

Best Practice Recommendations

The Best Practice Recommendations presented on the following pages were developed using best practices, key learnings from the Shelter Employee Engagement System (SeeDS), and subject matter expertise in Animal Shelter management and operations. Recommendations are provided for all the S16 questions. As you review the recommendations, please consider the following questions:

- What questions should we be focusing on?
 - *Focus on any red or yellow questions – this is where your program could use the most improvement. In many cases, a little effort can have major payoffs.*
 - *If you received all greens, celebrate your success and maintain existing best practices.*
- Are there any questions that we're especially concerned about? (spend your energy here)
- Which best practices are we already using? (keep using these!)
- Are there recommendations that would be very difficult or impossible to implement at your organization? (try other recommendations first)

Implementing the Recommendations

- Read through the recommendations for the areas you need to focus on (i.e., red or yellow areas). Pick and choose which recommendations to implement. For lasting, positive change, pick a few recommendations at a time that are feasible for your organization. Over time, you can build momentum and implement additional recommendations. The bottom line – do not over-extend by tackling too much at once.
- Use your energy and resources to implement these changes, then observe if and how changes occur as a result. Keep in mind, change takes time so don't expect drastic differences over night.
- After several months, ask for feedback from your employees to see how the new practices are working.
- After 12 months you are eligible to repeat the Shelter 16, which is a great way to gauge how your organization is progressing.

Communicate the Results

It's also important to communicate the high-level results with your employees. We don't recommend sharing the entire report, but rather tell them that you received their feedback and have identified several key areas to focus on improving. Share those key areas of focus and ideas you have for implementation. Use this as an opportunity to recognize concerns, seek clarification, and create an open dialogue about employee experiences.

S16 Recommendations and Best Practices

ENGAGEMENT

ITEM(S) & INTERPRETATION

Overall, I am proud to work for this organization.

I am enthusiastic about my job.

I feel attached to this organization.

I enjoy my work quite a bit.

Refers to an overall feeling of positivity toward one's work and organization. This positivity is accompanied by a strong dedication to one's work and a general feeling of being energized on the job.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to THINK about engagement in your organization:

- Engagement provides an overall sense of how things are going in the organization.
- Engaged employees are:
 - less stressed
 - more motivated
 - more satisfied with their work and the organization
 - less likely to leave the organization

What you can DO about engagement in your organization:

- Engagement is the result of improving key areas that help employees feel valued and supported in their work¹. The S16 helps you to identify and target key areas (described below) related to communication, perception of voice, autonomy, training, teamwork, leadership, procedures and resources, and volunteers. By implementing positive changes within those areas, organizations can promote overall employee engagement.
- With any organizational change, one size does not fit all. To ensure success, start by getting to know your employees and building positive relationships².
- The key areas described in this *S16 Recommendations and Best Practices* document are like levers that the organization can pull to help engagement rise. Small changes that are meaningful, planned, communicated, sustained, and measured over time can have a very big impact. The key is to not get overwhelmed and remember that employee engagement is a marathon, not a sprint.

¹ Lytle, T. (2016, September 22). 7 Tips to increase employee engagement without spending a dime. *HR Today*.

<https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/1016/pages/7-tips-to-increase-employee-engagement-without-spending-a-dime.aspx>

² Crim, D., & Seijts, G. (2006, March/April). What engages employees the most or, the ten Cs of employee engagement. *Ivey Business Journal*. <https://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/what-engages-employees-the-most-or-the-ten-cs-of-employee-engagement/>

COMMUNICATION

ITEM(S) & INTERPRETATION

Overall communication in your department / unit **Overall communication in your organization**

Refers to the effectiveness and timeliness of information shared with employees. Different forms of communication will get your message out to employees with different needs & preferences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to THINK about communication in your organization:

- Communication should²:
 - Be open, honest, clear, and direct
 - Include the “what” AND the “why”
 - Consider the “how” – that is, how employees prefer to send and receive messages
 - Be two-way, which fosters dialogue, rather than one-way, which stifles input

