Chapter 16

Skills for Optimizing Leadership as Situations Change

In this final chapter we offer some ideas about skills appropriate to the last element of the interactional framework. These skills include relatively advanced leadership skills useful in various specific situational challenges:

- Creating a compelling vision.
- Managing conflict.
- Negotiation.
- Diagnosing performance problems in individuals, groups, and organizations.
- Team building at the top.
- Punishment.

Creating a Compelling Vision

Suppose you are running the computer department at an electronics store. Overall the store has been having a good year: sales of cell phones, HDTVs and in-home theater equipment, and digital cameras have all been strong. But computer sales are lagging, and the store manager is exerting considerable pressure on you to increase sales. Your 11 sales associates are all relatively new to sales, and many do not have strong computer backgrounds. Your assistant department manager recently moved to the in-home theater department, and you have been screening candidates for this opening on your team. After failing to be impressed with the first four candidates interviewed, you notice that the next candidate, Colleen, has just moved to town and has a strong background in electronics sales. During the interview you become even more convinced that Colleen would be an ideal assistant department manager. Toward the end of the interview you ask Colleen if she has any questions about the position, and she states that she is considering several job offers and is asking all her prospective employers the same question, which is "Why should I work for you?"

What would you say if someone asked you this question? Would you be able to close the sale and make a strong case for getting someone to join your team? Believe it or not, many leaders cannot provide a compelling description of how they add value; as a result they have difficulty getting anyone excited to become part of their groups. And these struggles are not limited to new leaders—many seasoned leaders either do not have or cannot effectively articulate a clear and dynamic leadership vision. Yet many followers want to know where their team or group is going, how it intends to get there, and what they need to do to win. A leader's vision can answer these questions, explain why change is necessary, and keep team members motivated and focused. Because a leader's vision can have a pervasive effect on followers and teams, it is worth describing a process for building a compelling leadership vision.[1,2]

Before discussing the four components of leadership vision, it is worth noting that most people don't get particularly excited about a leader's vision by sitting though lengthy PowerPoint presentations or formal speeches. People tend to get more involved when leaders use stories, analogies, and personal experiences to paint compelling pictures of the future. As such, a leader's vision should be a personal statement that should help listeners answer the following questions:

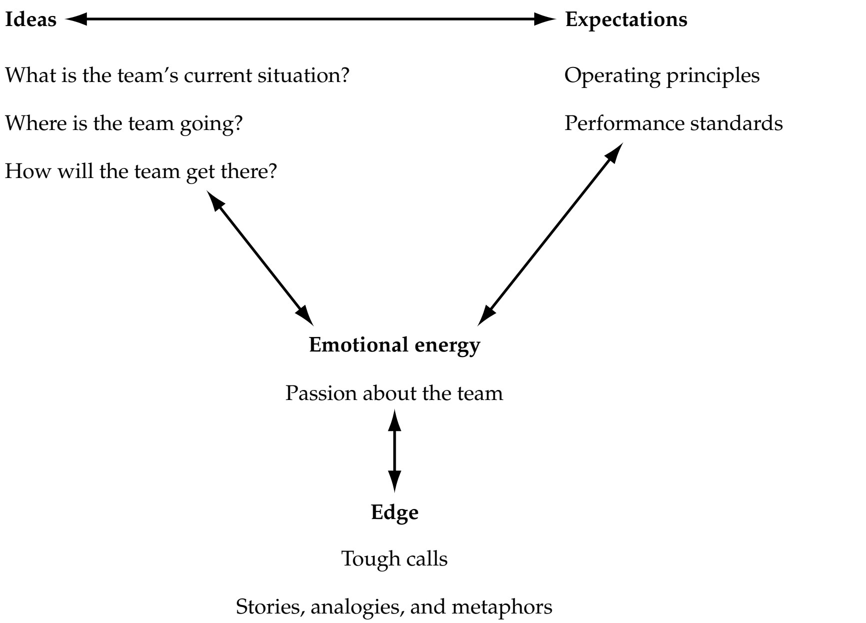
- Where is the team going, and how will it get there?
- How does the team win, and how does it contribute to the broader organization's success?
- How does the speaker define leadership?
- What gets the speaker excited about being a leader?
- What are the speaker's key values? In other words, what are the leader's expectations for team members, and what will she or he not tolerate as a leader?

If you are currently in a leadership position, ask yourself how your direct reports would answer these questions. Would their answers to all five questions be the same, or would their answers differ? Alternatively, how would you answer these questions for your boss? If followers do not provide the same answers for these questions, leaders may need to create or better articulate their leadership vision. As shown in Figure 16.1, a leadership vision consists of four related components.

Ideas: The Future Picture

The idea component of a leader's vision begins with an honest assessment of the current situation facing the team.[3] Leaders need to clearly identify

FIGURE 16.1
The Four Components of a Leadership Vision



what the team is doing well, what it is not doing well, how it is performing compared to the competition, and what challenges it faces. Leaders should not pull any punches when assessing team performance because downplaying or overlooking team shortcomings will likely result in mediocrity. Once a leader has accurately assessed a team's strengths, weaknesses, and potential, he or she needs to clearly define where the team needs to be over the next 12–36 months. This future picture needs to describe the team's upcoming goals; the reputation it needs to have within the organization, among competitors, and with customers; and what strategies the team will pursue to achieve these outcomes. Ideas should also describe what changes the team must make to accomplish its major goals, explain why these changes are necessary, and give listeners hope for the future.[4]

Although leaders can complete the ideas component by themselves, they will often get considerably more commitment by working with their teams to assess the situation, set future team goals, and identify the changes needed for success. Whether the idea component is a solo or team effort, leaders will have successfully articulated their future pictures when everyone on their teams shares the same understanding of the situation and what they need to do to win.

Expectations: Values and Performance Standards

A leader's vision also needs to clearly describe her or his expectations for team member behavior. More specifically, what behaviors do leaders want team members to exhibit, and just as importantly, what behaviors will they not tolerate from team members? A leader's expectations for team members are highly related to his or her values. For example, if a leader believes winning is an important value, then he or she needs to say something about the levels of performance and commitment needed by team members. Or if leaders believe collaboration is an important value, they need to define how team members are supposed to work together. Because values and operating principles play such an important role in defining team member expectations, leaders should spend time identifying the team's core values and the positive and negative behaviors associated with these values. To improve understanding and buy-in, leaders can work with team members to jointly define a team's core values.

One important leadership role is to ensure that a team's core values are aligned with its future picture. For example, if the team has some aggressive performance goals, then its core values should include something about the performance and commitment expectations for individual team members. Team goals represent *what* a team must do to succeed; core values and operating principles represent *how* team members should behave if the team is to win. In addition, leaders should strive to implement a fairly limited (five to eight) set of core values. Team members often have difficulty recalling more than a half dozen core values, so the operating principles should be limited to only those values that are most directly related to team goals.

