

## **Unit IV - Crisis Management**

### **Implications**

#### **What is Crisis?**

A sudden and unexpected event leading to major unrest amongst the individuals at the workplace is called organization crisis. In other words, crisis is defined as any emergency situation which disturbs the employees as well as leads to instability in the organization. Crisis affects an individual, group, organization or society on the whole.

#### **Characteristics of Crisis**

- Crisis is a sequence of sudden disturbing events harming the organization.
- Crisis generally arises on a short notice.
- Crisis triggers a feeling of fear and threat amongst the individuals.

#### **Why Crisis?**

#### **Crisis can arise in an organization due to any of the following reasons**

- Technological failure and Breakdown of machines lead to crisis. Problems in internet, corruption in the software, errors in passwords all result in crisis.
- Crisis arises when employees do not agree to each other and fight amongst themselves. Crisis arises as a result of boycott, strikes for indefinite periods, disputes and so on.
- Violence, thefts and terrorism at the workplace result in organization crisis.
- Neglecting minor issues in the beginning can lead to major crisis and a situation of uncertainty at the work place. The management must have complete control on its employees and should not adopt a casual attitude at work.
- Illegal behaviors such as accepting bribes, frauds, data or information tampering all lead to organization crisis.
- Crisis arises when organization fails to pay its creditors and declares as a bankrupt organization.

#### **Crisis Management**

The art of dealing with sudden and unexpected events which disturbs the employees, organization as well as external clients refers to Crisis Management. In other words, the process of handling unexpected and sudden changes in organization culture is called as crisis management.

#### **Need for Crisis Management**

- Crisis Management prepares the individuals to face unexpected developments and adverse conditions in the organization with courage and determination.
- Employees adjust well to the sudden changes in the organization.

- Employees can understand and analyze the causes of crisis and cope with it in the best possible way.
- Crisis Management helps the managers to devise strategies to come out of uncertain conditions and also decide on the future course of action.
- Crisis Management helps the managers to feel the early signs of crisis, warn the employees against the aftermaths and take necessary precautions for the same.

### **Essential Features of Crisis Management**

- Crisis Management includes activities and processes which help the managers as well as employees to analyze and understand events which might lead to crisis and uncertainty in the organization.
- Crisis Management enables the managers and employees to respond effectively to changes in the organization culture.
- It consists of effective coordination amongst the departments to overcome emergency situations.
- Employees at the time of crisis must communicate effectively with each other and try their level best to overcome tough times.

### **Points to keep in mind during crisis**

- Don't panic or spread rumours around. Be patient.
- At the time of crisis the management should be in regular touch with the employees, external clients, stake holders as well as media.
- Avoid being too rigid. One should adapt well to changes and new situations.

### **Types of crisis**

Crisis refers to sudden unplanned events which cause major disturbances in the organization and trigger a feeling of fear and threat amongst the employees.

### **Following are the types of crisis**

#### **1. Natural Crisis**

- Disturbances in the environment and nature lead to natural crisis.
- Such events are generally beyond the control of human beings.
- Tornadoes, Earthquakes, Hurricanes, Landslides, Tsunamis, Flood, Drought all result in natural disaster.

#### **2. Technological Crisis**

- Technological crisis arises as a result of failure in technology. Problems in the overall systems lead to technological crisis.

- Breakdown of machine, corrupted software and so on give rise to technological crisis.

### **3. Confrontation Crisis**

- Confrontation crises arise when employees fight amongst themselves. Individuals do not agree to each other and eventually depend on non-productive acts like boycotts, strikes for indefinite periods and so on.
- In such a type of crisis, employees disobey superiors; give them ultimatums and force them to accept their demands.
- Internal disputes, ineffective communication, and lack of coordination give rise to confrontation crisis.

### **4. Crisis of Malevolence**

- Organizations face crisis of malevolence when some notorious employees take the help of criminal activities and extreme steps to fulfill their demands.
- Acts like kidnapping company's officials, spreading false rumours lead to crisis of malevolence.

### **5. Crisis of Organizational Misdeeds**

- Crisis of organizational misdeeds arise when management takes certain decisions knowing the harmful consequences of the same towards the stakeholders and external parties.
- In such cases, superiors ignore the after effects of strategies and implement the same for quick results.

**Crisis of organizational misdeeds can be further classified into the following three types:**

#### **1. Crisis of Skewed Management Values**

- i. Crisis of Skewed Management Values arises when management supports short-term growth and ignores broader issues.

#### **2. Crisis of Deception**

- i. Organizations face crisis of deception when management purposely tampers data and information.
- ii. Management makes fake promises and wrong commitments to the customers. Communicating wrong information about the organization and products lead to crisis of deception.

### **3. Crisis of Management Misconduct**

- Organizations face crisis of management misconduct when management indulges in deliberate acts of illegal activities like accepting bribes, passing on confidential information and so on.

#### **Crisis due to Workplace Violence**

- Such a type of crisis arises when employees are indulged in violent acts such as beating employees, superiors at the office premises.

#### **Crisis Due to Rumours**

- Spreading false rumours about the organization and brand lead to crisis. Employees must not spread anything which would tarnish the image of their organization.

#### **Bankruptcy**

- Crisis also arises when organizations fail to pay its creditors and other parties.
- Lack of fund leads to crisis.

#### **Crisis Due to Natural Factors**

- Disturbances in environment and nature such as hurricanes, volcanoes, storms, flood, droughts, earthquakes etc result in crisis.

#### **Sudden Crisis**

- As the name suggests, such situations arise all of a sudden and on an extremely short notice.
- Managers do not get warning signals and such a situation is in most cases beyond anyone's control.

#### **Smoldering Crisis**

- Neglecting minor issues in the beginning lead to smoldering crisis later.
- Managers often can foresee crisis but they should not ignore the same and wait for someone else to take action.
- Warn the employees immediately to avoid such a situation.

### **Crisis Management Model**

Crisis refers to unplanned events which cause harm to the organization and lead to disturbances and major unrest amongst the employees. Crisis gives rise to a feeling of fear and threat to the individuals who eventually lose interest and trust in the organization.

## **Crisis Management Model**

Gonzalez-Herrero and Pratt proposed a Crisis Management Model which identified three different stages of crisis management. According to Gonzalez-Herrero and Pratt, crisis management includes the following three stages:

### **1. Diagnosis of Crisis**

The first stage involves detecting the early indicators of crisis. It is for the leaders and managers to sense the warning signals of a crisis and prepare the employees to face the same with courage and determination. Superiors must review the performance of their subordinates regularly to know what they are up to.

The role of a manager is not to sit in closed cabins and shout at his subordinates. He must know what is happening around him. Monitoring the performance of the employee regularly helps the managers to foresee crisis and warn the employees against the negative consequences of the same. One should not ignore the alarming signals of crisis but take necessary actions to prevent it. Take initiative on your own. Don't wait for others.

### **2. Planning**

Once a crisis is being detected, crisis management team must immediately jump into action. Advise the employees not to panic. Devise relevant strategies to avoid an emergency situation. Plan a meeting and discuss with the person concern to come out with a solution which would work best at the times of crisis. It is essential to take quick decisions. One needs to be alert and most importantly patient. Make sure your facts and figures are correct. Don't rely on mere guess works and assumptions. It will cost you later.

### **3. Adjusting to Changes**

Employees must adjust well to new situations and changes for effective functioning of organization in near future. It is important to analyze the causes which led to crisis at the workplace. Mistakes should not be repeated and new plans and processes must be incorporated in the system.

## **Structural Functions Systems Theory**

According to structural functions systems theory, communication plays a pivotal role in crisis management. Correct flow of information across all hierarchies is essential. Transparency must be maintained at all levels. Management must effectively communicate with employees and provide them necessary information during crisis. Ignoring people does not help, instead it makes situations worse. Superiors must be in regular touch with subordinates. Leaders must take charge and ask the employees to give their best.

## **Diffusion of innovation Theory**

Diffusion of innovation theory proposed by Everett Rogers, supports sharing of information during emergency situations. As the name suggests during crisis each employee should think out of the box and provide innovative solutions to overcome tough times. One should be ready with an alternate plan. Once an employee comes up with an innovative idea, he must not keep things to himself. Spread the idea amongst all employees and departments. Effective communication is essential to pass on ideas and information in its desired form.

## **Unequal Human Capital Theory**

**Unequal human capital theory was proposed by James.** According to unequal human capital theory, inequality amongst employees leads to crisis at the workplace. Discrimination on the grounds of caste, religion, social status, designation, job profile (For example, two employees will have the same job profile, but one will have more responsibilities and the other will be ignored) as well as salary leads to frustrate an employee, who eventually play with the brand name, spread baseless rumors and earn a bad name for the organization.

## **Crisis Management Plan**

Crisis refers to a sequence of unwanted events leading to major disturbances and uncertainty at the workplace. Crisis is an unexpected event which not only causes harm to the organization but also triggers a feeling of fear and insecurity amongst the individuals. Organizations must be prepared well to face inevitable threats and come out of tough times without much difficulty. Individuals must immediately jump into action; the moment crisis is being detected at the workplace.

## **What is a Crisis Management Plan?**

Individuals need to adopt a step by step approach during critical situations. Planning is essential. Getting hyper does not solve any problem, instead makes the situation worse. It is a crime to take impulsive and hasty decisions during crisis. It is essential to think rationally and devise strategies which would work best during emergency situations. Complaining and cribbing lead you nowhere.

**Crisis Management Plan refers to a detailed plan which describes the various actions which need to be taken during critical situations or crisis.**

Any plan prepared by superiors, members of crisis management team and related employees to help organization overcome crisis in the best possible way is called crisis management plan.

### **Why Crisis Management Plan?**

- Crisis management plan helps the employees to adopt a focused approach during emergency situations.
- Crisis management Plan elaborates the actions to be taken by the management as well as the employees to save organization's reputation and standing in the industry. It gives a detailed overview of the roles and responsibilities of employees during crisis.
- Individuals representing the crisis management team formulate crisis management plan to reduce the after effects of crisis at the workplace.
- Crisis Management Plan helps the managers and superiors to take quick and relevant actions as per the situation.
- Crisis Management plan protects an organization from inevitable threats and also makes its future secure.
- Such plans reduce instability and uncertainty amongst the employees and help them concentrate on their work.

### **Characteristics of Crisis Management Plan**

- Crisis Management Plan should be made in the presence of all executives. Every member of crisis management team should have a say in the plan. It is important for each one to give his / her valuable inputs and suggestions.
- Crisis Management Plan should take into account all identified problem areas and suggest a possible solution for all of them to help the organization come out of crisis as soon as possible.
- Make sure the plans are realistic and solve the purpose of saving organization's reputation and name.

### **How to make a crisis management plan?**

- Identify the problem areas and various factors which led to crisis at the workplace.
- Discuss issues and areas of concern amongst yourselves on an open forum for everyone to share their opinion.
- Make sure you have accurate information. Don't depend on guess works and assumptions. Double check your information before submitting the final plan.
- Crisis Management Plan should not only focus on ways to overcome crisis but also on making the processes foolproof to avoid emergency situations in future.

## **Crisis Communication: Meaning, Need, and its process**

Crisis refers to sequence of unwanted events at the workplace which lead to disturbances and major unrest amongst the individuals. Crisis generally arises on a short notice and triggers a feeling of threat and fear in the employees. In simpler words crisis leads to uncertainty and causes major harm to the organization and its employees.

It is essential for the employees to sense the early signs of crisis and warn the employees against the negative consequences of the same. Crisis not only affects the smooth functioning of the organization but also pose a threat to its brand name.

### **What is Crisis Communication?**

Crisis Communication refers to a special wing which deals with the reputation of the individuals as well as the organization. Crisis communication is an initiative which aims at protecting the reputation of the organization and maintaining its public image. Various factors such as criminal attacks, government investigations, media enquiry can tarnish the image of an organization. Crisis Communication specialists fight against several challenges which tend to harm the reputation and image of the organization.

### **Need for Crisis Communication**

Crisis can have a negative effect on brand image. Crisis Communication experts are employed to save an organization's reputation against various threats and unwanted challenges. Brand identity is one of the most valuable assets of an organization. The main purpose of Crisis Communication team is to protect the brand identity and maintain the organization's firm standing within the industry. Crisis Communication specialists strive hard to overcome tough situations and help the organization come out of difficult situations in the best possible and quickest way.

### **Crisis Communication Process**

- **Employees should not ignore any of the external parties and important clients.** The employees should take initiative, meet the external parties or stakeholders and discuss the problem with them. There is nothing to be ashamed of. If needed, seek their help. Media must not be ignored, answer to their questions and avoiding media makes situation all the more worse.
- **Don't criticize individuals.** Show a feeling of care and concern to each individual. Try to understand their feelings (empathy) and encourage them not to lose hope and to deliver the best. Put yourself in their place, respect them, and avoid blaming others.