What you can DO about communication in your organization:

- The first step in an intervention to improve communication is to involve employees in the process. Start by considering all the voices and perspectives in your organization and create a task force, or committee, with representation across the organization^{3,4}. The charge of this task force is to identify strategies for improving the form, frequency, function, and focus of communication.
 - To keep the task force on track, set a realistic, concrete goal of generating 5-10 actionable ideas for improving communication.
 - Recognize and reward the committee for its work. Such rewards can fit any budget (e.g., personalized thank you notes, lunch for the task force, etc.), and can leverage volunteer talents (i.e., a volunteer with a love of baking can create tasty homemade treats).
 - Close the loop on the ideas provided by the task force. Implement what is feasible; create a transparent timeline of when different solutions will be rolled out (now, later); clarify *why* certain solutions cannot be implemented or need to be delayed.
- Check in regularly with employees.
 - What are they thinking? What are they hearing?
- Create an “ambassador” or “liaison” to keep leadership informed about how communication is being received and understood³.
- Provide opportunities to hear directly from employees what they have understood from prior communication and, if needed, work together to get on the same page³.

³ Shelter Employee Engagement & Development Survey (n.d.). *What if...organizational communication scores are low?* [white paper]. <https://sites.uncc.edu/seeds/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/11/Org-Communication-Best-Practices-.pdf>

⁴ Bickmeier, B., Luu, M., & Rogelberg, S.G. (2017, June 2). *How to promote effective communication*. <http://blog.sawanetwork.org/how-to-promote-effective-communication/>

⁵ Shelter Employee Engagement & Development Survey (n.d.). *What if...organizational communication scores are low?* [white paper]. <https://sites.uncc.edu/seeds/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/11/Org-Communication-Best-Practices-.pdf>

- Adjust the frequency and form of messages to better meet your employees' needs and preferences⁴.
 - Collect and communicate *lower-priority, non-time sensitive information* in less frequent, aggregate forms (e.g., weekly newsletter).
 - Share *important information* in face-to-face formats, especially if the content is complex, controversial, and/or involves organizational change.
 - Communicate *critical information* via multiple mediums (i.e., email, newsletter, and meetings).
- Run meetings effectively and efficiently^{5,6,5}
 - Take a step back to evaluate the meetings that are currently taking place in your organization. Are they all necessary? Which ones are going well? Which ones are ineffective? Who is attending (and does everyone need to be there)?
 - Ask your employees for their feedback and suggestions about your meetings. This is important during the initial evaluation of meetings and as ongoing feedback as changes are implemented.
 - Make a plan.
 - Think about ways to make each meeting more enjoyable. For example, short, team-building activities can help set a productive, energetic tone. Different employees can take turns creating and running the activity. This can increase across-the-board ownership of meetings.
 - Meetings can be more enjoyable by changing the location (e.g., different spaces on-site; off-site location).
 - Create an intentional agenda. Avoid the pitfall of creating one right before the meeting is scheduled to begin. Instead, create an agenda 3 to 4 days ahead of the meeting. Send out the agenda to meeting attendees and ask for their feedback (Anything to add? Modify?).
 - Demonstrate that you value your employees' time by cancelling meetings that are not needed. If you need to re-schedule a meeting or add one, communicate as soon as possible so employees can plan around their work tasks.
 - Set an appropriate length of the meeting and stick to that timeline. This might require tabling discussion items. This also requires clear, considerate expectations about how discussions will flow.
 - *Dealing with dominant voices* – Establish a “three before me” rule in which everyone has to let three people contribute to the discussion prior to making another comment.
 - *Off-topic conversations* – Schedule pre-meeting socialization time. Even 10 minutes of designated social time can ensure that everyone stays on track during the actual meeting. This social time should be optional – not everyone needs/wants to socialize.

⁴ Shelter Employee Engagement & Development Survey (n.d.). *What if...organizational communication scores are low?*

[white paper].

