

The Conference for Administrative Professionals

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The Conference for Administrative Professionals

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Opening Session

Welcome to a day packed full of tips and techniques that will help you do your job with more competence and confidence!



EXERCISE

Below is a list of today's sessions. Everybody will end the day talking about organization and time management. But what do you want to focus on before that?

Reflect on what brought you here today. Read the sessions' descriptions and think about which are most likely to help you get what you came for.

TIME	TRACK ONE	TRACK TWO
10:15 – 10:20	MOVE TO BREAKOUT ROOMS	MOVE TO BREAKOUT ROOMS
Session One 10:20 – 11:20	<p>Staying Calm and Confident During Conflicts</p> <p>Use the techniques and tips from this session to guide your responses the next time you're in a challenging situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize and respond appropriately to others' emotions. • Identify and manage your emotional triggers. • Communicate assertively to overcome emotions and focus on solutions. 	<p>Business Strategy for Administrative Professionals</p> <p>Organizations rely on administrative professionals to help them live their mission and achieve their vision. The better you understand the business strategy behind your day-to-day tasks, the more effectively you can contribute to your company's success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define business strategy as it pertains to administrative professionals. • Describe effective decision-making strategies and when to use them. • Identify practical KPIs that promote continuous improvement.
11:20 – 11:25	BREAK	BREAK

TIME	TRACK ONE	TRACK TWO
Session Two 11:25 – 12:25	<p>Front Desk Safety and Security</p> <p>While you can't always accurately predict what will happen at the front desk, you can equip yourself with knowledge and skills so you're ready to act when (or before) a potential disaster strikes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe procedures for screening visitors and deliveries. • Discuss strategies for confidently handling difficult interactions at the front desk. • Summarize the emergency-preparedness information you need to know and share with your company. 	<p>Getting Results Without Authority</p> <p>Learn what it means to be a leader at any level of an organization and find out how to build on your existing characteristics and attributes to inspire others to follow your lead.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use personal accountability to positively influence others' behavior. • Establish your expertise and competence to build credibility and earn others' trust. • Build strong relationships that lead to win-win solutions.
12:25 – 12:55	LUNCH	LUNCH
Session Three 12:55 – 1:55	<p>Writing for a Digital World</p> <p>It's a short-attention-span world. Getting and keeping readers' attention while delivering must-know information is a challenge. This session will help you present your written content as effectively as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get and keep readers' attention. • Express yourself clearly and concisely. • Call readers to action. 	<p>Critical Thinking and Problem Solving</p> <p>In this session, you'll get tips and techniques for broadening your perspective so you can recognize hidden value and new opportunities in the ideas you and others generate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an inclusive perspective that benefits from everyone's unique contributions. • Ask the right questions to identify and address root causes. • Break free of thinking ruts and release a flow of ideas.

TIME	TRACK ONE	TRACK TWO
1:55 – 2:00	BREAK	BREAK
Closing Session 2:00 – 3:00	Organization and Time Management Learn how to gain control of tasks, organize your workload and improve your focus so you can be more productive. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize more accurately and efficiently. • Manage your time and tasks. • Use attention-management techniques to stay focused and on track. 	

Your Personal Training Plan

Select the title of each session you plan to attend.



Session One
10:20 – 11:20

Staying Calm and Confident During Conflicts
 Business Strategy for Administrative Professionals

Session Two
11:25 – 12:25

Front Desk Safety and Security
 Getting Results Without Authority

Session Three
12:55 – 1:55

Writing for a Digital World
 Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Closing Session
2:00 – 3:00

Organization and Time Management

Staying Calm and Confident During Conflicts

“Life is 10 percent what you experience and 90 percent how you respond to it.”

— Dorothy Neddermeyer, Ph.D.



Strong emotions in the workplace are inevitable. People want to do their best, but when something or someone gets in the way of their success, they become defensive. Responding appropriately to emotionally intense interactions can solidify your reputation and your relationships. Your ability to recognize and control your emotional triggers will help you respond rather than react.

Use the techniques and tips from this session to guide your responses the next time you're in a challenging situation.

Learning objectives

By the end of this session, you'll be better able to:

- Recognize and respond appropriately to others' emotions.
- Identify and manage your emotional triggers.
- Communicate assertively to overcome emotions and focus on solutions.

The Roots of Conflict



DISCUSSION

It's a Monday morning and you want a cup of coffee, but the carafe in the break room is sitting on the warmer with a dried-on layer of silt in the bottom. Frustrated with your co-workers, you clean and replace the carafe, clear the filter and put in a new one, add coffee, start the machine and wait. As the coffee fills the carafe, you scroll through emails and messages on your phone. Just as you're reaching to fill your mug, Jade from Sales bounces in. She says, "Good morning!" while cutting in front of you and grabbing the coffee. Oblivious to your annoyance, she talks nonstop about the weather and her weekend while she adds creamer and sugar to her cup. As she's leaving the break room, she says, "You seem kind of tired. I hope that coffee 'perks' you up and you have a great day!"

What Shapes Emotional Responses?



Maintain a Constructive, Confident Mindset

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognize your emotions and understand what they're telling you. Additionally, EI shapes your perception of others. Understanding how you feel, how others feel and how your emotions are affecting others will help you manage relationships more effectively.

According to Daniel Goleman, in his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, there are five components to EI.