- **Effective communication must be encouraged at the workplace** during emergency situations. Employees should have an easy access to superior's cabins to discuss critical issues with them and to reach mutually acceptable solution.
- **Information must flow across all departments** in its desired form. One should not rely on mere guess or assumptions during crisis. Make sure the information you have is accurate.
- **Crisis communication specialists must learn to take quick decisions.** Remember one needs to respond quickly and effectively during unstable situations. Think out of the box and devise alternate plans for the smooth functioning of organization.
- **Make sure information is kept confidential.** Serious action must be taken against employees sharing information and data with external parties. Such things are considered highly unprofessional and unethical and spoil the reputation of the organization.
- **The superiors must evaluate performance of employees on a regular basis.** They should collect feedbacks and reports to know what they are up to. The superiors should conduct surprise audits to track performance of employees.

Organizations hire crisis communication specialists to overcome tough times as well as to maintain their reputation and position in the market.

### **Crisis Management Team**

Sequence of sudden unwanted events leading to major disturbances at the workplace is called crisis. Crisis arises on an extremely short notice and triggers a feeling of fear and uncertainty in the employees. It is essential for the superiors to sense the early signs of crisis and warn the employees against the same. Once a crisis is being detected, employees must quickly jump into action and take quick decisions.

### **What is a Crisis Management Team?**

A Crisis Management Team is formed to protect an organization against the adverse effects of crisis. Crisis Management team prepares an organization for inevitable threats. Organizations form **crisis management team** to decide on future course of action and devise strategies to help organization come out of difficult times as soon as possible.

Crisis Management Team is formed to respond immediately to warning signals of crisis and execute relevant plans to overcome emergency situations.

### **Role of Crisis Management Team**

Crisis Management team primarily focuses on:

- Detecting the early signs of crisis.
- Identifying the problem areas

- Sit with employees face to face and discuss on the identified areas of concern
- Prepare crisis management plan which works best during emergency situations
- Encourage the employees to face problems with courage, determination and smile. Motivate them not to lose hope and deliver their level best.
- Help the organization come out of tough times and also prepare it for the future.

### **Crisis Management Team includes**

- Head of departments'
- Chief executive officer and people closely associated with the CEO
- Board of Directors
- Media Advisors
- Human Resource Representatives

The role of Crisis Management Team is to analyse the situation and formulate crisis management plan to save the organization's reputation and standing in the industry.

### **How does Crisis Management Team function?**

A Team Leader is appointed to take charge of the situation immediately and encourage the employees to work as a single unit.

The first step is to **understand the main areas of concern** during emergency situations. Crisis Management Team then works on various problems and shortcomings which led to crisis at the workplace. The team members must understand where things went wrong and how current processes can be improved and made better for smooth functioning of the organization.

It is important to **prioritize the issues and** prioritize the problems as per their effect on the employees as well as the organization. Find out the problems that require immediate attention and must be resolved immediately and which all can be attended a little later.

One person cannot take all decisions. Crisis Management Team should arrange a meeting with the employees on a common platform, discuss prevailing issues, accept other's suggestions without any discrimination and find a solution that is acceptable to all.

One of the major roles of the Crisis management team is to stay in touch with external clients and media and must handle critical situations efficiently. Develop alternate plans and strategies for tough times and make sure you have accurate information. Double check your information before finalizing the plan.

Implement plans that require immediate solution. The feedback must be taken from time to time. Crisis Management team helps the organization to take the right step at the right time and help the organization to overcome critical situations.

## **Ways to overcome Organizational crisis**

Sequence of unwanted events leading to uncertainty at the workplace is called as crisis. Crisis leads to major disturbances at the workplace and creates unrest amongst the employees. Employees must not lose hope during crisis. It is important for them to face inevitable threats with courage, determination, and smile.

### **Let us go through various ways to overcome crisis:**

- **Adopt a focused approach.** Take initiative and find out where things went wrong. Identify the problem areas and devise appropriate strategies to overcome the same.
- **Gather correct and relevant information.** One should not depend on mere guess works and assumptions during emergency situations. Double check your information before submitting reports.
- **Employees should change their perspective.** One should always look at the brighter side of things. Remember life has its own ups and downs. Unnecessary cribbing and complaining does not help at the workplace. Avoid making issues over petty things. Don't adopt a negative attitude; instead understand the situation and act accordingly.
- **Effective communication is essential to overcome crisis in the organization.** Information must flow across all departments in its desired form. Employees must be aware of what is happening around them. Individuals should have an easy access to their superior's cabin to discuss critical issues and seek their suggestions. Superiors must address employees on an open forum during critical situations.
- **Roles and responsibilities must be delegated as per the employee's specialization.** Make sure the right person is doing the right job. Employees must be motivated to deliver their level best and focus on the organization's goals to overcome tough times in the best possible way.
- It is essential to take quick decisions during critical situations and learn to take risks. The moment an employee detects the early signs of crisis, it is important for him to act immediately. Escalate issues to your superiors and do inform your co-workers as well. Don't wait for others to take action.
- Be calm and patient. Don't panic and spread baseless rumours around, unnecessary stress makes situation all the more worse. Remember a calm individual can handle things better. Relax and then decide on the future course of action to overcome crisis. Don't lash out at others under pressure.

- **Discussions are essential during crisis.** Engage with fellow workers and discuss issues amongst yourselves to reach mutually acceptable solutions which would work best at the times of crisis.
- Be loyal to your organization even at the times of crisis. Stick to it during bad times. Don't treat your organization as a mere source of earning money. It is important to respect your workplace.
- Review your performance regularly. Be your own critic. Strive hard to achieve your targets within the desired time frame. Don't work only when your boss is around.
- Avoid unnecessary conflicts and misunderstandings at the workplace. Treat your fellow workers as members of your extended family. Help each other when needed. Employees should not ask for unjustified things. Think from the management's perspective as well. Avoid criticizing your colleagues.
- Don't hide at the times of crisis. Come out; interact with external clients as well as media. Do not hesitate to ask for help. Ignoring outsiders worsens the situations.

### **Managing stress during crisis**

- Crisis refers to a sequence of unwanted events leading to major disturbances at the workplace.
- It triggers a feeling of insecurity and fear amongst the employees.
- Crisis causes major harm to the organization and poses a threat to its reputation and brand image.

### **The various ways of managing stress during crisis**

- Once a crisis is being detected, employees should immediately jump into action. Do not panic. Getting hyper and nervous never lead to any solution; instead make the situation all the more worse.
- It is essential for the individuals to stay calm at the times of crisis. One should not react over petty issues. Remember a calm and composed individual can take better decisions than a stressed one.
- Help your fellow workers during emergency situations. Don't lash out at others under pressure. Criticizing others at the workplace is not professional. Try to understand what the other person has to say. Employees find it difficult to think logically under stress.
- One should always look at the brighter sides of things. Adopting a negative attitude goes a long way in increasing stress among individuals. Don't take things to heart. It is best to ignore minor issues.

- Job mismatch and overlapping of duties lead to stress during emergency situations. Roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined as per the specialization of employees during crisis. Everyone should be very clear as to what is expected out of them.
- Make individuals work as a team. Individuals working alone are generally overburdened and eventually more stressed out. Let them work together and share ideas on various topics. Speaking out and discussing issues reduce the stress level at the workplace.
- It is absolutely okay to take short breaks at work even during emergency situations. Human beings are not machines who can start and stop working just at the push of a button. They need time for themselves. Working at a stretch can lead to fatigue and eventually individuals lose interest in work. Short tea and snack breaks are necessary to reduce stress. During these breaks employees get time to interact with each other.
- Make necessary arrangements for individuals working at night. It is important for them to feel comfortable at the workplace. Make sure individuals get dinner on time for them to deliver their level best. There should be proper restrooms and places where employees can take a nap.
- Light music also reduces stress to a large extent. Ensure the office is adequately lit. Dark cabins and suffocated rooms increase stress and lead to a negative ambience at the workplace.
- Encourage necessary motivation programs for the employees to make them face tough times with determination and courage.
- Make sure employees do not feel insecure during emergency situations. It is better to act immediately as per the situation rather than complaining and cribbing. One should never lose hope even in the worst conditions.
- Appreciating hard and smart working employees motivates them to perform better every time. Each employee should get his /her due credit. Employees should stay away from blame games and nasty politics. Such activities are considered highly unproductive and lower the morale and self-confidence of the employees.
- Employee's voice should be heard. Ignoring individuals request results in stress and affects their performance.
- Don't try to do all things together. Adopt a step by step approach. Plan your work well and effective time management also reduces stress.

## **Role of Employees in Crisis management**

The art of managing an emergency situation at the workplace through effective planning and quick action refers to crisis management. An unstable condition which leads to major disturbances at the workplace must be controlled immediately for effective functioning of the organization. Crisis Management helps the employees as well as organization to cope with difficult times in the best possible way.

### **Employees play an essential role in crisis management**

- Employees must be serious about their own work. An employee should review their performance regularly. One should not wait for their boss to ask for reports. Be your own critic. Strive hard to achieve your targets within the desired time frame. Never adopt a casual attitude at work. An individual must be able to sense the early signs of crisis and warn his fellow workers against the same. Take initiative on your own. Escalate issues immediately to your seniors. Don't wait for others to take action.
- One should not take things lightly. Once a crisis is being detected, employees must immediately jump into action.
- Encourage effective communication during emergency situations. Don't keep things to yourself. Discuss ideas amongst your fellow workers to reach to a plan which would work best at the times of crisis.
- Don't spread baseless rumours about your product and organization. Avoid spreading fake information.
- It is essential for the employees to respect their organization. One should maintain the decorum of the organization. Enter office with a cool mind. Do not find fault with your co-worker unnecessarily and fight or argue with them. Remember conflicts lead to no solution. It is always better to discuss things face to face and arrive a mutually beneficial solution.
- Don't ask for unjustified things. Think from the management's perspective as well. Remember your organization pays you for your hard work and not for spreading negativity around. Employees should never indulge in unproductive activities like boycotts or strikes to get their demands fulfilled. Violence at the workplace is a crime. Neither the management nor the employee benefits out of it. Such activities in turn tarnish the brand name.
- Don't panic, maintain a calm attitude and decide on the ways to overcome crisis rather than complaining and cribbing. Employees should never get hyper as stress and anxiety lead to more mistakes one might not otherwise commit. Relax and give your best.

- Employees must rely on accurate information. Mere assumptions and guess works create problems and misunderstandings later.
- Think out of the box. Try to come out with innovative ideas and strategies to overcome tough times as soon as possible. Employees must identify the causes of crisis and devise relevant strategies and ways to avoid it.
- Individuals must work as a single unit during emergency situations. Ensure free flow of information across departments. Avoid playing blame games or criticizing others. It only makes situation worse.
- Don't hide, instead come out, interact with stake holders and external parties, and ask for help. One must not avoid media.
- Discrimination on the grounds of caste, status, income, sex and so on is unethical and leads to crisis. Everyone must be treated as one for a peaceful environment at the workplace.

### **Role of Leaders / Managers in Crisis Management**

A sequence of sudden, unplanned and unexpected events leading to instability in the organization and major unrest amongst the individuals is called as crisis. Crisis generally arises on a short notice and causes major disturbances at the workplace.

#### **Leaders and managers play an extremely important role during crisis.**

- One should lead from the front. Show confidence and steadiness. Take complete charge of the situation.
- Managers should have full control on the employees. They should know what is happening around. Any issue neglected in the initial stage might be a major concern later. Problems must be attended immediately. One should not ignore even minor issues or wait for someone else to take the initiative. Any issue left unattended might lead to crisis and major unrest later.
- One should be alert at the workplace. A leader should be able to feel the early signs of crisis and warn the employees against the negative consequences of the same. It is his duty to take precautionary measures to avoid an emergency situation. A leader should be able to foresee crisis. Such a stage is also called as Signal Detection.
- Leaders must try their level best to prevent crisis. Encourage effective communication at the workplace. Let employees discuss issues amongst themselves and come to the best possible alternative to overcome crisis.