PERCEPTION OF VOICE

ITEM(S) & INTERPRETATION

Amount of input you have into organizational decision making, changes, policies, and/or initiatives

Refers to how valued employees feel their input is, how often they can express concerns on employee-related issues, and whether the organization considers their views before making decisions that affect them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to THINK about perception of voice in your organization:

- Perception of voice:
 - Fosters a sense of fair treatment
 - Increases employee satisfaction and engagement
 - Must be genuine – interest and concern for employee feedback is more important than the number of tools for soliciting input
 - Requires time to listen to employees BEFORE decisions/changes are finalized

What you can DO about perception of voice in your organization:

- There are several potential tools for increasing and improving perception of voice in an organization. Here are several ideas to consider – remember, ask your employees for input on what would work best for them:
 - *Ask me/Tell me program* – managers proactively seek questions and feedback from individual employees on a routine basis⁴.
 - *Question Box* – physical/virtual location for submitting anonymous questions⁸
 - Soliciting questions rather than suggestions helps to create dialogue
 - Example virtual suggestion boxes: <http://www.suggestionox.com> or <http://freesuggestionbox.com>

<https://sites.uncc.edu/seeds/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/11/Org-Communication-Best-Practices-.pdf>⁶

Madrone, K. (2018-2019, Winter). Making meetings matter. *Animal Sheltering*.

<https://www.animalsheltering.org/magazine/articles/making-meetings-matter>

⁵ Rogelberg, S.G. (2019). *The surprising science of meetings*. Oxford University Press.

[white paper].

PERCEPTION OF VOICE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED...

- *Graffiti Walls*⁸ – Physical or virtual spaces where employees can provide comments and feedback on specified topics. Such spaces are open for all to view, which increases the transparency of the communication process.
- *World Café*⁹ – This is a special meeting in which topic tables are set up (e.g., 4 topics of interest, 4 small tables). Each table has an assigned facilitator and notetaker. Meeting attendees start at one table for a set period of time and then rotate to the other tables in the room.
 - A large piece of paper can be used as a table cover and attendees can record their thoughts directly on the table.
Attendees can be free to roam around the room. This can allow people to stay longer at certain tables as well as mix up the composition of individuals at each table.
 - It is helpful to remind people of the time remaining, so they have the opportunity to visit all tables before the meeting is concluded.
- Designate time during meetings for questions and feedback⁶.
 - Create a culture where asking questions is the norm. For example, carve out time at the end of each meeting for the "Question Game". In this game, meeting attendees are asked to generate 3 to 5 relevant questions before the meeting can conclude. Be mindful to allow meeting time for this – employees may be frustrated if this causes the meeting to run over the scheduled time. Also, the tone matters. If the game is energized and playful, it can be a morale boost. If the game is delivered as a hurdle to be jumped, employees may resent the activity.
- Respond promptly (e.g., within 36 hours) to all questions, feedback, and suggestions¹¹.

⁶ Shelter Employee Engagement & Development Survey (n.d.). *What if...organizational communication scores are low?*

<https://sites.uncc.edu/seeds/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/11/Org-Communication-Best-Practices-.pdf> ¹¹

Bickmeier, B., Luu, M., & Rogelberg, S.G. (2017, June 2). *How to promote effective communication*.

[white paper].

AUTONOMY

ITEM(S) & INTERPRETATION

Amount of freedom you have to do your job as you see best

Refers to the input, or say, that employees have in how to go about their day-to-day tasks and overall work role responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to THINK about autonomy in your organization:

- Autonomy at work is:
- Individual control and influence of one's work that provides a sense of ownership of one's work
- NOT doing whatever one wants without direction or boundaries

What you can DO about autonomy in your organization:

- Start by providing clear job descriptions and procedures for employees to follow. This helps to establish clear boundaries.
- Evaluate and clarify the alignment between job descriptions, organizational procedures, and the overall organizational mission. This will help employees understand the connection between their work and the work of the overall organization.
- Within the clear boundaries, allow employees to choose how they go about their tasks⁷.
 - Can they set their own daily priorities?
 - If there is not a standard procedure, can they decide how to do a task?
 - If the role or project is particularly constrained, try providing a choice between two approaches for moving forward⁸.

