Save Thousands in Safety Costs

Keeping the factory and office neat and tidy isn't just a matter of aesthetics. It's absolutely necessary to promote safety. Here are some key pointers you can put to use in your workplace:

- **Fire prevention.** Store all flammable liquids in safe places. Dispose of oil- or solvent-soaked rags in a suitable metal container with a self-closing lid. Check electrical cords every time you plug a tool or machine in. If the cord is cracked or frayed, don't use it. If you notice a fire hazard, correct it immediately or report it to someone who can correct it.
- **Walkway clearance.** Tripping hazards can cause serious injuries to workers, including sprained or strained muscles, and back injuries. In order to avoid these problems, make sure aisles, walkways, staircases and exits are free of obstructions. Never put machinery, trash, boxes or other material in these areas.

- **Keep floors clean.** Slippery floors — or even a slick piece of paper on the floor — are invitations for accidents to occur. If you notice a spill, don't assume that someone else will clean it up. As a supervisor, you must make it clear to your workers that cleanliness is everyone's job. "If you see it, mop it," one supervisor tells her employees. Remember, even water on the floor can be disastrous.
- **Keep the effort constant.** One big cleanup isn't going to solve the problem of a messy workplace for very long. Organization requires constant effort. Don't wait for a serious injury to occur before getting your workplace organized. Make sure your employees know that keeping the work area clean is a part of their job. Otherwise, employees will get the message that it's really not that important after all. ■

Take the Initiative to Prevent Harassment

As a manager or supervisor, one of your responsibilities is to assign work to team members. Depending on your department's workflow and available resources, some of these decisions may be obvious, while others will require some deliberation. In order to maximize efficiency, the following checklist can help you make good decisions when allocating work:

- ❑ **Allocate work according to team members' skills and available resources.** Optimize resources and skills to meet organizational objectives.
- ❑ **Clearly define team and individual responsibilities and limits of authority.** A clear understanding will help avoid possible conflict, duplication or omission of important responsibilities.
- ❑ **Provide learning and developmental opportunities for team members within the allocated work.** Take opportunities to develop new skills that team members will need in the future.
- ❑ **Appropriately brief team members on their work.** Inexperienced or less confident people may need a more detailed briefing on their responsibilities and work than their more experienced and self-assured colleagues.
- ❑ **Encourage team members to seek clarification.** Check on their understanding and give them opportunities to ask questions.
- ❑ **Provide access to helpful people.** Colleagues, managers, specialists and external advisers may be able to help team members meet their work and developmental objectives.
- ❑ **Provide the right level of supervision.** Some team members will require much closer supervision than others.
- ❑ **Ensure that work allocations are realistic.** Carefully calculate the time, cost and importance of work to ensure that appropriate resources have been allocated.
- ❑ **Reallocate work where appropriate.** If the way that work was allocated proves to be unrealistic, or organizational demands change, reallocate work while minimizing the adverse impact on time or cost.
- ❑ **Benefit from your experience.** Evaluate how well you have allocated work in order to improve future performance. ■

Help Employees Develop with Mentoring

Mentoring is a personalized way to help develop employees. Unlike coaching, which involves specific, measurable skills, mentoring is geared toward the long term. The following checklist can help you implement an effective mentoring program:

- ❑ **Identify individuals' learning objectives.** Discuss and identify the learning objectives to be achieved with individuals, their line managers and others who are involved.
- ❑ **Agree on the required support.** Specify and agree on the roles, responsibilities and resources that are essential to help individuals achieve their learning objectives.
- ❑ **Identify and overcome any difficulties in obtaining this support.** Identify likely difficulties in obtaining the necessary people and resources, and agree on ways to overcome these difficulties.
- ❑ **Develop effective working relationships.** Such relationships are with the individuals being mentored as well as others who can provide support.
- ❑ **Provide guidance.** Provide accurate, timely and appropriate advice and guidance on learning methods and opportunities, and on other sources of information and advice.
- ❑ **Encourage independent decision-making.** Provide guidance in a way that encourages individuals to take responsibility for their own development and enables them to make informed decisions.
- ❑ **Facilitate learning and assessment opportunities.** Identify and facilitate opportunities for individuals to develop, practice, apply and assess new skills, knowledge and experience in a structured way.
- ❑ **Provide ongoing support.** Within the agreed-upon role, provide individuals with support for their learning, development and assessment, as required.
- ❑ **Give feedback.** Provide timely feedback to individuals on their progress toward learning objectives in a positive and encouraging manner.
- ❑ **Review the mentoring process.** At appropriate intervals, discuss the mentoring process and your relationship with those receiving guidance, and modify as appropriate. ■