- Ask the employees not to panic at the time of crisis. Encourage them to face the tough times with courage, determination and smile. Make them work as a single unit. It is the duty of the leader to provide a sense of direction to the employees.
- The leaders should interact with the employees more often. Let them feel that you are there for them. Impart necessary crisis management trainings to the employees.
- Planning is essential to avoid emergency situations. Learn to take quick decisions. Make sure everyone at the workplace is well informed about emergency situations.
- Identify the important processes and systems which should keep functioning for the smooth running of the organization. Develop alternate plans with correct and accurate information.
- Don't let negativity creep in the organization. Motivate the employees to believe in themselves and the organization. It is essential to trust each other during such situations. Take strict action against those spreading rumours and trying to tarnish organization's image.
- Don't avoid stakeholders, external parties and most importantly media. Come out, meet them and explain the whole situation. Ignoring people makes things worse. Develop strong partnerships with external parties and ask for help.
- Never lose hope. Be a strong pillar of support for your team members. They should be able to fall back on you.
- Leaders should strive hard to come out of tough times as soon as possible. Learn to take risks. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the individuals during this time.
- Once the organization is out of crisis, it is the leader's duty to communicate the lessons learnt so that employees do not commit same mistakes again. Work hard and relive your organization's image. Adapt well to changes and new situations.

### **Why organizations need to communicate effectively during crisis**

Many people think that corporate communication is all about glitzy press conferences in star hotels and the hosting as well as the wining and dining of media personnel and associated stakeholders. However, there is more to corporate communications than coming up with glossy annual reports or pithy press releases. For instance, the real mettle of the corporate communications team is tested whenever organizations face crises and the way in which the well oiled machinery of the corporate communications department or function responds to urgent need for communications often determines how well the press and the public as well as governmental agencies perceive the organization's efforts in mitigating the crisis and the steps taken to address the crisis.



Let us take an example here. Say a prominent multinational or transnational organization has been found violating the land or the water use agreements it has with the local and the national authorities.

Imagine how the media reacts once the scandal or the crisis breaks out and place yourself in the shoes of the organization when confronted by angry members of the public and the other stakeholders.

In this scenario, the most important aspect is the speed as well as the credibility of the response. In other words, the organization has to first assess where it stands and then come up with a credible and authoritative response immediately so as to avoid “**stoking the fires**” of the simmering issue.

This has been the case with many organizations such as the TATA group and Coca cola giants when they faced allegations of violating the land and the water usage agreements that they had with the local and the national stakeholders.

In both these cases, the response was very credible and authoritative and pointed to the steps that the respective organization had taken to mitigate the crisis as well as the need for all stakeholders to be patient and not to resort to scaremongering (spreading of frightening rumours) and a “**trial by the media**”.

The last phrase is very crucial since, in these days of 24/7 breaking news culture, it is often the case that the media in search of the next sensational news does not bother to fact check or even reach out to the relevant stakeholders and instead airs the content as it is.

This is where the corporate communications team in organizations can come into the picture as the senior members of the team must first ensure that they talk to the organizational leadership, ascertain what needs to be done, draft a response that accurately represents their stance on the issue and then release the statement to the media. Of course, as we shall discuss subsequently, this is not as simple as it sounds since it entails coordinating with various stakeholders within the organization as well as outside or external agencies such as the media houses and the governmental authorities before a statement can be issued.

For instance, whenever a crisis breaks, it is often the case that the organizational leaders themselves are unprepared or “**caught off guard**” by the sheer speed with which the frenetic and the frenzied media and public response erupts. So, the task of first ascertaining the facts lies with the leadership since most of the time, the escalations of problems on the ground do not always reach the top leadership.

To take an example, when the worst industrial disaster in history, the Bhopal Gas Leak incident happened, it was the case that there was no clear communication both top down as well as bottom up leading to all sorts of confusing and contradictory responses emerging in the immediate aftermath of the incident.

More recently, when the Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 disappeared, for a few hours, almost all stakeholders were like “**blind men and the elephant**” that were guessing and speculating rather than arriving at a coherent and cohesive response to the public. The point here is that in these days of Twitter and Social Media, *it is the anonymous public who often breaks the story as well as adds details and is on the lookout for updates*. Therefore, unlike the earlier eras, the corporate communications team cannot afford to simply “**manage the media**” which in other terms means the print and visual media.

Instead, they now have to reckon with armies of social media users who often react with such alarming speed that would put traditional journalists to shame for the sheer agility and pace. Therefore, not only does the corporate communications team during crises have to coordinate internally, but they also have to ensure that keep an eye on the social media feeds so that they can respond accordingly.

Another important aspect of crisis communication arises whenever there are fatalities or deaths and injuries to people. For instance, whenever there is a terrorist attack, it is often the case that corporate come out with statements that assure and reassure the stakeholders about the safety of their employees as well in the unfortunate case of fatalities, quickly come up with a response detailing the steps that they are taking.

Indeed, it is during these times that the corporate communications team and the crisis communications model is tested for its humanitarian aspects as well as the organizational leadership placed in the spotlight for its commitment to the welfare of its employees.

Considering all these aspects, it is important to note that **effective communications during crises often determine how the organization is perceived**. Since the impressions and the perceptions in our “always on” digital culture are formed instantaneously, the imperatives of speed, accuracy and humaneness are what matters during crisis communications.

**Reference:** <https://www.managementstudyguide.com/crisis-management.htm>

## **People issues**

### **Challenges managers' face and how to deal with them – Dan McCarthy**

Management has its share of perks and rewards. Managers are usually in a better position to influence and lead change. In most organizations, being a manager means a better compensation package and not having to sit in a cubicle. Most importantly, there's nothing like the satisfaction of helping an individual or team reach their goals and perform at their best.

However, there's a price to pay for the status and those extra rewards and perks. Being a manager means you also have to deal with tough issues that can cause you to lose sleep. Here are the top ten problems that keep a manager up at night, along with a "sleep aid" for each one.

#### **Confronting an Employee Performance Problem**

Dealing with performance problems has been and *always* will be the primary source of a manager's sleepless nights. While these issues are never easy, they don't have to be so hard. Many performance problems can be prevented with better selection practices and then by setting clear performance expectations.

If you identify a problem, the sooner you engage in constructive feedback, the faster you can facilitate a change in behavior. If the behavior does not improve, a transparent, fair and time-boxed progressive discipline process is called for. Postponing discussions or avoiding the discipline process prolong the problem and add to your sleepless nights. Confront performance problems as soon as they appear at the workplace, and you will rest easier.

#### **Terminating an employee**

There is no sleep aid when you decide to terminate an employee. No matter what you've done (see number one), it's always going to be gut-wrenching. No manager should ever get too comfortable with this responsibility. In addition to the tips in number one, make sure you have clear policies and training for severe conduct violations. For layoffs, make sure you use a fair and consistent process, get training on how to conduct the discussion respectfully, and provide a decent severance and outplacement package.

#### **Making the right hiring decision**

Choosing between your final candidates can be agonizing. If you choose wrong, you're going to end up dealing with a few of the other problems on this list. The cure? Use a suitable selection process — *do not* "wing it". Get trained in selection interviewing; consider using validated selection assessments; get multiple inputs, offer realistic job previews or shadowing, and work with a good HR pro or recruiter.

## **Doing something unethical or wrong**

Here's a preventative cure that's served me well over the years: when making a decision, ask yourself, "How comfortable would I be reading about my decision in the newspaper the next day"? That's a far better question than "What are the chances of being caught?"

However, if you failed to do well (and we all do), then the best thing is to come clean and own up to it. Cover-ups are usually worse than the mistake. Live with the consequences, learn from your mistake, and get on with it. If one of your employees crossover the line of ethical behavior and do something unethical, confront the issue immediately and get help from your HR pro or compliance team.

## **Confronting your boss**

The topic of how to deal with a bad boss would take up more space than this post allows. Let's assume most bosses are reasonably competent with good intentions. Bosses and people, in general, don't like being told they are wrong. If that's your goal in a confrontation (to convince your boss you're right and they are wrong), then it's not going to be a productive discussion.

Try putting yourself in your boss's shoes, and offer your idea as an alternative that will help them achieve their objectives. Also, listen and keep an open mind. Who knows, your boss may have information that would lead you to reconsider your idea. Most importantly, work on establishing a foundation of trust and mutual respect with your boss. That way, you'll be able to have disagreements in a safe and productive environment.

## **Team conflicts**

As managers, we all want our employees to collaborate, work as a team, and play nice in the sandbox. When one employee comes to you with complaints about another employee, it puts the manager in an awkward position of having to arbitrate the dispute. It is important to distinguish between task or personal conflict when alerted to a situation among team members. Task conflict is proven to be healthy and leads to the consideration and development of alternative ideas. Personal conflict, however, is toxic to teams and must be eliminated immediately.

Many project managers and team leaders work hard to clarify team values early in the formation process. The values outline acceptable and aspirational behaviors, and team member support of the values is a requirement. If the conflicts are personal, conduct a fair, frank discussion with the involved parties and indicate that behavior adjustment is expected immediately. If the conflict continues, eliminate the individuals from the team.

A significant amount of team member conflicts can be avoided with a team member recruiting profile that clearly describes the need for teamwork and collaboration. Expected

behaviors should be identified in detail, and the rewards and consequences that reinforce these expectations must be communicated.

As a final caution, beware the “star” performer that’s consistently ticking off their co-workers. If you do, then you are inviting conflict to the team party. The identification and reinforcement of team values is your best preventive medicine for team conflict. If it emerges, deal with it quickly, firmly and fairly.

### **Peer conflicts**

Are you starting to see a trend here? Yes, confrontations those messy people issues are probably the single aspect of work that keeps managers up at night the most. That’s why many managers tend to avoid them. In some cases, that’s not a bad strategy (i.e., develop more tolerance, acceptance, etc...). However, when the stakes are high, avoidance is a terrible strategy. Also, not all confrontations are bad — a little constructive conflict is healthy for a team.

### **Having to learn something new**

It’s always a challenge when we have to leave our comfort zone and feel “incompetent” all over again. If you never do anything new and different, you’re not developing. The most impactful way to develop as a leader is new jobs and challenging assignments. “Learning agility” is not something anyone is born with it can be developed over time.

When you are in a new role or doing something new, put a development plan in place to ensure your success. There are usually two to three “subject matter experts” that you can learn from, as well as books, courses, and online resources. Nowadays, with social networking, you can easily find someone that’s willing to help by sharing their expertise in whatever you need to learn. Great leaders are always learning and are not afraid to admit it.

### **Losing a high potential employee**

Don’t wait until your star employee shows up with an offer letter. By then, it’s too late. Make sure your high potential employees are paid what they are worth, are challenged, supported, and are learning. Let them know you care and how much you appreciate them.

Keep in mind; star performers will eventually get promoted or leave for better opportunities. That’s okay, that’s the rewarding part of being a great leader (as long as they are moving on for the right reasons, not because they’re dissatisfied).

### **Burnout**

Take care of your health and always keep a perspective on the things in life that matter most. Managers that don’t take vacations are not benefiting from the opportunity to recharge their

batteries. They also set terrible examples for their employees, which can lead to burning them out as well.

A primary cause of burnout is job satisfaction, not hard work. If you're doing something you genuinely hate, then make a plan to transition to something else. Life is too short. We don't need to settle for a job we hate.

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/top-challenges-a-manager-will-face-2275955>

### **Reference Only**

<https://www.mtdtraining.com/blog/one-of-the-most-critical-people-issues-facing-businesses-today.htm>

<http://content.timesjobs.com/s-people-issues/articleshow/57956121.cms>

## **Structure issues**

### **Issues with Organizational Structure**

No one thinks about an organization's structure until something goes wrong and profits plummet or customers complain. That's when reporting relationships, operational metrics and business culture come under scrutiny. Proactive business leaders take time to analyze the organizational structure from the start and make sure it facilitates efficient decision making.

### **Departmental Conflict**

In a matrix structure, people report to two different managers – a functional manager and a divisional manager. For example, a human resources employee functions as an expert in recruiting, hiring and training personnel. He reports to the HR manager and also reports to the division head of the department he supports, such as sales, manufacturing or customer service. This approach makes the best use of specially trained employees. However, when deadlines and budgets cause competition among departments, conflicts and power struggles occur, making it difficult for employees to know which direction to go. Effective coordination and collaboration can prevent a true crisis.

### **Inconsistency**

When each department functions independently, inconsistency may result. Company policies and procedures may not be enforced, causing employee dissension and confusion. Employees who transition to other jobs in the company run into problems when they behave as they did in their old roles. Approvals take longer because no one knows who is in charge when multiple departments interact. For example, if some customers complain that no one responds to problems, a small business can restructure support so each customer gets paired with a company representative.

## **Poor communication**

As small business grows, organizational structures that worked before no longer function productively. For example, relying on informal meetings for planning tends to become less effective. Lack of structure or an inflexible structure can impede the work force from achieving desired results. Additionally, poor communication among department leaders could filter down into the rest of the organization. Establishing good communication mechanisms – such as print, email, and presentations – alleviates organizational problems that stem from rapid growth. Implementing good project management practices can also formalize procedures that ensure good communication.