⁷ Maylett, T. (2016, March 4). 6 ways to encourage autonomy with your employees. *Entrepreneur*.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/254030>

⁸ Harriss, L. (2019, September 24). Why job autonomy is vital for success—and how to encourage it. *CIPHR*.

<https://www.ciphr.com/advice/employee-autonomy/>

AUTONOMY RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED...

- If management must decide both the goal and the approach, identify other aspects that employees can have a say over. For example, if you are rolling out a new program that requires a weekly meeting, let the program team decide when and where those meetings will take place¹³. Although such decisions are less goal-relevant, they provide a sense of ownership of the overall process.
- Build trust by delegating and approaching mistakes as learning opportunities^{12,13}.

- To help build trust and competence, start by delegating small tasks and then gradually increase the scope of responsibility for each employee.
- Employees need to understand *what* they are doing and *why* they are doing it. The *what* provides direction; the *why* provides a sense of meaning and clarifies how the employee is contributing to the larger organizational goals⁹.

Keep your focus on the end goal and choose your battles. Employees need to be able to make—and follow through—with their decisions. Save your critiques and re-directions for major components of a task that do not have wiggle room.

- Provide the tools and resources that support your employees¹⁰.
 - The encouragement of autonomy needs to be supported by actual, concrete support. This means providing the necessary training and access to resources to complete the work required.
- Hire individuals that have the experience—and willingness—to work autonomously¹¹.
 - During the hiring process, ask applicants to describe a time when they took initiative at work. What was the task? What did they do? What was the outcome?
 - Continue to reinforce the importance of autonomy (within boundaries) during new employee onboarding.

⁹ Halvorson, H.G. (2011, September 15). How to give employees a sense of autonomy (when you are really calling the shots). *Forbes*.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/heidigranthalvor>

¹⁰ Maylett, T. (2016, March 4). 6 ways to encourage autonomy with your employees. *Entrepreneur*.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/254030>

¹¹ Harriss, L. (2019, September 24). Why job autonomy is vital for success-and how to encourage it. *CIPHR*.

<https://www.ciphr.com/advice/employee-autonomy/>

TRAINING

ITEM(S) & INTERPRETATION

The training you receive to do your job well

Refers to how well-prepared employees feel to perform their roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to THINK about training in your organization:

- Training must be an ongoing, sustained activity.
 - Everything changes – people, processes, regulations. Up-to-date training ensures that your employees are up-to-speed.
 - Some work tasks and activities are not performed regularly and need to be brushed up on from time-to-time.
- Training is a way to acknowledge and recognize the important contributions that employees make to the organization.
 - Investing in regular training communicates that you are investing in your people and their development.

What you can DO about training in your organization:

- Conduct regular needs assessments to identify key areas to provide training¹².
 - How is the organization changing in terms of strategy? What do employees need to meet this change?
 - What knowledge or skills are required by the various positions in the organization? What additional training is needed to equip employees for their roles?
 - What are key areas of under-performance? What training can help improve employees' performance?
- When conducting your training needs assessments, involve employees in the process. This helps to ensure the relevancy of the training as well as employee commitment to training¹⁷. Ask employees to identify their own training needs—individually and as a department. Make the commitment to support at least 1 or 2 self-identified training initiatives each year.

¹² Kluczny, S. (2019, September 12). 9 characteristics of top employee training programs. *BizLibrary*.

<https://www.bizlibrary.com/blog/training-programs/employee-training-9-characteristics-of-top-programs/>

TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED...

