Human Resources: Managing and Motivating Office Staff

Peter Shaw-McMinn, Mark Wright, Carole Burns, Charles Bailey, and David Mills

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

Ralph Waldo Emerson *Circles*

Successful human resource management requires that attention be given to the basic functions of management: planning, organizing, directing and controlling personnel. The management of human resources in optometric practice continues to increase in complexity as society becomes more litigious. The success of a small business enterprise depends on the owner's ability to manage and motivate office staff.

MANAGING STAFF MEMBERS

Managing staff members involves setting standards, measuring performance, and taking corrective actions. To successfully carry out this function with staff members, the chief executive officer (or owner) of the business must provide the staff with the management philosophy of the business. This understanding is facilitated with the office manual of the practice.

Mission Statement

The office manual should include a mission statement for the practice. Employees must feel that they are a part of the practice and including them in the mission statement, as well as in the long-term objective of the practice, fulfills this need. This mission statement should be read by all employees (Box 18-1) and should periodically be revisited with input from staff. Everyone should be able to recite the mission statement, and it should be used to assist in making day-to-day decisions in the office.

Employee Evaluations

Evaluations of all employees should be performed at least once a year. During training periods, evaluations can be provided weekly. These evaluations should be written and a permanent part of the employee's file. An example of employee performance review is provided in Figure 18-1. This format permits the evaluator to address the employee's quality of performance, quantity of responsibilities, and knowledge of the job. In preparing for the evaluation, it is a good idea to keep notes about employee performance, using specific dates. The notes should include employee successes, problems, and any questions about

employee performance. Before the evaluation the record should be reviewed, and examples should be used during the discussion. Many human resource experts recognize that annual performance reviews can be threatening to employees, and some believe ongoing performance discussions throughout the year are more productive. However, all experts agree it is necessary to provide regular feedback to employees.

Setting Individual Goals

The use of performance evaluations is the first step in helping employees identify individual goals that will carry out the practice's mission.

The secret to employee development is good communication. Nowhere is this more evident than during a periodic review of the employee's performance. The perceptions of the evaluator can be quite different than those of the employee. How the performance review is conducted can be critical to morale and to the future productivity of the employee.

A good way to begin the first evaluation of an employee is to have the employee complete a self-evaluation survey. Figure 18-1 is an example of a format that could be used. Instead of an Employee Performance Review, it can be titled a Self-Evaluation Review. This self-evaluation will provide the evaluator with insights into the employee's perceptions of performance. If these perceptions differ from those of the evaluator in many areas, it might be best to choose only a few areas on which to concentrate. The evaluator should not forget, however, that 90% of all employees rank themselves in the top 10% in regard to performance.

The evaluator's survey should be reviewed with the employee, including performance scores and the reasons for these scores. Pertinent comments should be written for future review. The evaluator and the employee should compose goals, a plan to reach these goals, and the consequences that will result if the goals are not reached. After the review, the employee must sign the evaluation and the plan. This information should be used to increase or decrease employee bonuses. If the desired behavior requires little effort to correct, the time spent for the evaluation and goal setting can serve as a training period for the employee.

BOX 18-1

Example Mission Statement

- To provide our patients with quality eye/vision care, therapy, ophthalmic materials, and contact lenses in a professional, efficient, and friendly setting.
- To operate as a profitable, secure, and growing optometry practice and to provide maximum care at a fair cost.
- To be dedicated to providing growth opportunities, a caring environment, and an improved life for all staff members.

Monitoring Implementation of Changes

Sometimes, despite all the preparation, planning, and training, the behaviors sought do not occur. This situation is particularly likely in an office where employees have been following unchanging routines for a long period. In this type of office, a daily worksheet can serve as a helpful reminder to encourage employees to change the routine according to recommendations.

On the daily worksheet, the employee must note when the new procedure is used. Employees should be assured that this extra time will be required only until the new changes become

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EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Name:_____

Today's date:_____

Date hired:_____

Period covered: _____to_____

Position:_____

Evaluated by: (signature)_____

Please rate the employees in each of the areas below, using the following scale. Your evaluation should reflect on impartial judgment that is based on the entire period covered—not on isolated incidents.