Leaders not only need to be a role model for these core values—they also need to hold team members accountable for behaving in accordance with these operating principles. Nothing will erode a leader's credibility or team morale more quickly then leaders or team members not being held accountable for exhibiting behaviors that are misaligned with a team's operating principles. Leaders will have successfully conveyed their operating principles when everyone on the team understands and is behaving in accordance with the team's core values.

Emotional Energy: The Power and the Passion

The last two components of leadership vision, emotional energy and edge, are concerned more with delivery than content. Emotional energy is the level of enthusiasm leaders use to convey the future vision and the team's operating principles. Nothing kills follower enthusiasm and motivation for a leader's vision more quickly than a dull, monotone delivery. If leaders are not excited about where the team is going and how it will get there, it will be difficult to get others to join the effort. However, leaders who are excited about where their teams are going still need to make sure this enthusiasm is clear in the delivery of their vision. Emotional appeals make for compelling messages, and leaders should use a range of emotions when describing the future picture and operating principles. Leaders will have effectively mastered the emotional energy component when team members see that they are excited about where the team is going and being in a leadership role.

Edge: Stories, Analogies, and Metaphors

Perhaps the most difficult component to master when it comes to creating a leadership vision is edge. Edge pertains to lessons of leadership learned through personal experience that are related to the team's future picture and core values. Edge includes personal stories and examples that can help color a team's future picture. For example, edge might include stories about teams leaders have been on or have led in the past through similar situations. Edge would also include stories that illustrate why some of the team's core values are so important—examples of how team members did or did not act in accordance with a particular value and what happened as a result. Edge can also include slogans, analogies, and metaphors to help clarify and simplify where the team is going or what it stands for. In general, the more personal the examples and the simpler the stories, the more likely leaders will leave an impression on team members.

Leaders should not spend too much time worrying about edge until the team's future picture and core values are clearly defined. However, once these issues are clearly understood, leaders need to reflect on how their personal experiences can help team members understand where the team is going and why certain behaviors are important. They should also spend time brainstorming analogies, metaphors, and slogans that can distill team goals and behaviors into simple but memorable messages. As was described for the future picture and core values, these analogies and slogans do not have to be solo efforts; leaders can solicit team members' help in creating slogans that convey simple but compelling messages about the future direction for their teams.

Although ideas, expectations, emotional energy, and edge make up the four components of a leader's vision, several other leadership vision issues are worth noting. First, the delivery of a leader's vision improves with practice. The four components can help leaders define what they need to say and how they need to say it, but leaders should practice the delivery of their vision a number of times before going live with team members. Ideally they should use video recordings of some of these practice deliveries to ensure that key messages are being conveyed, the personal stories being used make sense and are easy to follow, and excitement and emotion are evident. Second, leaders need to remember that the most compelling leadership visions are relatively short and make sparing use of PowerPoint slides. Many of the best leadership visions are less than 10 minutes long and consist of no more than three to four slides. Third, leaders need to constantly tie team events back to their vision and core values. Reminding team members how delegated tasks relate to the team's vision, tying team member feedback to core values, and explaining how staff and strategy changes relate to team goals and operating principles are all effective ways to keep team members focused and motivated toward a leader's vision. And fourth, having a clear and compelling leadership vision should go a long way in answering the question posed at the beginning of this section, which was "Why should I work for you?"

Managing Conflict

We read or hear in the daily news about various types of negotiations. Nations often negotiate with each other over land or fishing rights, trade agreements, or diplomatic relations. Land developers often negotiate with city councils for variances of local zoning laws for their projects. Businesses often spend considerable time negotiating employee salaries and fringe benefits with labor unions. In a similar fashion, negotiations every day cover matters ranging from high school athletic schedules to where a new office copying machine will be located. In one sense, all these negotiations, big or small, are similar. In every case, representatives from different groups meet to resolve some sort of conflict. Conflict is an inevitable fact of life and an inevitable fact of leadership. Researchers have found that first-line supervisors and midlevel managers can spend more than 25 percent of their time dealing with conflict,[5] and resolving conflict has been found to be an important factor in leadership effectiveness.[6] In fact, successfully resolving conflicts is so important that it is a central theme in some of the literature about organizations.[7-9] Moreover, successfully resolving conflicts will become an increasingly important skill as leadership and management practice moves away from authoritarian directives and toward cooperative approaches emphasizing rational persuasion, collaboration, compromise, and solutions of mutual gain.

What Is Conflict?

Conflict occurs when opposing parties have interests or goals that appear to be incompatible.[10] There are a variety of sources of conflict in team, committee, work group, and organizational settings. For example, conflict can occur when group or team members (1) have strong differences in values, beliefs, or goals; (2) have high levels of task or lateral interdependence; (3) are competing for scarce resources or rewards; (4) are under high levels of stress; or (5) face uncertain or incompatible demands—that is, role ambiguity and role conflict.[11] Conflict can also occur when leaders act in a manner inconsistent with the vision and goals they have articulated for the organization.[12] Of these factors contributing to the level of conflict within or between groups, teams, or committees, probably the most important source of conflict is the lack of communication between parties.[13] Because many conflicts are the result of misunderstandings and communication breakdowns, leaders can minimize the level of conflict within and between groups by improving their communication and listening skills, as well as spending time networking with others.[14]

Before we review specific negotiation tips and conflict resolution strategies, it is necessary to describe several aspects of conflict that can have an impact on the resolution process. First, the size of an issue (bigger issues are more difficult to resolve), the extent to which parties define the problem egocentrically (how much they have personally invested in the problem), and the existence of hidden agendas (unstated but important concerns or objectives) can all affect the conflict resolution process. Second, seeing a conflict situation in win–lose or either–or terms restricts the perceived possible outcomes to either total satisfaction or total frustration. A similar but less extreme variant is to see a situation in zero-sum terms. A zero-sum situation is one in which intermediate degrees of satisfaction are possible, but increases in one party's satisfaction inherently decrease the other party's satisfaction, and vice versa. Still another variant can occur when parties perceive a conflict as unresolvable. In such cases neither party gains at the expense of the other, but each continues to perceive the other as an obstacle to satisfaction.[15]

Is Conflict Always Bad?

So far we have described conflict as an inherently negative aspect of any group, team, committee, or organization. This certainly was the prevailing view of conflict among researchers during the 1930s and 1940s, and it probably also represents the way many people are raised today (that is, most people have a strong value of minimizing or avoiding conflict). However, researchers studying group effectiveness today have come to a different conclusion. Some level of conflict may help bolster innovation and performance. Conflict that enhances group productivity is viewed as useful, and conflict that hinders group performance is viewed as counterproductive.[16] Various possible positive and negative effects of conflict are listed in Highlight 16.1.