## **Unclear goals**

To enable agility, each organization may set its own goals. This minimizes the levels of approval. However, when each department sets its own goals, the whole company lacks a cohesive direction. Setting a clear company strategy and having each department align to its individual goals helps the company to minimize the problems. In a divisional organizational structure, each employee works to meet the division's needs. This works well when each division works separately. However, when divisions need to interact, this works less effectively.

<https://yourbusiness.azcentral.com/issues-organizational-structure-15007.html>

## **Problems within an Organizational Structure**

**by George N. Root III; Updated June 29, 2018**

A company with a strong organizational structure benefits from improved communication, a well-defined hierarchy and the ability to create a unified company message. As efficient as organizational structure can be, it can also create problems that can lead to loss of productivity and internal conflict. In order to maintain a robust company framework, you need to be able to identify issues within an organizational structure and deal with them as they occur.

## **Departmental loyalty**

One of the dangers of creating departments is the appearance of "us versus them" mentality between different groups. Sales may feel in conflict with accounting because new customers are not getting approved for credit terms. Logistics is at odds with manufacturing because products are not being built fast enough to meet shipping deadlines. Departments tend to get competitive and feel that their work is more important to the success of the company than the work of the other groups. This can cause breaks in communication that affect productivity.

## **New management**

If there have not been changes in management for many years, then the company will start to settle into a way of doing things that is efficient and comfortable for the existing management team. Changes in management, for whatever reason, can put a strain on the organizational structure of an organization. The new manager, or managers, may be unfamiliar with the way the organizational structure has been run for years and try to put a new spin on how things should be run. There is an adjustment period for employees and other managers.

## **Poor communication**

Effective communication is required to keep an organizational structure running smoothly. Without communication, new ideas and processes can get confused. Managers may begin to redouble efforts in an attempt to claim certain parts of a process as their own. This is why executive communication to the rest of the company is critical to the success of any organizational structure. If departments are not clear on precisely what their responsibilities are, then the ensuing confusion can slow down production.

## **Company goals**

An organizational structure is only effective when the entire company uses it properly, according to management consultants Liebowitz and Associates. When upper management creates departmental goals for the rest of the company without consulting with the managers of those departments, the company runs the risk of not making its goals. In order for an organizational structure to be effective, goal-making needs to be a two-way process. When upper management does not seek the input of the rest of the company to create company goals, then resentment can set in and morale begins to drop.

<https://smallbusiness.chron.com/problems-within-organizational-structure-3828.html>

## **Environmental issues**

### **The top 10 environmental issues – Meghan Ray Nicholas**

Over the years, the environment has been changing, and not for the better. Here is a list of the current top environmental issues you'll hear about and you should be concerned.

#### **1. Climate Change**

Unfortunately, the climate change debate continues despite decades of research on the subject. Climate change is here and it is happening. Ninety-seven percent of scientists who study the climate agree that greenhouse gasses, both natural and those created by humans, are the main cause. Global temperatures are climbing, ice caps are melting, and droughts, wildfires, and super hurricanes are tearing their way across the landscape.



While the truth is plain to see, the inaction of deniers in power positions will only make matters worse. Not only does the Earth's temperature continue to rise, but the sea levels are rising, too. Both the ocean and the Earth are growing warmer.

Greenhouse gasses are a leading cause of climate change, specifically those emitted from the human population. This has an impact on habitats, agriculture, the ocean and natural disasters. The best way to reduce climate change is to build sustainably. Using renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power will assist the fight against climate change. Limiting waste and pollution will help preserve the environment.

## **2. Ecosystems and Endangered Species**

Due to the list of environmental issues happening on this planet, both ecosystems and species are affected. In fact, one out of every 10 plants and animal species is expected to go extinct by 2050. The endangered species list continues to grow as ecosystems continue to decrease. Lost habitats mean losing the species that live there. While some may be able to migrate elsewhere, others are not so lucky.

With the rising temperatures of the Arctic, sea ice melts, which eliminates the habitat of polar bears. The list of endangered species includes other animals as well. The best way to save species is to support organizations dedicated to fighting species extinction. By supporting the cause, you're helping to combat the issue. You can also find laws and government acts available to sign that protect ecosystems and endangered species.

## **3. Deforestation**

At least 15 percent of greenhouse gas emissions don't come from cars or factories, it's because of deforestation. By 2030, we may only have 10 percent of the rainforests left, the rest have been cut down for wood or wood pulp products, or cleared for agricultural uses.

In addition to this, more than 70 percent of the planet's plant and animal species live in forests. Species lose their habitat. Ecosystems die out. Climate change continues. There are fewer trees to produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide. It's all due to deforestation. Lumber and land are leading reasons people cut down forests, but no idea is good enough if it means someday there won't be any forests left. Deforestation has many side effects people don't realize.

To preserve the remaining forests, humans should stop cutting down trees. Forests are in major need of preservation. For every tree that's cut down, a new one needs to be planted in its place.

## **4. Pollution**

Pollution comes in many forms. Air, soil, and water all have the capability to be polluted. Pollution poses current and future threats to people and the environment. Contaminated waters are undrinkable. Polluted air weakens the ozone layer and causes health problems. Contaminated soil destroys habitats and irrigation.

As a human, your body is majorly affected by pollution if it's in the air you breathe or the water you drink. Pollution puts animals and the environment in critical condition that only humans can restore. It is one of the biggest killers on the planet, and it takes more than 100 million lives every single year and that's just human lives. People who live in areas with high levels of air pollution are 20 percent more likely to die of lung cancer even if they've never picked up a cigarette in their lives. We dump millions of pounds of garbage and trillions of gallons of untreated sewage and storm water into the oceans and rivers every single year.

In order to see restored air, water, and soil, it's essential to recover from pollution. By caring for the ecosystems, making sustainable choices and limiting the number of resources used, there is potential for recovery from pollution.

## **5. Water scarcity and water pollution**

A major issue happening now is water scarcity. There is a difference between fresh water, and clean water. Saltwater, freshwater, groundwater and surface water are the essential sources of water. There are two ways water can be scarce: the lack of water and the lack of drinkable water.

We often take the water coming out of the tap for granted, we turn the handle and water flows. But that's not the case in many places around the world. Cape Town, South Africa, may be the first city to run out of water.

Portable water can become contaminated with things such as airborne diseases, toxins, and hazardous chemicals. An estimated 780 million people have no access to clean water at all. This isn't just a problem in undeveloped countries through. The 2017 drought in California, and the fact that Flint, Michigan hasn't had clean water in nearly four years, serves as the perfect example to show us that water scarcity and pollution isn't just a problem everywhere else it's a problem here at home too. Like the Earth, your body is made up of a lot of water, too. Both land and your body need clean water to survive.

You can take action to reduce water scarcity. First people must admit this is a problem; then they have to do something about it. Start by turning the water off while brushing your teeth or while applying soap or shampoo by turning off the shower. You're not just saving the fish you're saving the population.

## **6. Loss of Biodiversity**

Biodiversity, or the variety of life in the world or a particular ecosystem, is declining. The levels of biodiversity across the board have significantly lowered to a dangerous amount. According to the World Wildlife Federation, biodiversity has declined 27 percent in the last three decades. Biodiversity is in critical condition due to various threats including urban sprawl, deforestation and climate change.

The lack of biodiversity puts the food chain, water sources and other resources at risk. Without enough biodiversity, ecosystems deteriorate until they no longer exist. The world just can't afford the cost of biodiversity loss. Education and protection are keys to combating biodiversity loss. Think with a sustainable mind. Make green choices. Spread the word.

## **7. Overpopulation**

We have more than seven billion people on the planet right now – and that number is expected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050, and 11.2 billion by 2100. While that might not sound like a bad thing, we live on a planet that can only support roughly 10 billion souls, which means we're less than a century away from overpopulation becoming a serious and even life-threatening problem.

As the world's population rises, the amount of resources available for survival decreases. In fact, the population has grown to an unsustainable level.

The more people there are on the planet, the more they release carbon dioxide and other gasses into the air. The growing population comes with the cost of greenhouse gasses and climate change. Until people realize that they have a direct impact on these pressing environmental issues, their behavior won't change. Resources aren't always sustainably sourced, but without those resources, the population won't survive. Hopefully, we don't realize this too little too late.

Fortunately, renewable energy sources are a great way to combat carbon emissions. By raising the amount of sustainable energy such as wind power and solar power, the resources can be sustainably sourced based on the need, and reducing carbon emissions. You can't change the population, but you can change what the population emits into the environment.

## **8. Waste disposal**

It's easy to throw something in a trash can. We don't usually think about our local landfills unless complaining about the smell when we drive by them, but the average person generates 4.6 pounds of trash per day.

This trash ends up in two places. It's in landfills or it ends up in environmental habitats and the ocean. Waste disposal poses a threat not only to the Earth and its environment but humans as well.

When waste is mixed in the ocean, the ocean dwellers mistake it for food or get tangled up in it. When waste is disposed of via burning or nuclear, it emits hazardous toxins in the air, which people breathe in. People can limit this crisis by reducing the amount of waste. By choosing to use products that can be recycled or placed in a compost pile, every household can reduce their waste.

## **9. Land management and urban sprawl**

Urban sprawl, or the uncontrolled expansion of urban areas, is a modern problem but one that threatens the environment. Moving to a new location isn't hard these days. Contractors keep building developments in record time, and undeveloped land is becoming scarce. Covering the landscape with concrete interrupts the natural water cycle, preventing rainwater from soaking into the ground. This was evident during the catastrophic floods in Houston during Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

Studies have found that this sprawl is increasing exponentially on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, with cities slowly creeping outward and negatively affecting the land around them. With less natural land, the environment takes a hit.

More houses lead to more pollution. Buildings emit their gasses into the air, which affect the health of the environment. Take China for example: Would you want to wear a face mask every time you go outside because of air pollution? It's time to put habitats of the environment first. We need to preserve land, stop building, and start restoring.

## **10. Public health**

Many of the issues we face all tie back into one central concern that is public health. Pollution, water scarcity and overpopulation all present a clear threat to public health. Nearly one out of every four deaths each year is directly caused by unhealthy environments, according to World Health Organization.

Even in developed countries, the growing anti-vaccination movement threatens public health, causing resurgence in diseases like measles that were almost completely obliterated. The health and wellness of human beings is an important issue to watch. What people eat, drink and breathe play a significant role in their wellness. Polluted air and water are a mounting crisis we need to address.

Without water, humans won't survive long. Polluted water poses threats through airborne water diseases and chemicals or toxins contaminating water. Without clean water, people's health declines substantially. One way to bring clean water to people is through digging wells. Another way is through water filters. There are people willing to take the initiative to bring clean water to those who need it.

## **Learning to keep calm**

### **Ten ways to stay calm in the face of daily stress – Faisal Hoque**

To survive and thrive we need to find ways to deal with pressure and uncertainty. Here are ten tips that will help you on a daily basis.

In late 1939 after the outbreak of World War II, the British government designed a number of morale boosting posters preempting the eventual mass bombings of the United Kingdom. One such poster read, “Keep Calm and Carry On,” and though it was not widely distributed during the war, the slogan has become so popular today that it has inspired innumerable imitations and parodies. There is a reason this message remains timeless: most of us deal with daily challenges and adversity of some kind in work and in life. But as James Allen said once, “The more tranquil a man becomes, the greater is his success, his influence, his power for good. Calmness of mind is one of the beautiful jewels of wisdom.” This, unfortunately, is easier said than done.

To survive and thrive we need to find ways to deal with pressure and uncertainty. There are many scientific studies out there that show the deep connection between staying calm and being productive.

#### **1. Plan ahead**

We don’t always know what’s going to walk through our door, but we probably have a pretty good idea of the general types of pressure we may face on a daily basis. Decide in advance on a few possibilities that could occur and how you will handle them. A simple formula such as, “If X happens, I’ll do Y,” can make all the difference.

#### **2. Focus on one thing at a time**

For most people multi-tasking typically leads to chaos. Try to choose one task, see it through, and head on to the next task that needs to be done.

#### **3. Be flexible**

No matter how carefully we plan, there’s always a chance that a situation will pop up that takes precedence over everything we’ve planned. When this happens, take a moment to regroup and prepare to deal with the new issue systematically.

#### **4. Don’t sweat the small stuff**

Not all tasks are equally important. Some of them can remain undone for later with no major consequences. Setting priorities helps one to maintain a sense of control.

#### **5. Count 10**

When you feel like you are getting bombarded from every angle, I take a short break and then look at the situation with a fresh pair of eyes. Just taking those few seconds to count to 10 gives one the distance that they need for a new perspective. It makes one realize, for instance, that the problem they have been attacked isn't the primary issue after all.

## **6. Control your breathing**

Whenever we are anxious, we tend to take quick, shallow breaths. This is called hyperventilating, and it can make us feel dizzy, light-headed, and panicky. It can also interfere with our judgment. If you catch yourself hyperventilating, try inhaling a deep breath through your nose, holding it a second, and releasing it from your mouth. Repeat this exercise until you feel calmer. This is a form of meditation.