Outstanding: Employee exhibits consistent, superior ability, far in excess of job requirements.
Very good: Employee exhibits ability above that expected for the position.
Satisfactory: Employee meets the position requirements.
Fair: Employee exhibits ability below job requirements. Some improvement needed.
Unsatisfactory: Employee exhibits ability far below requirements. Much improvement needed.

1) **QUALITY:**   _____
   a. Produces error-free work   _____
   b. Handles assignments with thoroughness   _____

2) **QUANTITY:**   _____
   a. Produces an acceptable volume of work   _____
   b. Completes tasks promptly   _____

3) **JOB KNOWLEDGE:**   _____
   a. Knows job duties   _____
   b. Knows office policies and procedures   _____

4) **DEPENDABILITY:**   _____
   a. Arrives on time   _____
   b. Has good attendance record   _____
   c. Completes a consistent quantity of work with acceptable quality

5) **ATTITUDE:**   _____
   a. Cooperates with associates   _____
   b. Maintains pleasant demeanor   _____
   c. Conforms to office policies and procedures

6) **INITIATIVE:**   _____
   a. Needs minimal supervision   _____
   b. Completes more work than expected   _____

7) **APPEARANCE:**   _____
   a. Dresses according to office standards   _____
                                                                         _____

8) **PERSONAL FACTORS:**   _____
   a. Concentrates on work rather than personal factors   _____
                                                                         _____

9) **OVERALL PERFORMANCE:**   _____
   a. Employee's strong points   _____
   b. Areas that need strengthening   _____

FIGURE 18-1 Employee performance review.

part of their routine. The practitioner might wish to monitor the employees' efforts to incorporate changes into the office routine by using personal observations.

Directing Staff Members

The manner chosen to communicate with employees is referred to as leadership style. Many business authors use the term *management style* instead because communications will unquestionably affect the entire management process. Generally, there are two extreme types of management style, with most managers' style falling somewhere in between. The most authoritarian style is the military approach, in which the manager tells the employee what to do and the employee follows the instructions without question. The opposite style is one in which the manager orchestrates situations so that the employee realizes what to do and does it because the employee believes it is in the best interest of the office. Each style has its advantages and disadvantages.

Douglas McGregor calls these management styles *theory X* and *theory Y* in his book *The Human Side of Enterprise.* The two theories are briefly described in Box 18-2.

Management style X means that the manager must control everything that goes on in the office and every decision that must be made by employees. The manager must constantly monitor the employees' performances. A specific procedures and policy manual is necessary to direct the staff to handle every situation the way the manager wants it handled.

This management style seems easier because no effort is made to convince staff members to understand or support changes. Their duty and job are simply to carry out orders, not question why. On the other hand, this management style requires more time. Employees must be constantly monitored or they might not provide services correctly because they were not told how to handle a particular situation. The employees will hesitate to act and might in fact be ineffective without the manager present. A large policy and procedures manual will be needed; large manuals are difficult to memorize and time consuming to create.

Management style X can be summarized by the statement, "Management is getting people to do things your way." Management style Y is completely different. Staff members participate in the decision making and are allowed to decide how to best handle situations. Office policy and procedures are decided by a group effort, with most input obtained from those providing the services. The manager offers resources and training to help the employees reach their goals for the office.

Initially, this management style seems slow and laborious because meetings must be held, levels of awareness must be raised, and alternatives discussed. Staff members must first realize that change is necessary, research the options, and finally agree on the policy to be implemented. Once the policy has been decided, implementation is usually much quicker and easier because staff members "own" the changes. They understand the need for change and can adapt the phiphilosophy

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BOX 18-2

Management Styles

THEORY X

Assumptions about the average person:

Works as little as possible
Lacks ambition, dislikes responsibility, prefers to be led
Inherently self-centered; indifferent to organizational needs
By nature resistant to change
Gullible, not very bright

Assumptions about management personnel:

Responsible for organizing staff, equipment, and supplies in the interest of economic ends
Direct staff efforts, motivate them, and control their behavior to fit the needs of the organization
Must persuade, reward, punish, and control staff activities, otherwise, staff members would be passive or resistant to organizational needs

THEORY Y

Assumptions about the average person:

At least potentially mature
Trustworthy
Able to handle responsibility
Motivated by organizational goals
Will use self-control and self-direction

Assumptions about management personnel:

Responsible for organizing staff, equipment, and supplies in the interest of economic ends
Believe it is their responsibility to provide opportunities to develop abilities
Provide guidance
Encourage growth
Remove obstacles
Arrange the work environment so that employees can achieve their own goals while meeting the goals of the practice

Modified from McGregor D: *The human side of enterprise.* New York, 1960, McGraw-Hill.

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behind the change to every situation. The employees are able to work independently and are not afraid to offer novel options for consideration. The staff members treat the business as their own because in a large sense it is. This management style can be summarized by the statement, "Management is the ability to let other people have your way."

Which style is best for a given practitioner? One employer might prefer to choose the style that comes most naturally. Another employer might choose the style to which employees respond best. Still another manager might change management styles from one to the other because change is generally more productive than rote routines. Arguments can be made in favor of each rationale.

Selecting a Natural Management Style

Choosing a style that comes naturally requires the least amount of effort on the manager's part. One means of

determining management style is illustrated in Figure 18-2. This exercise provides insight into individual management tendencies.

Selecting a Style to Which Employees Respond

Through experimentation, a manager finds the management style that each employee seems to respond to best. Time and effort can be reduced by predicting the management style that will be most effective in obtaining the best productivity from an employee. To make these predictions, it is helpful to look at the value systems of different groups of people. Managers should not be surprised to observe that an employee's value system is very different from the manager's own value system.

Management Style Questionnaire

The purpose of this exercise is to give you a general idea of your management style. For each statement listed check whether you mostly or completely agree with it or whether you mostly or completely disagree with it.

Respond to all the statements.

Scoring directions follow the questionnaire.

Statement	Mostly or completely agree	Mostly or Completely disagree
1. Since patient contact is critical, I try to provide all direct patient services myself.		
2. When I've tried to delegate patient services to an assistant, I've found patients got poorer service.		
3. To assure the right decision is made, I make all the decisions myself.		
4. I expect employees I've hired to learn to do things my way.		
5. I hardly ever hear any complaints from my employees.		
6. The important thing is that employees understand what I want of them.		
7. I assign tasks to whoever is capable of handling them.		
8. There are few employee problems that cannot be solved by better pay.		
9. Employees who insist on making all of their own decisions should open their own business.		
10. It's just not possible for everyone to make a living doing what they enjoy.		
11. The average employee is basically self-centered and indifferent to the goals of my practice.		
12. I allow employees to post humorous sayings about how this office is run, and there are many.		
13. My best technique in dealing with an employee grievance is to assert my leadership in etermining what I need to do to correct the situation.		
14. If I let my employees make their own decisions, I will lose control of my practice.		

FIGURE 18-2 Management style questionnaire. (From American Optometric Association: *Practice enhancement program II, professional enhancement module, managing your practice plan, precourse workbook.* St. Louis, 1986. Reprinted with permission.)

Statement	Mostly or completely agree	Mostly or Completely disagree
15. As manager, I am responsible for everything my employees do.		
16. The function of the manager is to set out and enforce clear rules; the function of the employee is to follow them.		
17. Allowing employees to attend optometric conferences and workshops cuts into their working time and may give them ideas to look for work elsewhere or about ideas for equipment or procedures that I can't afford to implement. It will only make them restless.		
18. If individuals are allowed to make their own decisions, they will not be for the good of the office, but for their own benefit.		
19. I enjoy optometry, and I'm unwilling to devote less than my full time to patient care.		
20. I'm in optometry to make a good living by providing quality optometric care. If I let my employees get too independent, I'll lose all my cost controls and jeopardize the profitability of my practice.		