Along these lines, researchers have found that conflict can cause a radical change in political power,[17,18] as well as dramatic changes in organizational structure and design, group cohesiveness, and group or organizational effectiveness.[19,20] Nevertheless, it is important to realize that this current conceptualization of conflict is still somewhat limited in scope. For example, increasing the level of conflict within a group or team may enhance immediate performance but may also have a disastrous effect on organizational climate and turnover. Leaders may be evaluated in terms of many criteria, however, only one of which is group performance. Thus leaders should probably use criteria such as turnover and absenteeism rates and followers' satisfaction or organizational climate ratings in addition to measures of group performance when trying to determine whether conflict is good or bad. Leaders are cautioned against using group performance alone because this may not reveal the overall effects of conflict on the group or team.

Possible Effects of Conflict

HIGHLIGHT 16.1

Possible Positive Effects of Conflict	Possible Negative Effects of Conflict
Increased effort.	Reduced productivity.
Feelings get aired.	Decreased communication.
Better understanding of others.	Negative feelings.
Impetus for change.	Stress.
Better decision making.	Poorer decision making.
Key issues surface.	Decreased cooperation.
Critical thinking stimulated.	Political backstabbing.

Conflict Resolution Strategies

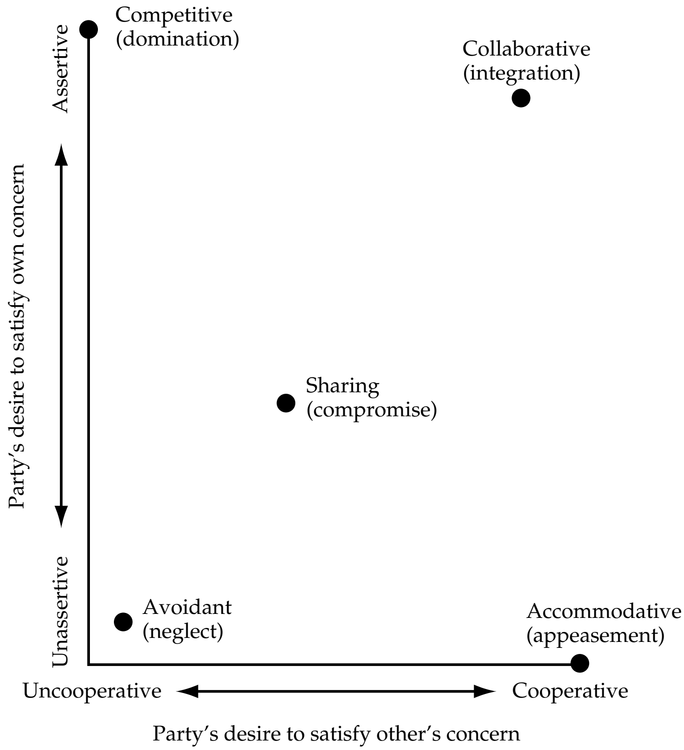
In addition to spending time understanding and clarifying positions, separating people from the problem, and focusing on interests, leaders can use five strategies or approaches to resolve conflicts. Perhaps the best way to differentiate between these five strategies is to think of conflict resolution in terms of two independent dimensions: cooperativeness versus uncooperativeness and assertiveness versus unassertiveness (see Figure 16.2). Parties in conflict vary in their commitment to satisfy the other's concerns, but they also vary in the extent to which they assertively stand up for their own concerns.[21] Thus conflict resolution can be understood in terms of how cooperative or uncooperative the parties are and how assertive or unassertive they are.

Using this two-dimension scheme, Thomas[22] described five general approaches to managing conflict:

1. *Competition* reflects a desire to achieve one's own ends at the expense of someone else. This is domination, also known as a win–lose orientation.
2. *Accommodation* reflects a mirror image of competition—entirely giving in to someone else's concerns without making any effort to achieve one's own ends. This is a tactic of appeasement.
3. *Sharing* is an approach that represents a compromise between domination and appeasement. Both parties give up something, yet both parties get something. Both parties are moderately, but incompletely, satisfied.
4. *Collaboration* reflects an effort to fully satisfy both parties. This is a problem-solving approach that requires the integration of each party's concerns.
5. *Avoidance* involves indifference to the concerns of both parties. It reflects a withdrawal from or neglect of any party's interests.

FIGURE 16.2
Five Conflict-Handling Orientations, Plotted According to the Parties' Desire to Satisfy Own and Other's Concerns

Source: K. W. Thomas, "Conflict and Conflict Management," in *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology,* ed. M. D. Dunnette (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976). Reprinted with permission of Marvin D. Dunnette.



Does one of these approaches seem clearly better than the others to you? Each of them does, at least, reflect certain culturally valued modes of behavior.[23] For example, the esteem many people hold for athletic, business, and military heroes reflects our cultural valuation of competition. Valuation of a pragmatic approach to settling problems is reflected in the compromising approach. Cultural values of unselfishness, kindness, and generosity are reflected in accommodation, and even avoidance has roots in philosophies that emphasize caution, diplomacy, and turning away from worldly concerns. These cultural roots to each of the approaches to managing conflict suggest that no single one is likely to be right all the time. There probably are circumstances when each of the modes of conflict resolution can be appropriate. Rather than seeking a single best approach to managing conflict, it may be wisest to appreciate the relative advantages and disadvantages of all the approaches, as well as the circumstances when each may be most appropriate. A summary of experienced leaders' recommendations for when to use each strategy is presented in Highlight 16.2.

Finally, winning a negotiation at your counterpart's expense is likely to be only a short-term gain. Leaders should attempt to work out a resolution

Situations in Which to Use the Five Approaches to Conflict Management

HIGHLIGHT 16.2

COMPETING

1. When quick, decisive action is vital—such as emergencies.
2. On important issues where unpopular actions need implementing—cost cutting, enforcing unpopular rules, discipline.
3. On issues vital to company welfare when you know you're right.
4. Against people who take advantage of noncompetitive behavior.

COLLABORATING

1. To find an integrative solution when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised.
2. When your objective is to learn.
3. To merge insights from people with different perspectives.
4. To gain commitment by incorporating concerns into a consensus.
5. To work through feelings that have interfered with a relationship.

COMPROMISING

1. When goals are important, but not worth the effort or potential disruption of more assertive modes.
2. When opponents with equal power are committed to mutually exclusive goals.
3. To achieve temporary settlements of complex issues.
4. To arrive at expedient solutions under time pressure.
5. As a backup when collaboration or competition is unsuccessful.