## **7. Avoid a doom and gloom attitude**

Often we anticipate the worst possible and often ridiculous conclusion to a situation. For instance, "If I don't get those numbers for the report by the end of the day, I'll lose my job and starve to death in the streets." Instead of using our imagination to scare ourselves, use it to solve the problem.

## **8. Trust yourself**

There are sometimes good reasons to change our plans, such as a new set of circumstances arising or receiving new information about a situation. In the absence of a compelling reason, however, stick to the plans we have outlined for ourselves. Random changes will only confuse us and put us behind schedule.

## **9. Focus on the positive scold**

Scolding ourselves for all we didn't get done does not help. Instead we are far better off being grateful for all that we did do. The more we practice looking on the bright side of things, the less frightening and grim a stressful situation seems.

## **10. Delegate and seek support**

No one succeeds in a silo! This is especially true when the pressure is on. Don't be afraid to reach out to others for help when needed, and offer to assist them in return. There is comfort in not being alone in times of stress.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3042153/10-steps-to-keep-calm-and-carry-on>

## **Preventing interruptions**

### **Six secrets to avoid interruptions at work – Sara Mccord**

You're working on a major project, and you've blocked out a few hours to really knock it out, but just as you're getting into the zone, your boss stops by to drop off some paperwork. Then

your co-worker comes over to chat about next week's meeting. Your phone rings. Your email dings. You face one disruption after another. And when you finally get back to your project, all of your brilliant new thoughts (not to mention motivation) are long gone.

Unfortunately, managing these interruptions isn't as easy as closing your office door (just ask the colleague thinking "should I or shouldn't I knock?") or telling your co-workers to go away. (I gained a bit of a reputation at a prior job for a death stare I gave when I was too busy to chat—let's just say, not the best approach.)

But, as I learned, there are some simple, effective ways to refocus after interruptions or, even better, prevent them in the first place. Use the following ideas to stop unanticipated breaks from throwing you off your game.

### **Avoiding Interruptions**

The best way to minimize interruptions is to take some proactive steps to avoid them. Before you get started on a major project, try these approaches to make sure you actually get the productive time you were planning for.

#### **1. Communicate with your colleagues**

Let's revisit the closed door scenario: How will your colleagues know when you're eating lunch at your desk versus finishing a grant application before a major deadline? Answer: tell them. In a small office, feel free to send around an email that says, "I'm on deadline for the annual report today, please only reach out with items that can't wait until tomorrow." In a larger office, clue in a few key people, including your boss, your assistant, and your immediate officemates. They'll be less likely to disturb you and can also help pass on the message to those headed your way.

#### **2. Use your technology**

The **Do Not Disturb** button on your phone isn't just there for decoration, much like your **Out of Office** message isn't there only for time off. So, take advantage of this customizable technology and set up messages to let your colleagues know that you'll be unavailable. Change your Out of Office response to say that you'll respond to emails tomorrow. Block out time on your Outlook calendar as "Unavailable – write the **Name of the Project**" so well-meaning colleagues won't choose that time to stop by for a chat. Don't be afraid to DND your phone. Non-urgent messages can sit in voicemail for a few hours, and if someone needs you, they'll come find you. (**Note:** This approach does not work when you do it every Tuesday. Use it for big, time-sensitive projects only.)

#### **3. Have a Go-To phrase**

Is it possible to prevent an interruption when someone is literally walking up to your desk? You don't want to ignore her or cut her off to explain how busy you are, so the key here is to preempt her: Have a phrase that you always use to start (and end) a conversation when you're too busy to talk. When you see someone coming toward you, say, "I'm in the middle of something right now - can I check back with you tomorrow?" or "I'm swamped right now, can you send me a meeting request?" This way, she knows following up is on your to-do list, but that now's not a good time.

### **Refocusing after an interruption**

While you can minimize interruptions, you can't always avoid them altogether, particularly when a time-sensitive issue arises. When the inevitable occurs, here's how to quickly get back on track.

#### **a. If you're Brainstorming**

Let's say you're thinking through an upcoming campaign or a way to approach a potential partner organization when an urgent email arrives. Now what? Though your first instinct might be to drop everything and respond, try to pause for 20 seconds and jot down a handful of key words so you won't lose your ideas altogether. If it's helpful, include arrows of how they connect or any other symbols to jog your memory. It doesn't have to look pretty or make sense to anyone else, all that matters is that you can piece together your thoughts when you sit back down to work.

#### **b. If you're writing**

One of the most frustrating things about being disturbed when you're writing is feeling like you had a rhythm and now you've lost it. Instead of expecting yourself to pick up where you left off, set aside a few minutes to go back and re-read the last few paragraphs you've written. Use this time to make mental notes of what you were thinking or where you were going next and let them guide you back on track.

#### **c. If you can't refocus**

Sometimes refocusing just isn't possible. Maybe you're on edge about being disturbed (a fire alarm, today—really?) or just feel like you lost your mojo. In this case, don't force it. Allow yourself a little time to decompress and stand up, walk around, or go get a cup of coffee. Its space for you to ease back into thinking about the project again (or let yourself be totally distracted if need be), so you'll be able start fresh when you get back to your desk.

Unfortunately, interruptions happen, so it's how you deal with them that matters. Be proactive and have some smart strategies to get back on track, and you'll be more productive (not to mention less intimidating to your colleagues).



## **Managing interruptions**

### **Maintain Focus, Keep control of your time**

Everyday interruptions at work can be a key barrier to manage your time effectively and, ultimately, can be a barrier to your success. Think back to your last workday, and consider for a minute the many interruptions that occurred. There may have been phone calls, emails, hallway conversations, colleagues stopping by your office, or anything else that unexpectedly demanded your attention and, in doing so, distracted you from the task at hand.

Because your day only has so many hours in it, a handful of small interruptions can rob you of the time you need to achieve your goals and be successful at your work-life balance. More than this, they can break your focus, meaning that you have to spend time re-engaging with the thought processes needed to successfully complete complex work.

The key to controlling interruptions is to know what they are and whether they are necessary, and to plan for them in your daily schedule. The tips that follow will help you do that, and so prevent interruptions from frustrating you and jeopardizing your success.

### **Use the following tips to understand and manage interruptions:**

#### **1. Keep an interrupters log**

If interruptions consistently rob you of time and energy, or if they frequently push you off schedule and cause delays, it's time to keep an Interrupters Log. This is a simple record of the interruptions you experience in the course of a day.

***Figure 1: The Interrupters Log***

Person	Date and Time	Description of Interruption	Valid?	Urgent?
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Keep your Interrupters Log with you every day for at least a week, recording every interruption you experience, and marking down the person interrupting you; the date and time it occurs; what the interruption is; whether it was valid; and whether it was urgent (or whether someone could have waited until a better time).

Once you have recorded the interruptions for a week, sit down with your log and analyze the information. Which interruptions are valid and which are not? You need to deal with the valid interruptions. Below you can find how you can schedule them into your day so that they get the attention they need, while you still have the time you need to adequately address your daily work. As for the interruptions that are not valid, you must find a way to block these out in the future.

#### **2. Analyze and conquer interruptions**

To analyze and conquer the interruptions you find in your Interrupters Log, first, look at whether the interruption is valid or not. Could someone have avoided interrupting you by waiting for a routine meeting? Or was it something they should have asked you about it? If not, deal with this politely but **assertively**.

Next, look at how urgent the interruptions were, and whether they could have been pre-empted. You can pre-empt many interruptions by holding routine meetings with people: if they're confident that they'll have access to you at a defined point in the near future, they'll learn to save up non-urgent issues until this meeting.

However, some interruptions are both urgent and valid. You need to be interrupted, and you need to deal with the situation. From your Interrupters Log, you'll see how much time is taken up by these urgent, valid interruptions. Block this time into your schedule as "contingency time", and only take on as much other work as you can fit into the remaining time. You'll have to juggle this other work around the interruptions, but at least you won't be overloaded and stressed by the things that you haven't done because they've been displaced by emergencies.

### **3. Put your phone to work for you (Not Against You)**

A little bit of planning can go a long way in working to control telephone interruptions, which many people experience all day long. If you are on a deadline or your focus needs to be intense (and not interrupted), use your voicemail to screen calls, or have an assistant deal with messages for you. This way, you can deal with calls by priority, and at times that suit you. In fact, this telephone time can be planned into your schedule, and so become a normal part of your working day.

### **4. Catch your breath**

When interrupted, it's easy to get caught up in the "rush" of the person who is interrupting, for they undoubtedly feel their request is urgent. In reality, however, most interruptions are not genuinely crisis-driven, and it can serve everyone best to take a little time before taking action.

Take a few minutes to consider the situation. Catch your breath and clear your head. A small delay, even one of just a few minutes, goes a long way in assessing the situation accurately and reacting appropriately.

### **5. Learn to Say "No"**

It's often acceptable to say "no" to requests or tasks if you are busy when someone else can handle it, if it is not an important task, or if it can be done later. When this is the case, saying "no" in a courteous and sincere way, followed by a short explanation is the best course of action to take:

"I am working against a very tight deadline on an important project right now so, I am sorry, but I cannot jump in and help".

## **6. "Available" and "Unavailable" time**

Simple yet effective: let people know when you are available and when you are not. Make sure that people know that during your "unavailable time", they should only interrupt you if they have to. You and your co-workers can also agree on a signal that everyone in the office can use when unavailable, like turning the nameplate on the door around, or simply closing the door. This alleviates interruptions and can avoid hurt feelings.

### ***Tip:***

Be careful here. If you're a manager, an important part of your job is to be available to people, to handle urgent issues which arise, and to coach your team so that people are as effective as possible.

If you put up barriers that are too high, you won't be able to do these jobs. By all means, use "unavailable time", but don't overuse it, and make sure people know they can interrupt you if there is a genuine crisis.

## **7. "Invitation Only" time**

Schedule regular check-in times for the individuals you talk to most often. Ask these people to keep a running list of things that they need to discuss, so you can cover all the points at one time and force yourself to do the same.

An open-door policy is good, but you should limit the number of people you invite to your work area. For instance, if you're scheduling a meeting, offer to meet your co-worker in his or her office or a conference room. This way, you can excuse yourself after you accomplish your purpose. Additionally, it's much easier to get up and leave than it is to get people to leave your office once they're seated and comfortable.

## **8. Uncontrollable interruptions**

There are interruptions that, no matter how hard you try, you simply cannot control. Most people are happy to schedule a more convenient time, but when this does not work, quickly set the parameters by saying something like, "I only have five minutes to talk about this right now," and stick to it.

Do not ask the interrupter to sit down and do not engage in small talk. Encourage the interrupter to get right to the point and if a solution cannot be reached before the allotted time runs out, set a time for getting back to them and, again, stick to it.

**[https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE\\_94.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_94.htm)**

## **Controlling crisis**

### **Managing the unexpected – What to do when things go wrong at work – Dawn Rosenberg Mckay**

The saying "Nothing ever goes as planned" is as accurate at work as it is anywhere else. When things go wrong, it is often without warning. If you could prevent these mishaps from happening in the first place, you would. While some of these problems are predictable, most are not. That is why it is essential to know how to be able to identify and deal with these situations as soon as they arise. Here are some tips for managing the unexpected at work:

#### **1. Expect Something to Go Wrong, Even If You Don't Know What**

Always be on the lookout for problems. No one wants to be a doomsayer, but the earlier you recognize a complication exists, the more quickly you can begin to take steps to fix it. Excellent problem solving skills are crucial when dealing with these kinds of situations. They include your ability to recognize a problem's existence and then identify its cause.

A small mishap can grow into a big problem, and then into a crisis pretty fast unless immediate action is taken. When a problem is ignored or unrecognized, it will, over time, become increasingly difficult, or even impossible, to resolve. Your alertness can save your company from severe damage.

#### **2. Don't Panic**

Your base instinct may be to panic when something goes wrong. Your adrenaline will start to flow, which can spur you into action. However, it will also cloud your judgment. Your ability to stay calm is instrumental to your success in managing the unexpected. Panic causes us to blow small complications out of proportion. This emotional response could transform a little glitch into a massive crisis in your mind.

Take a deep breath and spend a moment or two evaluating the situation and thinking about what you need to do next. Although you should react quickly, don't be hasty. That will only lead to making misinformed decisions and taking unhelpful actions.

#### **3. Prepare Solutions in Advance**

While it's impossible to plan for every worst-case scenario, have a strategy in mind for dealing with things that are most likely to go wrong. For example, if you are in charge of a big conference your organization is hosting, be prepared for the caterer to cancel at the last minute or

the sound system to malfunction. The day before the event, confirm with the caterer and check that the sound system is working.