Scoring directions

Now add up the number of your "Mostly or Completely Agree" answers.

If you checked 15 to 20 "agree" answers, you run a very "tight ship." Your style is highly directive, what is called a Theory X management style.

If you checked 7 through 14, your management style includes a number of practices that are consistent with a more participative management style.

If you checked 1 through 6 "agree" responses, your management style is highly participative, and you delegate not so many tasks as you do responsibilities in achieving shared goals. Your management style might be characterized as a Theory Y management style.

FIGURE 18-2—cont'd

Changing Management Styles

There might be times when a change in management style is needed. Different types of employees, different types of practice environments, or even staleness in a practice can necessitate a change. When altering management styles, however, the changes should be readily apparent to all employees. Otherwise, confusion and dissatisfaction can result.

MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES

The information used to predict the response of employees to a management style also can be used to motivate them. There are a number of common factors that motivate individuals in general. By applying Maslow's hierarchy (Figure 18-3) to the profession of optometry, optometrists can learn what will be most effective in motivating employees.

Physiological Needs

All people have bodily needs, such as food, water, rest, exercise, shelter, and protection, from the elements. The motivation of staff members is obviously beyond this basic level.

Security and Safety

People require protection against threats, dangers, and deprivation. Many people fear losing their job, benefits such as medical insurance, or an adequate income after retirement. To provide motivation, employers should offer regular performance reviews, with emphasis on feedback that stresses the positive aspects of job security. Updates should be provided on the status of employee benefits and their economic value. Bonus or profit-sharing plans also can be offered, contingent on level of performance. Retirement plans also can be
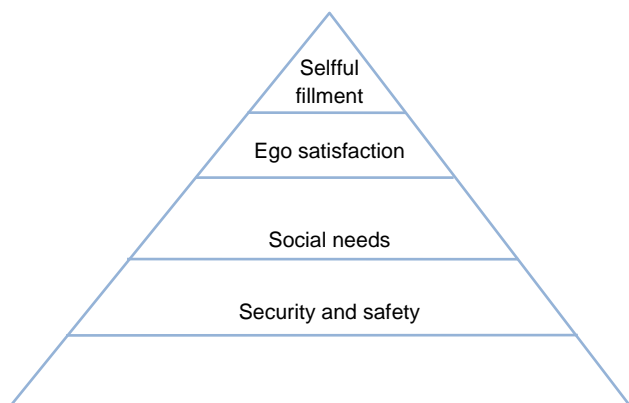
FIGURE 18-3 Maslow's hierarchy of needs. (Reprinted from AH Maslow: *Motivation and personality.* New York, 1970, Harper & Row.)

provided. The employer should be reassuring when discussing job security and business stability.

Social Needs

People have interpersonal needs such as belonging, association, acceptance, and giving and receiving friendship and love. Participation in certain activities on behalf of the practice can reinforce these feelings and provide motivation. Attendance at continuing education courses; staff participation in the determination of office policies and procedures; use of staff ideas to improve office functions; membership in various professional organizations and societies; and the periodic use of group functions, such as office retreats and informal staff birthday celebrations, can all achieve this goal.

Ego Satisfaction

People need self-esteem, which comes from self-confidence, independence, and achievement. People also enjoy a sense of reputation, which confers status, recognition, respect, and appreciation. The satisfaction of these needs can greatly improve motivation.

These needs are satisfied by promotions, assignments that provide added responsibilities, participation in the training of new staff members, or evaluations or opportunities in which positive feedback on performance is supplied. Patients should be encouraged to include staff members when offering thanks for services. Employees should be allowed to write or sign memos to other staff members; display an outstanding employee's name in work areas; mention accomplishments in front of patients and peers; and market the employee to patients through the use of biographical sketches, comments on signs, displays of awards and certificates, business cards, and name tags with an office title.

Recognition can be demonstrated by giving flowers, candy, lunches, theater tickets, or other rewards to employees. Saying "thank you" to employees, particularly in public, is effective. So is a letter to the employee, noting a job well done.