AVOIDING

1. When an issue is trivial or more important issues are pressing.
2. When you perceive no chance of satisfying your concerns.
3. When potential disruption outweighs the benefits of resolution.
4. To let people cool down and regain perspective.
5. When gathering information supersedes immediate decisions.
6. When others can resolve the conflict more effectively.
7. When issues seem tangential to or symptomatic of other issues.

ACCOMMODATING

1. When you find you are wrong—to allow a better position to be heard, to learn, and to show your reasonableness.
2. When issues are more important to others than yourself—to satisfy others and maintain cooperation.
3. To build social credits for later issues.
4. To minimize loss when you are outmatched and losing.
5. When harmony and stability are especially important.
6. To allow subordinates to develop by learning from mistakes.

Source: K. W. Thomas, "Toward Multidimensional Values in Teaching: The Example of Conflict Management," *Academy of Management Review* 2, no. 3 (1977), pp. 484–90.

How to Swim with Sharks

HIGHLIGHT 16.3

It is dangerous to swim with sharks, but not all sharks are found in the water. Some people may behave like sharks, and a best-selling book for executives written a few years ago took its title from that theme. However, an article appeared in the journal *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* over three decades ago claiming to be a translated version of an essay written in France more than a century earlier for sponge divers. The essay notes that while no one wants to swim with sharks, it is an occupational hazard for certain people. For those who must swim with sharks, it can be essential to follow certain rules. See if you think the following rules for interacting with the sharks of the sea serve as useful analogies for interacting with the sharks of everyday life:

Rule 1: Assume any unidentified fish is a shark. Just because a fish may be acting in a docile manner does not mean it is not a shark. The real test is how it will act when blood is in the water.

Rule 2: Don't bleed. Bleeding will prompt even more aggressive behavior and the involvement of even more sharks. Of course, it is not easy to keep from bleeding when injured. Those who cannot do so are advised not to swim with sharks at all.

Rule 3: Confront aggression quickly. Sharks usually give warning before attacking a swimmer. Swimmers should watch for indications an attack is imminent and take prompt counteraction. A blow to the nose is often appropriate because it shows you understand the shark's intentions and will respond in kind. It is particularly dangerous to behave in an ingratiating manner toward sharks. People who once held this erroneous view often can be identified by a missing limb.

Rule 4: Get out of the water if anyone starts bleeding. Previously docile sharks may begin attacking if blood is in the water. Their behavior can become so irrational, even including attacking themselves, that it is safest to remove yourself entirely from the situation.

Rule 5: Create dissension among the attackers. Sharks are self-centered and rarely act in an organized fashion with other sharks. This significantly reduces the risk of swimming with sharks. Every now and then, however, sharks may launch a coordinated attack. The best strategy then is to create internal dissension among them because they already are quite prone to it; often sharks will fight among themselves over trivial or minor things. By the time their internal conflict is settled, sharks often have forgotten about their organized attack.

Rule 6: Never divert a shark attack toward another swimmer. Please observe this final item of swimming etiquette.

Source: V. Cousteau, "How to Swim with Sharks: A Primer," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine,* Summer 1973, pp. 525–28.

by looking at long-term rather than short-term goals, and they should try to build a working relationship that will endure and be mutually trusting and beneficial beyond the present negotiation. Along these lines, leaders should always seek win–win outcomes that try to satisfy both sides' needs and continuing interests. It often takes creative problem solving to find new options that provide gains for both sides. Realistically, however, not all situations may be conducive to seeking win–win outcomes (see Highlight 16.3).

Negotiation

Negotiation is an approach that may help resolve some conflicts. The following negotiating tips, from Fisher and Ury,[24] include taking the time to prepare for a negotiating session; keeping the people and problems separate; and focusing on interests rather than on positions.

Prepare for the Negotiation

To successfully resolve conflicts, leaders may need to spend considerable time preparing for a negotiating session. Leaders should anticipate each side's key concerns and issues, attitudes, possible negotiating strategies, and goals.

Separate the People from the Problem

Fisher and Ury also advised negotiators to separate the people from the problem.[25] Because all negotiations involve substantive issues and relationships between negotiators, it is easy for these parts to become entangled. When that happens, parties may inadvertently treat the people and the problem as though they were the same. For example, a group of teachers angry that their salaries have not been raised for the fourth year in a row may direct their personal bitterness toward the school board president. However, reactions such as these are usually a mistake because the decision may be out of the other party's hands, and personally attacking the other party often makes the conflict even more difficult to resolve.

Leaders can do several things to separate the people from the problem. First, leaders should not let their fears color their perceptions of each side's intentions. It is easy to attribute negative qualities to others when we feel threatened. Similarly, it does no good to blame the other side for our own problems.[26] Even if this is justified, it is still usually counterproductive. Another thing leaders can do to separate the people from the problem is to communicate clearly. Earlier in this text we suggested techniques for active listening. Those guidelines are especially helpful in negotiating and resolving conflicts.

Focus on Interests, Not Positions

Another of Fisher and Ury's main points is to focus on interests, not positions. Focusing on interests depends on understanding the difference between interests and positions. Here is one example. Say Raoul has had the same reserved seats to the local symphony every season for several years, but he was just notified that he will no longer get his usual tickets. Feeling irate, he goes to the ticket office to complain. One approach he could take would be to demand the same seats he has always had; this would be his *position.* A different approach would be to find alternative seats that are just as satisfactory as his old seats were; this would be his *interest.* In negotiating, it is much more constructive to satisfy interests than to fight over positions. Furthermore, it is important to focus both on your counterpart's interests (not position) and on your own interests (not position).

Diagnosing Performance Problems in Individuals, Groups, and Organizations

In many ways leaders will be only as effective as the followers and teams they lead. Along these lines, one of the more difficult issues leaders must deal with is managing individuals or teams that are not performing up to expectations. What makes this issue even more difficult is that although the lack of performance may be obvious, the reasons for it may not. Leaders who correctly determine why a follower or team is exhibiting suboptimal performance are much more likely to implement an appropriate intervention to fix the problem. Unfortunately many leaders do not have a model or framework for diagnosing performance problems at work, and as a result many do a poor job of dealing with problem performers. The model in Figure 16.3 gives leaders a pragmatic framework for understanding why a follower or team may not be performing up to expectations and what the leader can do to improve the situation. This model maintains that performance is a function of expectations, capabilities, opportunities, and motivation and integrates concepts discussed in more detail earlier in this book.