- Training is an investment for both the organization and the employees that participate in training. Prior to rolling out a training session or program, plan how you will evaluate the outcomes of the training¹⁷.
 - There are a variety of ways to assess training outcomes:
 - A *training satisfaction* survey can provide you with insight into whether employees felt positively about the training experience.
 - Consider giving employees a knowledge or skills test prior to the training and then at the conclusion of the training program. You can then compare results to determine gains in knowledge and skills.
 - The *transfer of training* back to the job itself is crucial. Identify the key markers of training transfer. For example, if you are updating safety training, you can track number of accidents before and after the training to look for improvements.
 - You can also look to *longer-term* outcomes related to organizational performance. For example, new software training may improve the speed of animal adoption processing, which, over time, may result in an increase in adoptions. Organizational performance outcomes often take longer to emerge (i.e., 6 months to a year; sometimes longer).
 - The most effective training programs evaluate all of the types of outcomes listed above. This requires dedicated attention to monitoring short-term and long-term progress.
 - Consider how training is designed.
 - Training that is creative and fun is more positively received¹³. Consider having a training mascot, logo, or title for your training programs. This could be as simple as "Animal Welfare Academy" with an accompanying image of dogs, cats, and bunnies wearing graduation caps. Or, you can stretch your creative muscles (and those of your staff and volunteers) to the max.

¹³ Kluczny, S. (2019, September 12). 9 characteristics of top employee training programs. *BizLibrary*.

<https://www.bizlibrary.com/blog/training-programs/employee-training-9-characteristics-of-top-programs/> ¹⁸ Royal, S.C. (2014, March 21).

7 best practices for employee training. *Training*.

<https://trainingmag.com/7-best-practices-employee-training>

TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED...

When planning your training sessions, keep in mind the following key elements¹⁸:

- Training sessions, like meetings, require clear agendas. For training, these agendas should specify what employees will learn from attending the training.
- Get to know your employees so you can tailor the training to their preferences.
- During the training, check for understanding in order to keep everyone on the same page. This can be accomplished by asking periodically if there are any questions or by providing short (single item), self-graded quizzes on the key content.
- Mix it up! Try to use a variety of training tools – lecture, discussion, video, role play, application, etc.
- Keep it real. When possible, use actual examples or case studies from your organization or similar organizations.
- Provide feedback during training that helps employees know that they are learning what they are supposed to be learning. Constructive feedback in real-time improves learning and retention. The key is to stay positive – critical or harsh feedback during training can stifle the desire of employees to engage in the training.

In addition to the training design itself, two major factors influence whether or not employees will use training back on the job – *leadership support* and the *opportunity to use the training*¹⁷. Make sure to recognize and reward employees that implement their training. Consider having a "Training Triumphs" column in your newsletter or bulletin board posting. Highlight staff members that are putting their training to work.

- Follow-up with training attendees to find out if they have had opportunities to use their new training. If not, figure out how to shift task responsibilities to provide them with on-the-job opportunities to use their new knowledge and skills.
- Develop a formal mentorship program.
- Provide periodic re-training opportunities.
 - Evaluate the training itself and update as needed prior to re-training employees.

TEAMWORK

ITEM(S) & INTERPRETATION

Teamwork in your department

Teamwork across departments

Refers to how people work together and collaborate both within departments and across units within the organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to THINK about teamwork in your organization:

- Effective teamwork requires:
- High quality inputs, such as leader support of teams, organizational resources, and a culture that values teamwork.
- Strong team processes, which rely on knowledge of team members, trust of team members, and continuous, respectful communication between teams and team members.

What you can DO about teamwork in your organization:

- Start by creating a working group or committee that is tasked with identifying teamwork issues as well as solutions to those issues¹⁴.
 - Structure the committee such that the employees impacted by the teamwork issues are included. Thus, to address issues related to teamwork across departments, be sure to have representation across the organization (e.g., one person from each department).
 - Teamwork is an ongoing process. Schedule the committee to come together quarterly (or as-needed) to identify successful strategies and opportunities for improvement.
 - Teamwork and communication are intertwined¹⁵. For optimal solutions, task the committee to consider communication challenges as part of their teamwork discussions.
 - Traditional brainstorming where people are presented with a prompt and share ideas out loud can exclude certain employees from the conversation. To help ensure inclusivity, re-think brainstorming. One method is to provide a general prompt and ask for all committee members to write down their thoughts. Then, committee members can each share. For hot topics or sensitive issues, the written thoughts can be gathered and shared anonymously.