Self-Fulfillment

Motivation involves realizing one's own potential, continued self-development, and creativity in its broadest sense. This final area of need is said to come from within. Self-fulfilling employees are motivated through introspection, a recognition of what is important to them. They are able to focus on satisfying their personal needs and require no outside motivation. A manager must provide the resources and the opportunity for employees to reach their fullest potential by using the office as a vehicle to attain self-fulfillment.

Motivating employees must take into account their needs and wishes. The manager must be able to recognize "true" rewards, which differ from individual to individual. When providing a reward, the manager must ask, "Is this reward really what the employee considers special?" Not everyone wants the same thing. A few different things staff members may want include money, to be part of a group, meaningful work, stability, a well-organized office, high office morale, or growth in job opportunity. Getting to know each staff member individually and identifying what he or she considers true rewards is essential. A motivation plan can accompany a training program. Each opportunity to improve staff performance also can be used to motivate employees. Retreats, staff meetings, lunch meetings, performance reviews, and opportune moments all can be used to reinforce positive behavior and encourage more of the same. Perhaps the most powerful opportunity of all is the opportune moment when an employee is caught doing something the right way. This moment should be seized because such acknowledgment builds enthusiasm like nothing else.

Managers have at their disposal many strategies with which to motivate employees. Effective managers will use as many of these strategies as they can. They will note which strategies work best with individual employees. They will use these strategies to mold the staff into a team that works together to reach the goals of the practice.

Protocol for Motivating Staff

Keeping staff members happy is a difficult challenge for any practice manager. All employee problems can be reduced to either head problems or heart problems. A head problem is an educational or training problem. If a staff member does not know how to do something, education or training will resolve the problem. A heart problem is an attitude problem. "I don't want to do the job" cannot be resolved through either education or training. If a staff member is unable to resolve an attitude problem, then dismissal as soon as possible is the best course of action. An unresolved attitude problem is damaging to staff morality and patient care. It is better to dismiss the patient today, even if you pay them for the next 2 weeks, than to allow them to continue in the office for even 1 more day. Any perceived benefit from keeping the staff member until someone new is hired is dramatically reduced by the damage this person is doing to both patients and staff.

Management is simplified when staff are given achievable and measurable goals. Goals should be drafted and posted at least weekly, although daily is better. The online staff member knows minute by minute how well they are doing. The person managing the online staff member knows day by day how well they are doing. In the practice, the owner knows week by week how well staff is performing. If a staff member is not achieving daily goals, then the person managing him or her should have management interactions with this staff member more frequently. Examples of measurable goals are outlined in Table 18-1.

Written action plans should be done weekly for each position, identifying any help needed to achieve the measurable goal and how the position can be managed more efficiently. Staff members in control of achieving their measurable goals will feel acknowledged and satisfied. There are factors outside of the practice that can influence the performance of a staff member. Box 18-3 contains a suggested protocol for keeping staff motivated and happy in their job. Items 1 through 5 deal with knowing the employee as an individual. Each employee is different. They have different interests and different ways of thinking and different needs. It is best to treat each employee in whatever manner works best to get the results wanted.

Complete the employee profile for each staff member in Figure 18-4. Update it as you learn more about them. Use

BOX 18-3

Protocol for Motivating Staff

1. Learn as much as you can about the employee.
2. Learn about employee's family.
3. Identify what is important to the employee.
4. Decide why the employee would want to stay with you
5. Figure out how to motivate the employee. Choose strategies to keep him or her happy and motivated.
6. Prepare a calendar with the planned actions
7. Implement the plan and monitor progress, revising if necessary

these profiles to develop a calendar with planned actions each week to keep the employees functioning at a maximal level (Figure 18-5).

The job of the human resources manager for any business is to manage and motivate each staff member to give the best performance possible. As needed, consider specific interventions for specific employees. Use the employee profile as a guide in decision making, and use suggestions from Box 18-4 to motivate the staff.