The model is also a modification of earlier models developed by various experts.[27-29] Because it is a multiplicative rather than a compensatory model, a deficit in any component should result in a substantial decrement in performance that cannot be easily made up by increasing the other components. An example might help illuminate this point. Recently one of the authors was asked to help the manager of a nuclear power plant fix several safety and operational issues affecting the plant. Apparently many plant personnel did not feel they had to comply with governmental regulations regarding the proper use of safety equipment. An investigation into the problem revealed that the expectations for compliance were clear, everyone had been trained in the proper use of safety equipment, and the equipment was readily available. However, many personnel felt the equipment and procedures were a nuisance and unnecessary. The plant manager's initial attempt to rectify this problem was to run all plant personnel through a three-day nuclear safety training program. Much to the manager's surprise, the training program actually appeared to decrease safety compliance. This was due

FIGURE 16.3
A Model of Performance

Performance = f (Expectations × Capabilities × Opportunities × Motivation) to the fact that the underlying issue was not expectations, capabilities, or opportunities but rather motivation. Even 30 days of training would not have helped motivation, which was the underlying barrier to performance. Because there were few if any positive or negative consequences for the staff's use or neglect of the equipment, the problem did not improve until the manager implemented a system of rewards and punishments for safety compliance. A more thorough explanation of the components of the model and what leaders can do to improve performance follows.

Expectations

Performance problems often occur because individuals or groups do not understand what they are supposed to do. In many instances talented, skilled groups accomplish the wrong objective because of miscommunication or sit idly while waiting for instructions that never arrive. It is the leader's responsibility to ensure that followers understand their roles, goals, performance standards, and the key metrics for determining success. More information about goal setting and clarifying team goals and roles can be found in the "Setting Goals" and "Building High-Performance Teams" sections of Chapter 11.

Capabilities

Just because followers understand what they are supposed to do does not necessarily mean they can do it. Sometimes followers and teams lack the capabilities needed to achieve a goal or perform above expectations. Abilities and skills are the two components that make up capabilities. Ability is really another name for raw talent, and includes such individual variables as athleticism, intelligence, creativity, and personality traits. As such, abilities are characteristics that are relatively difficult to change with training. Because abilities are relatively insensitive to training interventions, sending people who lack the required abilities to more training or motivating them to work harder will have relatively little impact on performance. Instead the best remedy for this situation is to select individuals with the abilities needed for performance.

Although followers may have the raw talent needed to perform a task, they still may lack the skills needed to perform at a high level. Such is the case with many athletic teams or musical groups at the beginning of the season or when a work group gets new equipment or responsibility for tasks it has no previous experience with. As discussed in the "Leadership Behavior" chapter (Chapter 7), skills consist of a well-defined body of knowledge and a set of related behaviors. Unlike abilities, skills are amenable to training, and leaders with high levels of relevant expertise may coach others in the development of skills, see that they are obtained in other ways on the job, or send their followers to training programs in order to improve their skill levels.

Opportunities

Performance can also be limited when followers lack the resources needed to get the job done. At other times followers may lack the opportunity to demonstrate acquired skills. Such is the case when passengers are hungry but flight attendants have no meals to pass out during the flight. In this situation the flight attendants could have high levels of customer service goals, capabilities, and motivation but will still not be able to satisfy customer needs. Leaders must ensure that followers and teams have the needed equipment, financial resources, and opportunities to exhibit their skills if they want to eliminate this constraint on performance.

Motivation

Many performance problems can be attributed to a lack of motivation. The critical issue here is whether followers or groups choose to perform or exhibit the level of effort necessary to accomplish a task. If this does not occur, the leader should first try to learn why people are unmotivated. Sometimes the task may involve risks the leader is not aware of. At other times individuals or groups may run out of steam to perform the task, or there may be few consequences for superior or unsatisfactory performance. Leaders have several options to resolve motivation problems in followers and teams. First, they can select followers who have higher levels of achievement or intrinsic motivation for the task. Second, they can set clear goals or do a better job of providing performance feedback. Third, they can reallocate work across the team or redesign the tasks to improve skill variety, task significance, and task identity. Fourth, they can restructure rewards and punishments so they are more closely linked to performance levels. See the "Motivation, Satisfaction, and Performance" chapter (Chapter 9) for more information about motivating followers.

Concluding Comments on the Diagnostic Model

In summary, this model provides an integrative framework for many of the topics affecting performance previously reviewed in this text. It reviews some of the factors that affect performance and suggests ideas for rectifying performance problems. However, this model addresses only follower, group, and organizational performance. Leaders need to remember that there are other desirable outcomes, too, such as organizational climate and job satisfaction, and that actions to increase performance (especially just in the short term) may adversely impact these other desirable outcomes.

Team Building at the Top

In certain ways, executive teams are similar to any other teams. For example, just about any group of senior executives that has faced a dire crisis and survived will note that teamwork was essential for its survival.

In a nutshell, then, *when teamwork is critical,* all the lessons of the Chapter 11 section "Building High-Performance Teams" apply. More specifically, to really benefit from a team-building intervention, individual members must be comfortable with their own strengths and weaknesses and the strengths and weaknesses of their peers. But this raises a question: If all this is true, why do we include a separate section about team building for top teams? Because two important differences between most teams and "teams at the top" should be addressed.

Executive Teams Are Different

As opposed to other kinds of work teams, not all the work at the executive level requires all (or even any) of the team to be present. An example might help. In our research on teams we studied the air crews that fly the B-1 bomber. These are four-person teams comprising an aircraft commander, a copilot, an offensive systems officer, and a defensive systems officer. While each has individual responsibilities, in every bombing run we observed, it was essential that the team work together to accomplish the mission. They had all the components of a true team (complex and common goal, differentiated skills, interdependence), and no individual acting alone could have achieved success. But this is not always the case for executive teams.

As Katzenbach has observed,[30] many top leadership challenges do not require teamwork at all. Furthermore, many top leadership challenges that do constitute real team opportunities do not require or warrant full involvement by everyone who is officially on the team. In fact, an official "team at the top" rarely functions as a collective whole involving all the formal members. Thus the real trick for executive teams is to be able to apply both the technical individual skills that probably got the individuals to the team and the skills required for high-performance teamwork when a team situation presents itself.

Applying Individual Skills and Team Skills

There are two critical requirements if this is to work. First, leaders must have the diagnostic skills to discern whether a challenge involves an individual situation or a team situation. Then leaders must "stay the course" when a team situation is present. This means, for example, when pressure for results intensifies, not slipping back into the traditional modes of assigning work to an individual (such as one member of that top team), but rather allowing the team to complete the work *as a team.* Again, Katzenbach stated this clearly:

> Some leadership groups, of course, err in the opposite way, by attempting to forge a team around performance opportunities that do not call for a team approach. In fact, the increasing emphasis that team proponents place on "team-based organizations" creates real frustrations as top leadership groups try to rationalize good executive leadership instincts into

> time-consuming team building that has no performance purpose. Catalyzing real team performances at the top does not mean replacing executive leadership with executive teams; it means being rigorous about the distinction between opportunities that require single-leader efforts and those that require team efforts—and applying the discipline that fits.[31]

To summarize this point, executives do not always need to perform as a team to be effective. But when they do need to perform as a team, the same lessons of team building discussed earlier can help enhance their team performance.