Prioritize by planning for more common events, not ones that are improbable. If you worry about too many things going wrong, you will be unable to do your job. Adjust your plans as unlikely events become possible. For example, while you don't need a plan to respond to a hurricane in January, you do need one in July.

#### **4. Use Your Critical Thinking Skills**

In addition to excellent problem solving skills, excellent critical thinking skills are also essential to successfully managing the unexpected at work. Take a systematic approach to solving both small complications and significant crises. Though quick action is imperative, take the time to come up with a few alternative solutions. Then evaluate them all before you choose the one you decide is best. If necessary, get input from your team and superiors, both when coming up with possible solutions and when selecting which one to implement.

#### **5. Keep a List of Resources at Your Fingertips**

When problems arise, and you need outside help to resolve them, a list of service providers will prove invaluable. Going back to the example of the conference and being prepared for a caterer to cancel at the last minute, have a list of other companies you can call. If you have an audio equipment repair person on your contact list, a sound system failure won't waylay your conference.

Depending on your organization's needs, include plumbers, electricians, computer experts, office equipment repair people, caterers, and temporary employment agencies on your contact list. Before hiring an outside service, make sure to have the approval of the person who controls the purse strings for your organization. Customize your contact list as necessary. Add to it as you find additional providers and delete contacts that don't come through for you or that are no longer in business. Network with your colleagues, even those at other organizations, for recommendations and reviews.

A quick and measured response to a critical situation will lessen the adverse effects on your organization and its bottom line. Your boss will appreciate your efforts to respond to a potentially damaging crisis.

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### **Pushing new ideas**

#### **Eight habits of people who always have great ideas – Stephanie Vozza**

Eureka moments are rare. The back-story behind great ideas is often more complex and winding than having an apple fall on your head. But the best part is that creative ideas aren't reserved for a special group of people; they can come to anyone if you change your mind-set.

“The fact is, almost all of the research in this field shows that anyone with normal intelligence is capable of doing some degree of creative work,” Teresa Amabile, professor of business administration at Harvard Business School and author of *The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work*, told *Fast Company* in 2004. “Creativity depends on a number of things: experience, including knowledge and technical skills; talent; an ability to think in new ways; and the capacity to push through uncreative dry spells.”

Whether they're coming up with an innovative new product to launch, finding a solution to a universal problem, or picking a cool new place to grab lunch, people who consistently have great ideas have formed habits that help them think differently. Here are eight simple things those “creative geniuses” do that you can do, too:

#### **1. They look for inspiration in unexpected places**

Instead of staying focused within their industries, people who have great ideas look elsewhere, says Sooshin Choi, provost at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit. “Many professionals go after information in their industry, but once you get that information, it's too late everyone has it,” he says. “Even if you get that information faster than others, what kind of real difference can you make?” Instead, Choi suggests looking outside your field. “Car

designers might look at furniture designers for inspiration,” he says. “There are endless examples of different areas where you can find inspiration.”

## **2. They make slow decisions**

In his book *Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind*, author Guy Claxton says intelligence increases when you think less: “There’s an expanding idea of what it means to be intelligent,” he told the London Business Forum in 2014. “The narrow idea is all built around cleverness, which is the ability to argue, marshal facts, and interpret a spreadsheet. That it’s all done through reason; it’s all done consciously.” Give your mind time, to work in the margins when you’re thinking of something else.

Research, however, has found that thoughts are going on in the margins of the mind in areas Claxton calls hazy, poetic, or uncontrolled. Calling this the “tortoise mind,” Claxton says great ideas bubble up when you slow down decisions: “Whenever there’s a decision that needs to be made, the first thing you ask yourself is, ‘When does this decision need to be made?’” he says. “And you don’t make it until then.”

Deciding prematurely stunts your ability to find great ideas. Give your mind time to work in the margins when you’re thinking of something else. This allows time to collect more information, listen to hunches, and experience bursts of creativity.

## **3. They find internal motivation**

People who have great ideas are motivated to work on something because it is interesting, involving, exciting, satisfying, or personally challenging, says Amabile. Research has found that people are most creative when they’re intrinsically motivated, rather than pushed by evaluation, surveillance, competition with peers, dictates from superiors, or the promise of rewards.

“You should do what you love, and you should love what you do,” she writes. “The first is a matter of finding work that matches well with your expertise, your creative thinking skills, and your strongest intrinsic motivations. The second is a matter of finding a work environment that will allow you to retain that intrinsic motivational focus, while supporting your exploration of new ideas.”

## **4. They start from scratch**

Instead of improving on an existing item, people with great ideas pretend the product doesn’t exist and they design it from scratch, says Choi. “If you improve something, then you only make it better,” he says. “If you want to make something different, you have to behave as if there is no such thing.” Don’t ask yourself, ‘How could I design a smartphone?’ says Choi. Ask

yourself, ‘What is communication?’ ‘If you start there, you may be able to discover new possibilities,’ - Choi.

### **5. They are willing to take risks**

“Often the difference between a successful man and a failure is not one’s better abilities or ideas, but the courage that one has to bet on his idea, to take a calculated risk, and to act,” said Maxwell Maltz, author of the 1960 self-help classic *Psycho-Cybernetics*.

If you improve something, then you only make it better, if you want to make something different, you have to behave as if there is no such thing. Corporate cultures that allow employees to challenge the status quo or disagree will foster innovation, says Amabile. Training employees to be comfortable disagreeing with others and receptive to disagreement will create an atmosphere of innovation, she writes.

### **6. They’re always trying new things**

As you progress in your field, it can be easy to stick with what works, says Choi. “The trouble is that when you get older, you have many routines that come from memory of past successes,” he says. “The past may not work in the future.” Instead of becoming set in your ways, Choi says people who have great ideas have formed the habit of trying something different.

“If you always order the same thing at your favorite restaurant, you are an old person,” he says. “Try something new - maybe something you didn’t like when you were younger. Or do something you aren’t familiar with. You’ll feel young and you’ll experience new things and ideas.”

### **7. They find connections between experiences**

Great ideas are often the result of connecting two seemingly unrelated items. People who consistently have great ideas have become good at finding connections. In 1996 long before he thought of the iPhone or iPod the late Steve Jobs told *Wired* magazine: “Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn’t really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That’s because they were able to connect experiences they’ve had and synthesize new things. And the reason they were able to do that was that they’ve had more experiences, or they have thought more about their experiences than other people”.

### **8. They’re open to magic**

Elizabeth Gilbert, author of *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear*, says ideas are out there waiting to find the right person who can bring them to life. “Ideas are these disembodied life forms, they don’t have a form, but they have a will. All they want is to be made manifest,” she told



Robin Young on NPR's *Here and Now*. "If you can manage to open up your consciousness to an idea of living in a world of abundance, then you can believe that, constantly, ideas are trying to find human collaborators."

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Empowerment

### **Top ten principles of employee empowerment – Susan Heathfield**

The credo of an empowering manager is to create a work environment in which people are empowered, productive, contributing, and happy. Instead of hobbling employees by limiting their tools or information, trust them to do the right thing, get out of their way, and then watch them catch fire. Following are the ten most important principles for managing people in a way that reinforces employee empowerment, accomplishment, and contribution.

#### **1. Demonstrate that you value people**

Your regard for people needs to shine through in all of your actions and words, including your facial expression, body language, and the words you choose to express what you're thinking about in regards to the people who report to you. Your goal is to demonstrate your appreciation for each person's unique value. No matter how an employee is performing on his or her current task, your value for the employee as a human being should never falter and always be visible.

#### **2. Share Leadership Vision**

Help people feel that they are part of something bigger than themselves and their individual job. Do this by making sure they know and have access to the organization's overall mission, vision, and strategic plans.

#### **3. Share Goals and Directions**

When possible, involve employees in goal setting and planning. At the very least, involve those who report to you in goal setting on the department level and share the most important goals and direction for your group. With the help of your employees, make progress on goals (measurable and observable), or clarify that you have shared your picture of a positive outcome with the people responsible for accomplishing the results.

If you share a picture of where you're headed - and share the meaning behind the goals and direction of the business - empowered employees can then chart their own course without close supervision.

#### **4. Trust People**

Trust the intentions of people to do the right thing, make the right decisions, and make choices that (while maybe not exactly what you would decide) still work. When employees receive clear expectations from their manager, they relax. This allows them to focus their energy on accomplishing results, not on worrying and second-guessing.

#### **5. Provide information for decision making**

Make certain that you have given people all of the information they need to make thoughtful decisions. If that's not achievable, make sure that those working under you have access to the information they need to do their job most productively.

#### **6. Don't just delegate the drudge work**

Don't just delegate the drudge work. You need to make work enjoyable, so be sure to delegate some of the fun stuff and assignments that you know a person is interested in. Some of the fun, interesting work you can delegate includes important meetings, committee memberships that influence product development and decision making, and the projects that people and customers notice.

#### **7. Provide frequent feedback**

Provide frequent feedback so that people know how they are doing, both in terms of meeting expectations and where they need improvement. Ideally, there should be a mix of feedback that's reward and recognition as well as improvement coaching, with an emphasis on recognition.

#### **8. Assume the problem is the system, not the person**

When a problem occurs, ask what is wrong with the work system that caused the people to fail, not what is wrong with the person who had difficulty with the task. If you determine it is the individual, not the system, try to resolve the problem with the employee first, before heading to HR.

#### **9. Listen to learn and ask questions**

Provide a space in which people will feel free to communicate by listening to them and then asking them questions. Guide them by asking questions, not by telling them what to do, like you would a child. People generally know the right answers if they are given the opportunity to comfortably express themselves.

When an employee brings you a problem to solve, ask, "What do you think you should do to solve this problem?" Or, ask, "What action steps do you recommend?" Eventually, you will feel comfortable telling the employee that he or she does not need not ask you about similar situations.

#### **10. Help employees feel rewarded and recognized**

If employees feel under-compensated, under-titled for the responsibilities they take on, under-noticed, under-praised, and under-appreciated, they will not experience employee empowerment.

The basic needs of employees must be met before employees can give you their discretionary energy, that extra efforts that people voluntarily invest in their work. For successful employee empowerment to come into play, recognition must play a significant and ongoing role.

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### **Work place humour**

#### **Thirty benefits of humour at work – Andrew Tarvin**

I'm incredibly passionate about humour at the workplace and not because it's fun. As an engineer, the reason why I care about using humour is that it works. It's effective with the one thing you can't be efficient with, human beings. So with that in mind, here are **30 benefits of humour at work**, backed by research, case studies, and real-world examples.

#### **Humour and Communication**

1. **Humour gets people to listen.** "Consistent uses of appropriate humour makes people want to read and hear what you say."<sup>1</sup>

2. **Humour increases long-term memory retention.** “Instructional messages that gain students’ attention and help them make sense of course content (clarify behaviors) enhance students’ ability to process the content resulting in greater retention and learning.”<sup>22</sup>
3. **Humour increases persuasion.** “Humour can be highly persuasive when presenting a message that people disagree with because the humour distracts them from immediately creating counter arguments, in part because they don’t feel like the message is being crammed down their throats.”<sup>23</sup>
4. **Humour aids in learning.** “The use of humour as a pedagogical tool has been shown to reduce classroom anxiety, create a more positive atmosphere, as well as facilitate the learning process.”<sup>24</sup>
5. **Humour increases the likability of the speaker.** “An appropriate use of humour will produce a favorable attitude toward the speaker.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Humour and Relationships**

6. **Humour connects us with others.** “Positive sounds such as laughter or a triumphant ‘woo hoo!’ can trigger a response in the listener’s brain. The response is automatic and helps us interact socially by priming us to smile or laugh, and thereby connecting us with the other person.”<sup>26</sup>
7. **Humour reduces status differentials.** “Humour can help to reduce the social distance between managers and employees.”<sup>27</sup>
8. **Humour diffuses conflict.** “Humour has long been seen as the great equalizer, a means to facilitate conversation and bridge differences. As a matter of fact humour has been identified as a key factor in peace-building and international mediation.”<sup>28</sup>
9. **Humour builds trust.** “Social benefits of humour include group cohesiveness, reduction of status differentials, and diffusion of conflict, team and trust building among diverse groups.”<sup>29</sup>
10. **Humour encourages people to work together.** “A growing body of research shows that when you share a laugh with someone, you’re mirroring not only one another’s body language, but also the hormonal and neuronal activity, prompting a mutual investment in each other’s well-being.”<sup>30</sup>

### **Humour and Problem Solving**

11. **Humour boosts overall brainpower.** “A dose of humour releases the chemical serotonin in your brain, which improves focus, increases objectivity and improves overall brainpower.”<sup>31</sup>
12. **Humour improves decision-making.** “Positive moods prompt more flexible decision-making and wider search behavior and greater analytic precision.”<sup>32</sup>