Management style strategies should be planned and implemented with the same attention that would be given to the planning and conduct of a vision examination. Managers should never forget to set aside sufficient time for administrative duties and responsibilities. If management is properly performed, this time will be enjoyably spent working with an efficient and enthusiastic office staff.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE 18-1

Examples of Measurable Goals

Task/Position	Measurable Goal
Recalling patients	Actual number of appointments seen
Third-party billing	Percentage of claims submitted in 24 hours
Ophthalmic technician	Percentage of jobs dispensed with 5 days of order

EMPLOYEE PROFILE
Name:
Describe the employee's personality:
What does the employee like about working here?
What employee needs are being experienced?
What employee needs have been satisfied and how?
How can unsatisfied needs be filled?
What motivates the employee?
What values are important to the employee?
What are the employee's future goals?
What does the employee like? Favorite color? Food? Movies?
How does the employee like to be rewarded?
Does the employee respond well to words of encouragement?
Does the employee like gifts? Examples:
What hobbies and interests does the employee like to spend time on?
Does the employee value time with the manager to discuss office issues?
What is the status of family members? Is this a concern to the employee?
Does the employee perceive effort will lead to performance?
What makes the employee laugh?
Does the employee like time off?

FIGURE 18-4 Employee profile. (From Shaw-McMinn PG: *K eeping your employees happy.* New York, 2001, Vision Expo.)

WEEKLY EMPLOYEE CALENDAR

Week of	Action
January 1	Bring aspirin to office, share New Year's stories
8	Set goals and rewards for the next year
15	Find reason to praise employee
22	Train new procedure or responsibility
29	Take out to lunch, discuss anything except office
February 5	Say "Thank You" in public
12	Bring Valentine's gifts to everyone
19	Do something for employee's family
26	Delegate to run staff meeting

FIGURE 18-5 Weekly employee calendar. (From Shaw-McMinn PG: *Keeping your employees happy.* New York, 2001, Vision Expo.)

BOX 18-4

Strategies for Motivating Staff

OPPORTUNITIES TO ACHIEVE

- Allow attendance at continuing education courses
- Allow opportunity to train new staff
- Increase responsibility
- Promote from within
- Provide profit sharing contingent on longevity
- Encourage and use ideas on improving office functionality
- Allow to set goals
- Allow to devise strategies on how to reach goals

SECURITY

- Provide regular salary reviews
- Give feedback on job performance, stressing the positive, though mentioning the negative as well
- Provide profit sharing contingent on a certain level of performance
- Pay for unused sick leave

SATISFACTION

- Provide feedback on performance that has been crucial for the office
- Ask patients to include staff when thanking you for services

STATUS

- Allow employees to write or sign memos to other staff
- members
- Display the employee's name in his or her work area
- Mention accomplishments in front of patients
- Provide employees with business cards with their names on them
- Give a more prestigious title

RECOGNITION

- Give employees flowers or candy
- Pay for lunch out
- Give theater or sports tickets
- Say thank you
- Say thank you in public
- Send a memo noting a job well done
- Reach into your pocket and give cash to immediately reinforce a desired behavior
- Afternoon off with pay
- Day off with pay
- Special birthday gift
- Praise
- Bonus

GENERAL

- Demonstrate caring attitude toward staff
- Organize staff retreats, including training and entertainment
- Send to Las Vegas for a weekend
- Offer different tasks, a variety of tasks
- Use photos of staff in advertisements
- Encourage out-of-office endeavors
- Show support for employee concerns
- Donate to employee causes
- Discuss opportunities for career development
- Provide growth opportunities (continuing education, college classes)
- Provide physical and emotional climate
- Buy champagne or pizza for the office
- Share jokes
- Distribute touching stories on human nature
- Take to store to buy new comfortable stool
- Reinforce how meaningful employee's work is
- Emphasize the importance of the ophthalmic industry
- Provide childcare for the employee
- Allow employee to attend school plays or sports events of children
- Provide counseling service to employee
- Improve parking lot lighting
- Ride to/from work
- Heating/air conditioning in office
- Provide a sense of love and belonging
- Treat employee fairly

From Shaw-McMinn PG: *Keeping your employees happy.* New York, 2001, Vision Expo.

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