The second difference with executive teams is that they have an opportunity to enhance teamwork throughout their organization that few others have. It is our experience that *only the executive team can change organizational systems.* Recall that in Chapter 10 we described the Team Leadership Model and mentioned four systems issues critical to team performance. These systems were all located at the organizational level and consisted of reward systems, education systems, information systems, and control systems. The impact of these systems can be so pervasive across the entire organization that a small change in a system can have monumental impact in the organization. In a sense, then, the executive team has the power to do widespread team building in a manner different than we have discussed to this point. For example, consider the impact of changing a compensation system from an individual-based bonus plan to a team-based bonus plan.

Tripwire Lessons

Finally, our experience in working with executives has taught us that leaders at this level have important lessons to learn about team building at the top. Richard Hackman, in preparing the huge editorial task of having many people produce one coherent book (by his own admission, not necessarily the best of team tasks), assembled the various authors at a conference center. As one of the contributors, one of this text's authors (RCG) recalls the frustrating task of attempting to put together a simple checklist of steps to ensure that a team developed properly. As this arduous process dragged on and tempers flared, it became obvious that "Teamwork for Dummies" was never going to emerge. But something else did emerge. It became clear that *some behaviors leaders engaged in could virtually guarantee failure for their teams.* While not the intent, this experience yielded a worthwhile set of lessons. A condensed version of those lessons, labeled "trip wires" by Hackman, concludes our discussion of team building at the top.[32]

Trip Wire 1: Call the Performing Unit a Team But Really Manage Members as Individuals One way to set up work is to assign specific responsibilities to specific individuals and then choreograph individuals' activities so their products coalesce into a team product. A contrasting strategy is to assign a team responsibility and accountability for an entire piece of work and let members decide among themselves how they will proceed to accomplish the work. Although either of these strategies can be effective, a choice must be made between them. A mixed model, in which people are told they are a team but are treated as individual performers with their own specific jobs to do, sends mixed signals to members, is likely to confuse everyone, and in the long run is probably untenable.

To reap the benefits of teamwork, a leader must actually build a team. Calling a set of people a team or exhorting them to work together is insufficient. Instead explicit action must be taken to establish the team's boundaries, to define the task as one for which members are collectively responsible and accountable, and to give members the authority to manage both their internal processes and the team's relations with external entities such as clients and co-workers. Once this is done, management behavior and organizational systems gradually can be changed as necessary to support teamwork.

Trip Wire 2: Create an Inappropriate Authority Balance The exercise of authority creates anxiety, especially when a leader must balance between assigning a team authority for some parts of the work and withholding it for other parts. Because both managers and team members tend to be uncomfortable in such situations, they may collude to clarify them. Sometimes the result is the assignment of virtually all authority to the team—which can result in anarchy or a team that heads off in an inappropriate direction. At other times managers retain virtually all authority, dictating work procedures in detail to team members and, in the process, losing many of the advantages that can accrue from teamwork. In both cases the anxieties that accompany a mixed model are reduced, but at significant cost to team effectiveness.

Achieving a good balance of managerial and team authority is difficult. Moreover, merely deciding how much authority will be assigned to the group and how much will be retained by management is insufficient. Equally important are the domains of authority that are assigned and retained. Our findings suggest that managers should be unapologetic and insistent about exercising their authority over *direction*—the end states the team is to pursue—and over *outer-limit constraints on team behavior*—the things the team must always do or never do. At the same time managers should assign to the team full authority for the means by which it accomplishes its work—and then do whatever they can to ensure that team members understand and accept their responsibility and accountability for deciding how they will execute the work.

Few managerial behaviors are more consequential for the long-term existence of teams than those that address the partitioning of authority between managers and teams. It takes skill to accomplish this well, and this skill has emotional and behavioral as well as cognitive components. Just knowing the rules for partitioning authority is insufficient; leaders also need practice in applying those rules in situations where anxieties, including their own, are likely to be high. Especially challenging for managers are the early stages in the life of a team (when managers often are tempted to give away too much authority) and times when the going gets rough (when the temptation is to take authority back too soon). The management of authority relations with task-performing teams is much like walking on a balance beam, and our evidence suggests that it takes a good measure of knowledge, skill, and perseverance to keep from falling off.

Trip Wire 3: Assemble a Large Group of People, Tell Them in General Terms What Needs to Be Accomplished, and Let Them "Work Out the Details" Traditionally, individually focused designs for work are plagued by constraining structures that have built up over the years to monitor and control employee behavior. When groups perform work, such structures tend to be viewed as unnecessary bureaucratic impediments to team functioning. Thus, just as managers sometimes (and mistakenly) attempt to empower teams by relinquishing all authority to them, so do some attempt to get rid of the dysfunctional features of existing organizational structures simply by taking down all the structures they can. Apparently the hope is that removing structures will release teams and enable members to work together creatively and effectively.

Managers who hold this view often wind up providing teams with less structure than they actually need. Tasks are defined only in vague, general terms. Group composition is unclear or fluid. The limits of the team's authority are kept deliberately fuzzy. The unstated assumption is that there is some magic in the group interaction process and that, by working together, members will evolve any structures the team needs.

This is a false hope; there is no such magic. Indeed, our findings suggest the opposite: groups that have appropriate structures tend to develop healthy internal processes, whereas groups with insufficient or inappropriate structures tend to have process problems. Worse, coaching and process consultation are unlikely to resolve these problems precisely because they are rooted in the team structure. For members to learn how to interact well within a flawed or underspecified structure is to swim upstream against a strong current.

Trip Wire 4: Specify Challenging Team Objectives, but Skimp on Organizational Supports Even if a work team has clear, engaging direction and an enabling structure, its performance can go sour—or at least can fall below the group's potential—if the team is not well supported. Teams in high-commitment organizations fall victim to this trip wire when given "stretch" objectives but not the wherewithal to accomplish them; high initial enthusiasm soon changes into disillusionment.

It is no small undertaking to provide these supports to teams, especially in organizations designed to support work by individuals. Corporate compensation policy, for example, may make no provision for team bonuses and indeed may explicitly prohibit them. Human resource departments may be primed to identify individuals' training needs and provide first-rate courses to fill those needs, but training in team skills may be unavailable. Existing performance appraisal systems, which may be state-of-the-art for measuring individual contributions, are likely to be inappropriate for assessing and rewarding work done by teams. Information systems and control systems may give managers the data they need to monitor and control work processes, but they may be neither available nor appropriate for use by work teams. Finally, the material resources required for the work may have been prespecified by those who originally designed it, and there may be no procedure in place for a team to secure the special configuration of resources it needs to execute the particular performance strategy it has developed.