13. **Humour increases the acceptance of new ideas.** “Unconventional interactions can lower the barrier for people to posit novel things.”<sup>13</sup>
14. **Humour triggers new connections.** “Humour stimulates the right hemisphere of the brain, which, in turn, sets off divergent, creative thinking which allows individuals to see broader applications, novel connections, and otherwise elusive relationships.”<sup>9</sup>
15. **Humour enhances one’s ability to solve problems.** “Studies have shown that simply watching comedy films can improve creative problem solving skills.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Humour and Productivity**

16. **Humour provides motivation.** “The use of humour in organizations has been associated with improving morale among workers, creating a more positive organizational culture, ... and increasing motivation.”<sup>15</sup>
17. **Humour reduces absenteeism.** “Humour is associated with enhanced work performance, satisfaction, workgroup cohesion, health, and coping effectiveness, as well as decreased burnout, stress, and work withdrawal.”<sup>16</sup>
18. **Humour prevents long-term burnout.** “Humour at the workplace has been shown to reduce absenteeism, increase company loyalty, prevent burnout and increase productivity.”<sup>17</sup>
19. **Humour increases employee engagement.** “Managers who lead with levity benefit from higher levels of employee engagement and overall success.”<sup>18</sup>
20. **Humour improves productivity.** “In one study of more than 2,500 employees, 81 percent said they believe a fun working environment would make them more productive.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Humour and Health**

21. **Humour reduces stress.** “People with a sense of humour report less stress and anxiety than those with a low sense of humour, despite experiencing the same number of problems at work.”<sup>20</sup>
22. **Humour strengthens the immune system.** “Laughter may improve immune function by blocking production of stress hormones, such as cortisol, and by increasing the release of immune enhancers, such as beta-endorphin.”<sup>21</sup>
23. **Humour relaxes muscles.** “Humour relaxes muscles, decreases blood pressure and improves our immune system.”<sup>22</sup>
24. **Humour burns calories.** “Laughing 100 times can burn as many calories as 10-minutes on a stationary bicycle.”<sup>23</sup>
25. **Humour increases happiness.** “Humour was one of the healthiest adaptations to being happy in life.”<sup>24</sup>

## Humour and Leadership

26. **Humour enhances perceived leadership skills.** “People who use humour, particularly in stressful or seemingly one-down positions, are viewed as being on top of things, being in charge and in control, whether they are in fact or not.”<sup>25</sup>
27. **Humour creates more opportunities.** “Research has shown that managers displaying a good sense of humour are given more opportunities in organizations than those without a sense of humour.”<sup>29</sup>
28. **Humour builds credibility.** “Humour users are seen as more credible and as more competent.”<sup>26</sup>
29. **Humour increases size of paycheck.** “The size of their bonuses correlated positively with their use of humour – ‘In other words, the funnier the executives were, the bigger the bonuses.’”<sup>27</sup>
30. **Humour increases profit.** “Organization humour has been linked with successful leadership, with increases in profit and work compliance, with a successful business culture, with message and goal clarity in managerial presentations, with improvement in group problem-solving, and with reducing emotional stress due to threats and role conflict at work.”<sup>28</sup>

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## Developing a sense of Humour

Some might say that a sense of humour is inbred. It can't be learnt. But how then would you explain the fact that children have to learn about jokes, especially word play? Since learning about humour is a part of language development and learning, it follows that one's sense of humour can be further developed as an adult.

### A Sense of Humour

Our ancestors believed that our body was made up of four fluids or 'humours'. The balance of the humours determined our temperaments. For example, those who got angry easily were thought to have more *choler*, and calm people had more *phlegm*.

The word ‘humour’ therefore came to mean ‘disposition’, hence ‘good-humoured’. It’s not clear when it began to be used for a sense of the ridiculous, but there’s no doubt that, for most of us, ‘having a sense of humour’ means being ready to be amused and to be amusing.

It’s a very human trait, and one that we obviously value highly. Why else would ‘GSOH’ or ‘good sense of humour’ feature so highly in dating advertisements that it’s become a cliché?

### **But what does it really mean in practice?**

Having a good sense of humour is, like **Friendliness and Civility**, one of the great oilers of the wheels of social interaction. Amusing people, and those who are ready to be amused by others, are pleasant to be around.

But there’s one aspect that’s more important, and that’s the nature of ‘good’ when attached to ‘sense of humour’. People with a ‘good’ sense of humour are pleasant in their amusement. They can take a joke against themselves, and they don’t find amusement in others’ misfortunes or in hurtful things. If someone tells a joke that’s inappropriate, they are not sanctimonious or judgemental but they do know how to make clear that it’s not right. They challenge jokes that are in bad taste, but in a way that is acceptable to others or handling the situation tactfully.

### **The benefits of a good sense humour**

Humour is a great leveller. It is almost impossible to remain angry with someone who is making you laugh, even if it’s your child and they’ve done something really naughty. Once you allow yourself to see the funny side, you will soon be laughing with them. Finding the same things funny also seems to be one of the strongest bases for lasting friendships.

### **Laughing together promotes warmth of feeling and helps people to feel good.**

Even in the very worst of times, laughter can make people feel better. You may have heard people say that they didn’t know whether to laugh or cry: the two are very close, but laughing feels so much better and is much more positive.

This may be the origin of the phrase ‘gallows’ humour’, the idea that even a condemned man could enjoy a joke. It was, perhaps, taken to extremes by Monty Python in the film *Life of Brian* but maybe they had a point about ‘looking on the bright side’.

However laughter and humour also have other, equally valuable purposes.

### **Humour can:**

- Make criticism more palatable. With humour, rather than anger and harsh words, the sense of the words can be taken on board without offence.
- Allow things to be said that are otherwise too ‘heavy’ or difficult for the conversation, because they can be said more lightly. A joke can often tell a difficult truth.

- Get to the heart of what matters in a very gentle and subtle way.

**Too Much or too Little? As with most things in life it is possible to have too much of a good thing.**

Aristotle described those who push jokes too far as *buffoons*. He noted that in doing so, these people often hurt or offend others. Modern buffoons may tell tasteless or unpleasant jokes, and are sometimes described as *crude* or *coarse*. Those who lack a sense of humour were described as *boorish* or *unpolished* by Aristotle.

They may be over-sensitive to the feelings of others, and go too far to avoid giving offence. Nowadays, we might say that they were too politically correct, or acting as ‘thought police’, trying to stop anyone giving any offence to anyone else, whether the offence is real or imagined. The danger of this is that it leads to a very uptight view of the world. As we have said, laughter is good for everyone, and the exercise of kindness and tact will ensure that humour is gentle, not wounding.

### **The Importance of Context**

It is also important to be aware of the situation. What is fine in certain situations will not be fine in others. A joke that might happily be shared at the rugby club might not be so good the first time that you meet your prospective parents-in-law.

**To avoid making mistakes, there are four areas you should consider:**

- **Object** – who or what is the target or object of my humour, and will they be hurt by it?
- **Strength** – what strength of feeling will this arouse, and is that appropriate in this group?
- **People** – who is the audience, and who might be offended?
- **Occasion** – is this really the time and place for this joke?

Taken together, these questions should guide you as to whether the comment or joke is going to be acceptable at the time. If in doubt, stop. It’s much better not to offend and hurt people, and if you think the joke might offend someone who is listening, then don’t tell it.

**A ‘good’ sense of humour means tactful, pleasant fun that does not cause offence in those who are listening.**

If you cause offence, that does not make the person whom you have offended ‘humourless’ or ‘no fun’. It is your problem, not theirs, and you need to make it right. If you do get it wrong, don’t hesitate to apologise. You will know straight away because there will be sharp intakes of breath, or people will look offended. Stop immediately and make a simple apology, such as:



*'I'm so sorry, that was inappropriate. Please forgive me for causing offence.'*

You probably won't be forgiven immediately, but your apology will be remembered and *may* mean that you are eventually excused. Likewise, if you later find that a joke has offended someone, then apologise to them personally. A genuine apology will go a long way to mitigate offence. It is, however, *never* the right time to try another joke!

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## **Learning to laugh**

### **Why laughing at yourself can boost your health – Vivian Manning – Schaffel**

It happened to everyone: you walk down the street, trip, stumble and fall. Assuming you aren't seriously injured, you might peer around to see who bore witness to your foible and either

- a) be completely embarrassed and horrified that you took a tumble in public (**or**)
- b) have a good laugh at yourself, dust yourself off and resume whatever it was you were doing.

The world seems to be divided between two types of people — those who find it easy to laugh at themselves, and those who take themselves a little *too* seriously. Believe it or not, the science of good health tilts in favor of those who crack up when they fall. As it turns out, the ability to laugh at yourself is not only a healthy attitude — it's a healthy attribute.

### **Not taking ourselves too seriously benefits our mental health**

A 2011 study referenced in Time examined a group of people's reactions to funhouse mirror images of themselves, and the findings revealed those who laughed most frequently at images of themselves showed "fewer signs of fake smiles or negative emotion." The study's author, Ursula Beermann, Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Psychology, University of Innsbruck, says the ability or proclivity not to take yourself too seriously also can mean you're prepared to "acknowledge that you are not the center of the universe."

Aside from authenticity and a healthy awareness of others, Dr. Beermann says those who don't take themselves too seriously can step back and look at themselves, or mistakes they have made, from an outside perspective. She's also careful to acknowledge the difference between laughing at yourself and putting yourself down, or laughter at another's expense, which isn't so healthy. "Adaptive humour," such as cheering people up or looking for the funny side in rather negative events, is connected to well-being and psychological health in a myriad of ways.

#### **Four other ways laughing at yourself makes you healthier**

Dr. Beermann says her study showed that people who can laugh at themselves tend to be more prone to "feeling good and worrying less." People who worry less are less prone to chronic stress. Chronic stress cranks up the natural fight-or-flight hormonal system in our bodies, which has long been linked to many emotional and physical health issues, including headaches, heart disease, digestive issues, anxiety and depression, according to the Mayo Clinic.

##### **1. It's good for your heart - Literally**

A 2009 study conducted by cardiologists at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore revealed that laughing, along with an "active sense of humour," can protect against a heart attack and prevent heart disease. According to the study, people with heart disease were 40 percent less likely to laugh in a variety of situations compared to people of the same age without heart disease — a little more evidence that lightening up can lengthen your life span.

##### **2. It means you can handle life better**

Dr. Beermann says happier people are also more resilient, meaning they can better handle life when things don't go their way. "According to (Swiss humour expert from the University of Zurich) Dr. Willibald Ruch, a cheerful person seems to be more resilient against negative events, and is more able to face adversities in life with a smile," she says. What's more, a study from the Harvard University Center of the Developing Child says though resilience is borne of both nature and nurture, the stress experienced by less resilient people produces chemicals in the body that cause inflammation. Chronic inflammation can lead to a variety of illnesses, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, arthritis, cancer, dementia and depression. "Given the centrality of inflammation to multiple diseases, the fact that early life adversity is associated with elevated inflammatory responses suggests that toxic stress increases the probability of lifelong health impairments," the study says. Though the study was targeted at young children, toxic stress causes inflammation in adults, too. Science says the more you laugh, the better you remember.

##### **3. You can manage pain better**

We've established that laughing at yourself indicates resilience. And a recent study published in the Journal of Pain demonstrated that higher resilience is associated with a higher pain threshold in otherwise healthy adults. Another article in Scientific American attributes the endorphins released during laughter to pain relief.

#### **4. It boosts your short-term memory**

Science says the more you laugh, the better you remember. Loma Linda University researchers conducted a study examining the stress levels and short term memory of 20 healthy adults in their 60s and 70s. They asked one group to sit in silence without means of communication, and let the other group watch funny videos. Wouldn't you know it, the "humour group" had "much higher improvement" in the ability to remember things, 43.6 percent, compared with 20.3 percent in the other group. Additionally, the humour group had lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol floating around their systems, while the other group only showed a slight drop in their stress levels.

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### **Role of group cohesion and team spirit**

#### **Group Cohesiveness: Meaning and Its Consequences (With Diagram) – Kushboo Sinha**

##### **Meaning of Cohesiveness**

Group cohesiveness is one of the characteristic features of the groups, which is very important from behaviouristic point of view. Cohesiveness is the degree to which the group members are attracted to each other and are motivated to stay in their groups. Cohesiveness defines the degree of closeness that the members feel with their group. It is understood as the extent of how far everyone wants to remain as a member of the group and like each other.