¹⁴ Shelter Employee Engagement & Development Survey. (n.d.). Cross-departmental teamwork best practices. <https://seeds.uncc.edu/resources-and-tools/>

¹⁵ Hickman, A. (2020, January 9). The 5 tactics of teamwork: A blueprint for team management. *Gallup Workplace*.

TEAMWORK RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED...

- Facilitate knowledge of team members through informal gatherings and formal teambuilding activities^{19,20}.
- Job shadowing or job rotations help staff learn about other team roles and functions¹⁹.

Rotate employees through different departments on a 2-week basis so they can train and learn more about what the department does.

- Create a “full experience” job rotation as a capstone, so that employees can participate in every aspect of a shelter function (e.g., adoption).
- Joint training (and realistic team problem-solving activities) provides an opportunity to form relationships and share important information.

Create cross-department project groups that require employees from different departments to work together²¹.

- Appoint an ambassador or liaison to facilitate communication between departments or departments with consistent communication issues²¹.
 - The ambassador should be a person with strong communication skills.
 - The ambassador should also champion good communication strategies, such as two-way communication rather than one-way communication.
 - Set a “solutions mindset” expectation to help focus the liaison on addressing issues rather than simply highlighting problems.

Create an “emergency assistance crew” of employees who can rotate in and support departments in times of unusually high workload¹⁶.

- Update and change this list frequently so that all staff have the opportunity to work together.
- Leadership must model and promote good teamwork behavior for other employees²¹.

<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/275387/tactics-teamwork-blueprint-team-management.aspx>

¹⁶ ²¹ Shelter Employee Engagement & Development Survey. (n.d.). Cross-departmental teamwork best practices.

<https://seeds.uncc.edu/resources-and-tools/>

- Set clear goals for the organization²² and identify ways in which various departments can work together to achieve that goal more efficiently¹⁷.
- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of various positions and units^{21,23}.
 - Ideally, various positions should be defined to complement and collaborate rather than overlap.
 - This may involve redefining existing jobs, shifting responsibilities, updating job descriptions, etc.
 - Engage employees in this evaluation and change; consider making this a task for the teamwork committee described above.
 - Consider a "matrix" job structure in which employees are given tasks in their core area as well as a selection of tasks from other areas or departments that they must manage daily.

Take a step back and evaluate situational or environmental obstacles to teamwork²¹. For example:

- The layout of the workplace.
 - Adjacent units are more likely to engage in frequent and informal communication than physically separated units. If possible, move units that must interact frequently closer together. Re-think the layout in terms of communication needs instead of task/process needs. For example, adoption staff may need to be in more frequent communication with front desk staff to coordinate adoptions.
- The role of shiftwork in creating "us vs. them" attitudes and communication barriers (particularly relevant for organizations with a significant proportion of part-time employees).

¹⁷ Hickman, A. (2020, January 9). The 5 tactics of teamwork: A blueprint for team management. *Gallup Workplace*. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/275387/tactics-teamwork-blueprint-team-management.aspx> ²² Riggio, R.E. (2011, August 22). 10 Rules for high-performing teams. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/cutting-edge-leadership/201108/10-rules-high-performing-teams>

TEAMWORK RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED...

- Encourage managers to identify times for meetings and even social gatherings that will include employees from all affected shifts.
- Encourage employees to use asynchronous forms of communication that allow for responses and feedback (e.g., email) over "one-way" forms of communication (e.g., leaving a note for the next shift)

During slower seasons, set aside a day or a few hours at the beginning or end of the work day to close the shelter and dedicate the time to Staff Development Days¹⁸.

- This is a great opportunity to train employees on job rotations and allow employees to teach employees in other areas about their jobs in a stress-free environment.
- The important point is to send a message to your employees that you are invested in their development and success and provide them a means to work together to improve their teamwork.

Recognize and reward team accomplishments as well as positive teamwork through consistent feedback and praise as well as regular visible celebrations (e.g., staff appreciation)¹⁹.