Aligning existing organizational systems with the needs of teams often requires managers to exercise power and influence upward and laterally in the organization. An organization set up to provide teams with full support for their work is noticeably different from one whose systems and policies are intended to support and control individual work, and many managers may find the prospect of changing to a group-oriented organization both unsettling and perhaps even vaguely revolutionary.

It is hard to provide good organizational support for task-performing teams, but generally it is worth the trouble. The potential of a well-directed, well-structured, well-supported team is tremendous. Moreover, stumbling over the organizational support trip wire is perhaps the saddest of all team failures. When a group is both excited about its work and all set up to execute it superbly, it is especially shattering to fail merely because the organizational supports required cannot be obtained. This is like being all dressed up and ready to go to the wedding only to have the car break down en route.

Trip Wire 5: Assume That Members Already Have All the Competence They Need to Work Well as a Team Once a team is launched and operating under its own steam, managers sometimes assume their work is done. As we have seen, there are indeed some good reasons for giving a team ample room to go about its business in its own way; inappropriate or poorly timed managerial interventions have impaired the work of more than one group in our research. However, a strictly hands-off managerial stance also can limit a team's effectiveness, particularly when members are not already skilled and experienced in teamwork.

Punishment

In an ideal world, perhaps everyone would be dependable, achievement oriented, and committed to their organization's goals. However, leaders sometimes must deal with followers who are openly hostile or insubordinate, create conflicts among co-workers, do not work up to standards, or openly violate important rules or policies. In such cases leaders may need to administer punishment to change the followers' behavior.

Of all the different aspects of leadership, few are as controversial as punishment. Some of the primary reasons for this controversy stem from myths surrounding the use of punishment, as well as lack of knowledge of the effects of punishment on followers' motivation, satisfaction, and performance. This section is designed to shed light on the punishment controversy by (1) addressing several myths about the use of punishment, (2) reviewing research findings concerning the relationships between punishment and various organizational variables, and (3) giving leadership practitioners advice on how to properly administer punishment.

Myths Surrounding the Use of Punishment

We should begin by repeating the definition of punishment stated earlier in the book. Punishment is the administration of an aversive event or the withdrawal of a positive event or stimulus, which in turn decreases the likelihood that a particular behavior will be repeated.[33] Examples of punishment might include verbal reprimands, being moved to a less prestigious office, having pay docked, being fired, being made to run several laps around an athletic field, or losing eligibility for a sport entirely. We should note that, according to this definition, only those aversive events administered on a contingent basis are considered to be forms of punishment; aversive events administered on a noncontingent basis may constitute harsh and abusive treatment but are not punishment. Additionally, punishment appears to be in the eye of the beholder; aversive events that effectively change the direction, intensity, or persistence of one follower's behavior may have no effect on another's.[34] It is even possible that some followers may find the administration of a noxious event or the removal of a positive event to be reinforcing. For example, it is not uncommon for some children to misbehave if that increases the attention they receive from parents, even if the latter's behavior outwardly may seem punishing. (To the children, some parental attention of any kind may be preferable to no attention.) Similarly, some followers may see the verbal reprimands and notoriety they receive by being insubordinate or violating company policies as forms of attention. Because these followers enjoy being the center of attention, they may find this notoriety rewarding, and they may be even more likely to be insubordinate in the future.

We will examine some myths surrounding the use of punishment. Three of these myths were reviewed by Arvey and Ivancevich and include beliefs that the use of punishment results in undesirable emotional side effects on the part of the recipient, is unethical and inhumane, and rarely works anyway (that is, it seldom eliminates the undesirable behavior).[35]

B. F. Skinner's work in behavioral psychology lent support to the idea that punishment is ineffective and causes undesirable side effects. He based his conclusions on the unnatural behaviors manifested by rats and pigeons punished in various conditioning experiments.[36] Despite the dangers of generalizing from the behavior of rats to humans, many people accepted Skinner's contention that punishment is a futile and typically counterproductive tool for controlling human behavior. This was so despite the fact that considerable research regarding the emotional effects of punishment on humans did not support Skinner's claim.[37-39] Parke, for example, suggested that undesirable emotional side effects of punishment might occur only when punishment was administered indiscriminately or was particularly harsh.[40]

With respect to the myth that punishment is unethical or inhumane, it's been suggested that there is an ethical distinction between "future-oriented" and "past-oriented" punishment. Future-oriented punishment, intended to help improve behavior, may be effective in diminishing or eliminating undesirable behavior. Past-oriented punishment, or what we commonly think of as retribution, on the other hand, is simply a payback for past misdeeds. This sort of punishment may be more questionable ethically, especially when it is intended *only* as payback and not, say, as deterrent to others. Moreover, when considering the ethics of administering punishment, we must also consider the ethics of failing to administer punishment. The costs of failing to punish a potentially harmful behavior, such as unsafe workplace practices, may far outweigh those associated with the punishment itself.[41]

A third myth concerns the efficacy of punishment. Skinner[42] and others claimed that punishment did not result in permanent behavior change but instead only temporarily suppressed behavior.[43] Evidence to support this claim was found in one study in which incarcerated prisoners had a recidivism rate of 85 percent.[44] However, this high recidivism rate may be due to the fact that criminals may have received punishment primarily for retribution rather than for corrective purposes. Judicious administration of sanctions, combined with advice about how to avoid punishment in the future, may successfully eliminate undesirable behaviors on a more permanent basis.[45] Furthermore, it may be a moot point to argue (as Skinner did) that punishment only temporarily suppresses behavior; so long as sanctions for misdeeds remain in place, their impact on behavior should continue. In that regard, the "temporary" effects of punishment on behavior are no different from the "temporary" effects of reinforcement on behavior.

Punishment, Satisfaction, and Performance

It appears that properly administered punishment does not cause undesirable emotional side effects, is not unethical, and may effectively suppress undesirable behavior. However, we also should ask what effect punishment has on followers' satisfaction and performance. Most people probably would predict that leaders who use punishment frequently will have less satisfied and lower-performing followers. Interestingly, this does not appear to be the case—at least when punishment is used appropriately. Let us look more closely at this issue.

Several researchers have looked at whether leaders who administer punishment on a contingent basis also administered rewards on a contingent basis. Generally, researchers have found that there is a moderate positive relationship between leaders' contingent reward behaviors and contingent punishment behaviors.[46-48] There also are consistently strong negative correlations between leaders' contingent reward and noncontingent punishment behaviors. Thus leaders meting out rewards on a contingent basis are also more likely to administer punishment only when followers behave inappropriately or are not performing up to standards.