"Cohesiveness refers to the extent of unity 'in the group and is reflected in members' conformity to the norms of the group, feeling of attraction for each other and wanting to be co-members of the group." Attraction, cohesiveness and conformity are all intertwined. The more the members feel attracted to the group, the greater will be the group cohesiveness. The greater the

cohesiveness, the greater the influence of the group members to persuade one another to conform to the group norms. The greater the conformity, the greater the identity of the members to the group and the greater the group cohesiveness.

**Cohesiveness is a very important group attribute. Managers must offer answer to such questions as:**

- (i) What are the sources and causes of cohesiveness?
- (ii) What are the consequences of cohesiveness?

**Consequences of Cohesiveness:**

Group cohesiveness has only positive consequences.

**These positive outcomes are explained in detail as follows:**

**1. More Participation**

Higher the degree of group cohesiveness, closer will be the interpersonal relationships among the members. As a result members will participate actively in group affairs and activities. As the members consider the group as their own, just like a family, they will help other members of the group in times of need which will further strengthen their bonds. The turnover of members will be very low. If possible, all the members attend the group meetings and group activities and take active part in discussions relating to preparing of strategies for achieving individual and group goals.

**2. More Conformity:**

One of the factors which influence cohesiveness is similarity of attitudes and values. As a result, members tend to like each other and perceive themselves as similar. These characteristics lead members to be relatively dependent on the group for satisfaction and, thus, they are susceptible to being influenced. For example, if any member is getting involved in organisational politics for enhancing his personal goals, the group might put social pressure on him and make him comply with the group norms.

**3. More Success**

Cohesiveness and success are mutually dependent upon each other. Cohesiveness makes the goal achievement easier and goal achievement adds to success. The reason for this relationship is that higher degree of cohesiveness leads to high degree of communication, participation and conformity to group norms. Such coordinated efforts result in agreement about the goals to be achieved, the methods of achieving them and finally achieving the final goals.

**4. More Communication**

Members of cohesive groups communicate with each other more than the members of non-cohesive groups. Because the members share common ideologies, goals, backgrounds or attitudes, they are inclined to greater communicativeness. Such communication is reinforcing as it tends to foster and cement positive social relations as well as depth in personal relationships.

### **5. More Personal Satisfaction**

Members of cohesive groups are more satisfied as compared to members of non-cohesive groups. This is understandable because if members are not satisfied they will leave the group and join some other group. Members are more satisfied due to so many factors which include friendliness, respect, support, achievement, protection and a feeling of security.

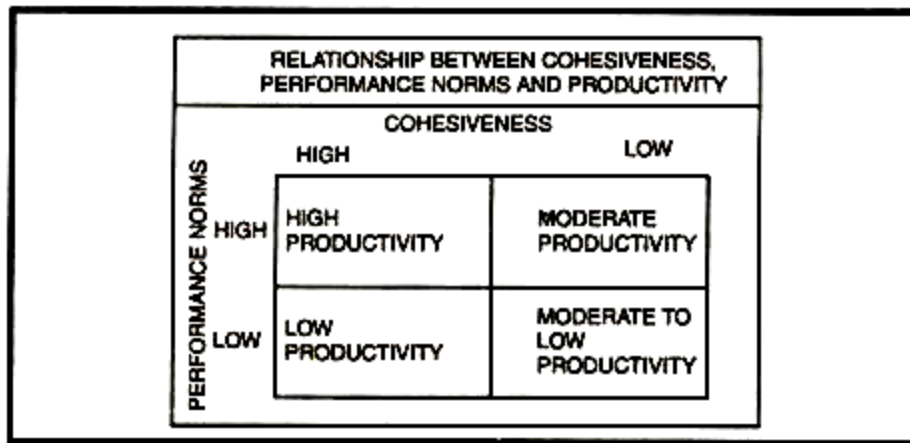
### **6. High Productivity:**

**Cohesiveness may contribute to increased productivity because**

- (i) People in cohesive groups experience fewer work related anxieties and tensions
- (ii) Highly cohesive groups tend to have lower absenteeism and turnover and
- (iii) Cohesiveness decreases productivity differences among groups.

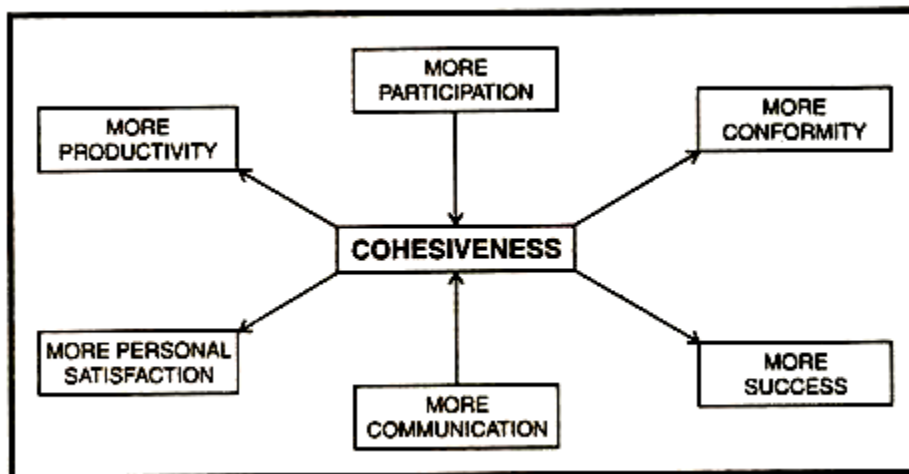
Studies consistently show that the relationship of cohesiveness and productivity depends on the performance related norms established by the group. If performance related norms are high, a cohesive group will be more productive than will a less cohesive group. But if cohesiveness is high and performance norms are low, productivity will be low. If cohesiveness is low and performance norms are high, productivity increases but less than in high cohesiveness-high norms situation. Where cohesiveness and performance related norms are both low, productivity will tend to fall into the low to moderate range.

**These conclusions are summarized in the following figure**



The worst situation for the manager is a highly cohesive group with low performance norms. Here members are highly motivated to work for their personal satisfaction only not for the organisational goals. Here the success of the management will depend upon how to direct the activities of highly cohesive group towards the successful attainment of organisational goals.

**The consequences of cohesiveness are now illustrated with the help of the following diagram**



### **Managerial Actions for Increasing or Encouraging Cohesiveness**

**A manager can follow any one or more of the following suggestions to encourage cohesiveness**

1. Make the group smaller
2. Encourage agreement with group goals
3. Increase the time members spend together
4. Increase the status of the group and the perceived difficulty of getting membership of the group
5. Stimulate competition with other groups.
6. Give rewards to the group rather than to members.
7. Physically isolate the group

8. Increase membership homogeneity
9. Increase interaction among members

### **Managerial Actions to Decrease or Discourage Cohesiveness**

Sometimes high cohesiveness adversely affects the productivity. In such cases managers have to reduce the cohesiveness of the groups.

### **Following are some of the actions which can be taken by the managers**

1. Induce disagreement on group goals
2. Increase membership heterogeneity
3. Restrict interactions among members
4. Increase group size
5. Reduce the time members spend together
6. Allocate rewards to individuals rather than to group member.
7. Remove physical isolation
8. Disband the group
9. Introduce a dominating member

**<http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/organization/group-cohesiveness/group-cohesiveness-meaning-and-its-consequences-with-diagram/63917>**

### **Top 12 Factors Influencing Group Cohesiveness**

#### **1. Similarities of Attitudes and Values**

One of the strongest sources of group cohesiveness is the similarity in attitudes and values among group members. We enjoy the company of people who hold similar opinions, morals, beliefs and code of conduct, because the person who shares the same opinions as we do provide us with a kind of social validation for our beliefs. He provides us with a feeling that we are right. If someone disagrees with us, this might make us scared that we are wrong.

Similarity of interest is very important when the group's primary goal is that of creating a friendly interpersonal climate. This factor may not be so important when the goal is task oriented. For example, if the army has to win a strategic battle, then the task accomplishment becomes the cohesive factor rather than the similarity of attitudes and values because the unit may consist of soldiers from different parts of the country who may not have much in common.

#### **2. Size of the Group**

Small groups are effective. The larger the size of the group, the less cohesive the group is.

**The main reasons for this are as explained below**

- (i) When the group is small, its members have constant face to face contacts. Thus, there will be high degree of interaction and communication with each other. In large groups, the possibility of interaction among members is less.
- (ii) As group size increases, it becomes more difficult to get the group to agree on common goals and activities and expression of disagreement and dissatisfaction increases.
- (iii) Another problem with large size groups is that there is a likelihood of forming small groups within the large groups. This would result in the dilution of the common group goal thus increasing the extent of power politics play. This tends to decrease the overall cohesiveness.
- (iv) Studies have shown that if all the members of the group are of the same sex, then small groups have better cohesion than large ones. But when the groups were made up of both males and females, the large groups have better cohesion.

### **3. Time**

It is quite natural that the more time people spend with one another, the more they will get to know each other and more tendency there will be to get closer to each other, thus, strengthening the degree of cohesiveness. In a workplace, people who work near each other are more likely to spend more time together. In routine life, you will spend more time with only those whom you like personally and want to continue interacting with them.

### **4. Location:**

Location of the group plays an important role in determining the cohesiveness. Where members of a group are located close together separated from other groups, they will develop greater cohesiveness because of constant face to face interaction. Where there is no dividing line between one group and another, cohesion is more difficult to achieve because a chain of interactions develops.

### **5. Status:**

Status of a group determines the degree of group cohesiveness to a great extent. A high status group receives greater loyalty from its members which in turn makes the group stronger. That is why people are generally more loyal to high status groups.

### **6. Difficulty in Entry**

The more difficult it is to get in a group, the more cohesive that group becomes. The reason is that in exclusive and elite groups the members are selected on the basis of certain characteristics and these characteristics being common to all add to the degree of liking and attraction towards each other. The more exclusive the group the more is the closeness among



members. As the groups are not easy to join, the selected members feel a sense of pride and accomplishment.

## **7. Inter Dependency**

When each member of a group has independent activities, the cohesiveness among the members of such group will be less as compared to the group whose members are doing the operations which are dependent upon each other, thus, mutual dependency leads to greater cohesiveness.

## **8. Management Behaviour**

The behaviour of management has a direct influence on the degree of cohesiveness that exists within a group. The manager can make close relations difficult by creating unhealthy competition among employees. On the other hand, he can build solidarity by rewarding cooperative behaviour. The cohesive group can help attain the group goals more effectively, if the group members are properly inspired by the manager.

## **9. Member Turnover**

To make a group more cohesive, there is need for some degree of stable relationships among members. The higher the degree of member turnover, the less cohesive a group becomes, because the more frequently members leave a particular group the more time a new member takes to get attached to the group and the more time the old member takes to get attached to the new group.

## **10. Threat**

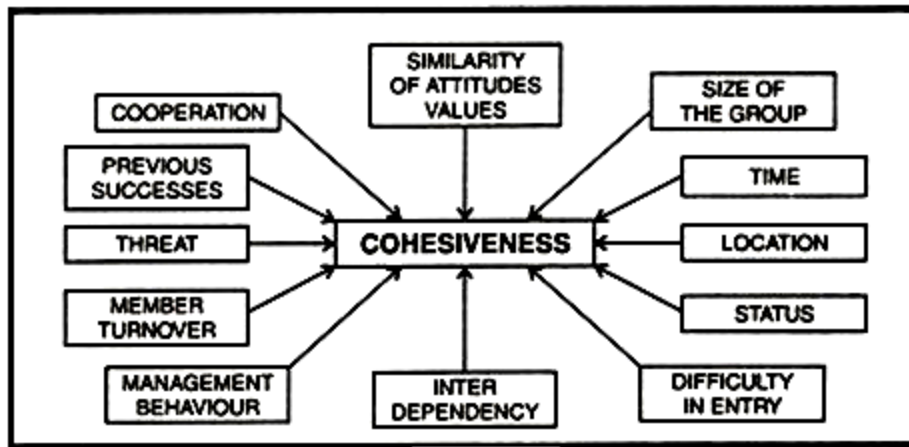
**Threat is a very powerful force which unifies the group, particularly when it comes from**

- (i) Outside the group
- (ii) Cooperation can help overcome the threat and
- (iii) There is little or no chance for escape.

For example, the management threatens frequently to bring together an otherwise disarrayed union. Thus, the threatening party will have a less chance of success when faced with a unified force.

## **11. Previous Successes and Shared Goals**

When a group achieves a meaningful goal, the cohesiveness of the group increases because the success is shared by all the members and each one feels responsible for the achievement. , If the group agrees on the purpose and direction of its activities, this serves to bind the group together. For this reason, successful companies find it easy to hire new talented employees.



## 12. Cooperation

Sometimes the general atmosphere of group enhances cohesiveness. The overall atmosphere depends among other things on leadership.

<http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/organization/group-cohesiveness/top-12-factors-influencing-group-cohesiveness/63921>

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