¹⁸ Shelter Employee Engagement & Development Survey. (n.d.). Cross-departmental teamwork best practices.

<https://seeds.uncc.edu/resources-and-tools/>

¹⁹ Riggio, R.E. (2011, August 22). 10 Rules for high-performing teams. *Psychology Today*.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/cutting-edge-leadership/201108/10-rules-high-performing-teams>

LEADERSHIP

ITEM(S) & INTERPRETATION

Effectiveness of your direct supervisor / manager
Top management's leadership of the organization

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to **THINK** about leadership in your organization:

- Leadership is:
 - Goal-oriented – if employees are unclear on the goals, then they will have a difficult time effectively following leadership
 - Complementary to managerial functions – both are necessary
 - *Managerial functions* maintain order and consistency (e.g., scheduling)
 - *Leadership functions* provide vision, inspiration, and motivation (e.g., strategy)

What you can **DO** about leadership in your organization:

- Effective communication is essential for effective leadership. In addition to the best practices for better communication in the organization, here are key areas to focus on improving communication by leadership²⁰:
- **Be authentic.** Employees want to know their leaders as real people.
- **Be visible.** In person interaction fosters connection and trust between you and your employees.
- **Be a great listener.** Employees want to see their leaders and they want to be seen and heard by their leaders. Carve out time to listen and take note of what your employees are saying.

²⁰ Center for Creative Leadership (n.d.). Why communication is so important for leaders.

<https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/communication-1-idea-3-facts-5-tips/>

- Trust is also essential for effective leadership. The word "TRUST" also provides a simple acronym for building trust between your employees²¹:
 - **T**ransparent communication is a must! Provide consistent, clear, and candid communication with your employees.
 - **R**espect all members of your organization. Respect begins with genuine care and concern for each individual. Get to know your employees and listen to what they have to say.
 - **U**nite your team. Foster cooperation and effort toward common organizational goals. Do not tolerate gossip or dysfunctional conflict and competition.
 - **S**how that you care. Showing people that you care is built in the small moments (e.g., saying "good morning" every day; referring to people by name; getting to know them as whole persons not just workers) and in big moments (e.g., seasonal parties, employee recognition). People are highly motivated to follow and work harder and longer for leaders that value them.
 - **T**eam-building activities do actually work. We have all sat through an awkward team activity or two (or more). However, incorporating group activities into meetings and work events does actually help employees get to know—and enjoy—each other. Leaders need to not just facilitate such activities but join in! For descriptions of potential activities, check out: <https://www.workamajig.com/blog/team-building-activities>

²¹ Manning, B.A. (2018, May 16). 5 steps for building trust in the workplace. Association for Talent Development. <https://www.td.org/insights/5-steps-for-building-trust-in-the-workplace>

LEADERSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED...

- Clearly define your organization's mission and make it known to your employees.
- Explain how employees' actions, roles, and responsibilities relate to strategic goals and the overall mission.
- Provide regular updates on progress toward strategic goals.
- Invest in a general leadership or management training program (e.g., continuing education programs associated with universities).
- Identify leaders and managers who need development in communication skills and work with them to improve.
- Leaders can also benefit from a formal mentorship program. If possible, leaders can be paired with mentors within the organization. It may also be beneficial to pair leaders from different animal welfare organizations. Professional associations can be a useful resource for making connections outside of your organization.
- Encourage managers to provide regular feedback—both positive and negative (when constructive) feedback to employees to make regular communication a good habit.
- Create informal opportunities for leadership and employees to interact in order to break down barriers.

PROCEDURES & RESOURCES

ITEM(S) & INTERPRETATION

The standard operating procedures used in your organization

The resources (tools and materials) to do your job well

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to **THINK** about procedures and resources in your organization:

- Be transparent – be open and clear about what resources are available and *why* procedures are needed.
- Be empathetic to employees' frustrations – acknowledging and validating frustrations open the doors to further solution-focused dialogue.