Keller and Szilagyi maintained that punishment can serve several constructive organizational purposes.[49,50] They said it can help clarify roles and expectations, as well as reduce role ambiguity. Several other authors have found that contingent punishment either is unrelated to followers' satisfaction with their supervisor or has a low positive relationship with it.[51,52] In other words, leaders who follow certain rules in administering punishment need not have dissatisfied subordinates. In fact, judicious and appropriate use of punishment by leaders may result in somewhat higher overall satisfaction of followers. These findings make sense when the entire work unit is considered; failing to use punishment when it seems called for in most followers' eyes may lead to perceptions of inequity, which may in turn reduce group cohesiveness and satisfaction.[53,54]

With respect to followers' work behaviors, Arvey and Jones reported that punishment has generally been found to reduce absenteeism and tardiness rates.[55] Nevertheless, the evidence about punishment's impact on performance appears mixed. Some authors report a strong positive relationship between punishment and performance,[56-59] whereas others found either no relationship between punishment and performance or a negative one.[60,61]

Despite such mixed findings, several points about the relationship between punishment and performance findings are worth noting. First, the levels of punishment as well as the manner in which it was administered across studies could have differed dramatically, and these factors could have affected the results. Second, of the studies reporting positive results, Schnake's experiment studying the vicarious effects of punishment is by far the most provocative. Schnake hired college students for a temporary job and, after several hours at work, publicly reduced the pay or threatened to reduce the pay of a confederate in the work group. As predicted, the more severe the punishment witnessed (either the threat of reduced pay or the reduction of pay), the higher the subsequent performance of other work group members.[62]

Although these findings demonstrated that merely witnessing rather than receiving punishment could increase performance, these results should be interpreted with caution. Because most of the individuals in the experiment did not know each other and had been working together only for several hours, there was probably not enough time for group cohesiveness or norms to develop. It is unclear whether members of cohesive groups or groups with strong norms would react in the same way if they observed another group member being punished. Third, one of the studies reporting less favorable punishment–performance results made an important point about the opportunities to punish. It examined the relationships between Little League coaches' behaviors and their teams' win–loss records. They found that coaches who punished more often had less successful teams. These coaches also, however, had less talented players and therefore had many more opportunities to use punishment. Coaches of successful teams had little if any reason to use punishment. Fourth, many behaviors that are punished may not have a direct link to job performance. For example, being insubordinate, violating company dress codes, and arriving late to meetings are all punishable behaviors that may not be directly linked to solving work-related problems or producing goods or services.[63]

Finally, almost all these studies implicitly assumed that punishment enhanced performance (by correcting problem behaviors), but Curphy and his associates were the only researchers who actually tested this assumption. They collected over 4,500 incidents of documented punishment and performance data from 40 identical organizations over a three-month period. (The punishment and performance data were collected monthly.) They found that low performance led to higher levels of punishment. Moreover, they found that inexperienced leaders administered almost twice as much punishment as experienced leaders. The authors hypothesized that inexperienced leaders used punishment (that is, relied on their coercive power) more frequently because, by being the newest arrivals to the organization, they lacked knowledge of the organizational norms, rules, and policies (expert power); had not yet established relationships with followers (referent power); and were severely limited in the rewards they could provide to followers (reward power).[64]

In summary, the research evidence shows that punishment can lead to positive organizational outcomes if administered properly. When administered on a contingent basis, it may help increase job satisfaction, may decrease role ambiguity and absenteeism rates, and, depending on the behaviors being punished, may improve performance. However, administering intense levels of punishment in a noncontingent or capricious manner can have a devastating effect on the work unit. Group cohesiveness may suffer, followers are likely to become more dissatisfied and less apt to come to work, and they may perform at a lower level in the long term. Thus learning how to properly administer punishment may be the key to maximizing the benefits associated with its use.

Administering Punishment

Usually leaders administer punishment to rectify some type of behavioral or performance problem at work. However, not every behavior or performance problem is punished, and leaders probably weigh several different factors before deciding whether to administer punishment. Green and Mitchell maintained that leaders' decisions concerning punishment depended on whether leaders made internal or external attributions about a subordinate's substandard performance. Leaders making internal attributions were more likely to administer punishment; leaders making external attributions were more likely to blame the substandard performance on situational factors beyond the follower's control.[65]

Attribution theory maintains that leaders weigh three factors when making internal or external attributions about a follower's substandard performance. Specifically, leaders would be more likely to make an internal attribution about a follower's substandard performance (and administer punishment) if the follower had previously completed the task before, if other followers had successfully completed the task, and if the follower had successfully completed other tasks in the past. Moreover, it was found that leaders were biased toward making internal attributions about followers' poor performance (the fundamental attribution error) and thus more likely to use punishment to modify a follower's behavior.[66,67]

Because leaders are biased toward making internal attributions about followers' substandard performance, leaders can administer punishment more effectively by being aware of this bias and getting as many facts as possible before deciding whether to administer punishment. Leaders also can improve the manner or skill with which they administer punishment by using certain tips, such as that punishment is administered most effectively when it focuses on the act, not the person.[68] Followers probably cannot change their personalities, values, or preferences, but they can change their behaviors. By focusing on specific behaviors, leaders minimize the threat to followers' self-concepts. Also, punishment needs to be consistent across both behaviors and leaders; the same actions need to have the same consequences across work groups, or feelings of inequity and favoritism will pervade the organization. One way to increase consistency of punishment is through the establishment of clearly specified organizational policies and procedures.

Administering punishment properly depends on effective two-way communication between the leader and follower. Leaders need to provide a clear rationale for punishment and indicate the consequences for unacceptable behavior in the future. Finally, leaders need to provide followers with guidance about how to improve. This guidance may entail role-modeling proper behaviors for followers, suggesting that followers take training courses, or giving followers accurate feedback about their behavior at work.[69]

Overall, it may be the manner in which punishment is administered, rather than the level of punishment, that has the greatest effect on followers' satisfaction and performance. Leaders need to realize that they may be biased toward administering punishment to rectify followers' substandard performance, and the best way to get around this bias is to collect as much information as possible before deciding whether to punish. By collecting the facts, leaders will be better able to focus on the act, not the person; be able to administer a punishment consistent with company policy; provide the rationale for the punishment; and give guidance to followers on how to improve.

A final caution that leaders need to be aware of concerns the reinforcing or rewarding nature of punishment. Behaviors that are rewarded are likely to be repeated. When leaders administer punishment and subsequently see improvement in a follower's behavior, the leaders will be rewarded and be more apt to use punishment in the future. Over time this may lead to an overreliance on punishment and an underemphasis on the other motivational strategies as means of correcting performance problems. Again, by collecting as much information as possible and by carefully considering the applicability of goal setting, job characteristics theory, and so on, to the problem, leaders may be able to successfully avoid having only one tool in their motivational toolkit.

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