What you can **DO** about procedures and resources in your organization:

- Review and update existing documentation of organizational procedures to ensure accurate and consistent information.
- Evaluate the availability of procedural information:
 - Do employees know where to find information about procedures?
 - Is the information available to all employees?
- When appropriate, seek input from employees about standard operating procedures:
 - Where are there areas of confusion?
 - Are their points of disagreement?
 - Build process working groups that are tasked with developing or refining processes. Such working groups should consist of a representative set of employees.
- After receiving solicited or unsolicited input about procedures:
 - Foster constructive dialogue to resolve disagreements and improve the procedures.
 - Provide widespread clarification. After addressing one employee's stated confusion, follow that one-on-one communication up with employee-wide information sharing so that everyone can be on the same page.
- Look for opportunities to create visual reminders and reference points throughout the organizational space.
 - This is a task that can be supported through the time and talents of dedicated volunteers.
- Clearly and promptly communicate any changes to procedures and resources.
- Help employees prioritize problems and develop solutions to problems based on the resources that are available – that is, keep the focus on what can be done with what you have rather than what can't be done.

VOLUNTEERS

ITEM(S) & INTERPRETATION

The use of volunteers by your organization

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to **THINK** about volunteers in your organization:

- Satisfied and engaged volunteers are important for the overall health and productivity of the organization.
 - To improve the use of volunteers by your organization, start by evaluating how you are currently structuring and managing your volunteer program.
 - The University of North Carolina at Charlotte offers a free Volunteer Program Assessment (VPA) service to help you get started (see link below in Additional Resources).

What you can **DO** about volunteers in your organization:

- Create a training program for volunteers/staff about interacting; include information about how often they will interact, the importance of each group of people, how to communicate (e.g., saying thank you, reporting issues), and policies and procedures about how to handle situations when staff and volunteers do not cooperate.
- Seek information from employees about how to utilize volunteers more effectively. This will help figure out where staff can help to construct volunteers' responsibilities and provide input on where volunteers are most needed.
- Set expectations where any negative issues are funneled through the volunteer manager, but positive information is communicated directly between volunteers and staff.
- A healthy volunteer program leads to more engaged volunteers, which, in turn, positively impacts employees and the organization as a whole. Take a step back to evaluate your overall volunteer program. For volunteer program information, please visit the Volunteer Program Assessment ([VPA](#)) website (listed in the additional information section below).

Links to Additional Resources

In addition to the S16, faculty and students at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte have also developed three animal welfare specific consulting resources:

- 1.) The **Shelter Employee & Engagement Development Survey** ([SeeDS](#)) website provides access to free informational resources related to employment engagement and satisfaction. Interested shelters can also apply for an in-depth, one-on-one consultation to expand on the results of the S16. The SeeDS is a fee-based service that analyzes employee attitudes, perceptions, and opinions on key issues related to organizational health and well-being, such as: Peer Support, Euthanasia Practices, Communication Effectiveness, Employee Morale, Supervision, Job Stress/Burnout, Teamwork, and Training.
- 2.) The **Volunteer Program Assessment** ([VPA](#)) is a completely free, one-on-one consulting service that provides detailed information about the satisfaction and engagement of volunteers. The [VPA Resources](#) page also provides links to additional information about volunteers and volunteer management.
- 3.) The **Foster Assessment System** ([FAST-15](#)) is a free, automated online diagnostic tool that assesses engagement and satisfaction of current foster volunteers.

We know that the animal shelter world is a busy one and there is not enough time in the day to sift through the many online resources to figure out what information is accurate and helpful. In our consulting and research with animal welfare professionals as well as leaders in other industries, we have identified several reputable online resources. The links to these resources are provided below – *please note*: the websites listed provide *both* free and for-pay resources.

Animal Welfare Specific Online Resources

[Animal Sheltering Online](#)

[The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement](#)

[American Humane Society](#)

Non-Industry Specific Online Resources

[Association for Talent Development](#)

[Center for Creative Leadership](#)

[Deloitte Insights](#)

[Gallup Workplace](#)

[Harvard Business Review](#)

[PwC Research & Insights](#)

[Society for Human Resource Management](#)