SELF-AWARENESS

- Understand your emotions and trust your intuition.
- Take an honest look at yourself.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Work to improve yourself.



SELF-MANAGEMENT

- Control emotions and impulses.
- Think before you act.



MOTIVATION

- Defer immediate results for long-term success.
- Be productive and welcome challenges.



EMPATHY

- Identify with and understand others' wants, needs and viewpoints.
- Recognize others' emotions.



SOCIAL SKILLS

- Be approachable.
- Be a team player.
- Manage disputes and build relationships among group members.

Identify and Manage Emotional Triggers

What pushes your buttons?

- Insults, bullying and harassment
- Attacks on you or a loved one
- Refusal to compromise
- Deception



EXERCISE

How do you respond in emotional situations? Fill in the chart below.

EMOTION	THOUGHTS/BELIEFS	PHYSICAL SIGNS/SENSATIONS
Sadness/Hurt		
Anger		
Fear		
Shame		

What are some strategies to change your responses?

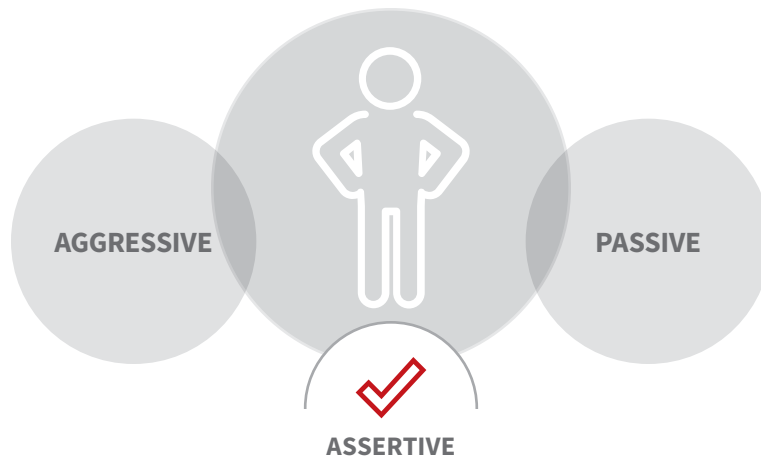
Refuse to act

- Physically leave the situation.
- Remove yourself mentally.
- Regroup your thoughts.
- Remind yourself YOU are in control.

Change your internal dialogue

- Monitor your internal dialogue and assess how it makes you feel.
- Practice *honest*, positive internal dialogue.
 - Focus on your accomplishments.
 - Focus on your positive character attributes and personal talents.
 - Acknowledge what you need to work on and your ability to improve.
- Visualize success.

Choose Assertiveness



Read the following scenarios.

1

Teri is angry because Todd missed a critical deadline. Her face flushes red and she shouts, “This is inexcusable! What are you, an idiot?” Todd apologizes, flustered, and starts to offer an explanation. Teri says: “Just get out. I will take care of it, as I ALWAYS do.”

2

Teri is angry because Todd missed a critical deadline. She asks him to give her what he has finished, then she goes to her office and completes the work herself.

3

Teri is angry because Todd missed a critical deadline. She says: “Todd, I told the customer he would get this today. I thought I was clear about the deadline. If I need to present deadlines differently from now on, let me know what will work better. Now, what can we do to finish this as quickly as possible?”

Imagine you are Todd in the first scenario. Teri is berating you. You feel attacked, but you know that if you don’t stand up for yourself, Teri’s aggressive behavior toward you will continue. You need to stay in control emotionally and assert yourself.

In-the-moment techniques



DISCUSSION

List three things Todd can do to take charge of his emotions in the heat of the altercation with Teri.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now, script what Todd can say to assert himself. Use the “I feel _____ when you _____, because _____” format. Add an “I would like _____” statement at the end to describe what Todd would prefer.







KEY TAKE AWAYS

- Everyone deserves respect.
- Passive, victim behavior violates individual rights as much as aggressive behavior.
- Immediate, open and honest conversations increase the likelihood of a productive relationship.
- Others treat us as we allow them to treat us.

Assess and Remedy the Damage After a Heated Interaction

After an embarrassingly bad interaction, it seems best to avoid the other person and never mention the issue again. But is this the productive solution? What happens if you must work with that individual again?

 Assess	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The relationship• Your reputation• Remaining unanswered questions• Remaining untaken actions
 Own your part	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admit mistakes.• Take responsibility for misunderstandings in which you played a part.• Avoid “I’m sorry you feel that way” and other language that shifts the blame.
 Make things right	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I accept responsibility for this. I want to correct it. I’d like to _____. Will that work for you?”• “I want to make things right, but I’m not sure how to do it. Can you help me come up with an acceptable plan?”
 Acknowledge remaining emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don’t expect or demand immediate forgiveness.• Give the other person time and space.



EXERCISE

Teri treated Todd horribly in the first scenario. Todd intervened to control the emotion and addressed her assertively. Now it's Teri's turn to remedy the damage.

What should she do to:

- Salvage her relationship and reputation?
- Own her part in the issue?
- Make things right with Todd?



Conclusion

Letting the conversation become heated takes the focus off the goal at hand and puts it on emotions instead. Address emotions in the moment and use assertive communication to express what you need, while valuing the other person's needs at the same time. Set boundaries, show empathy and use "I" language to take control and guide the interaction to a positive conclusion.

Business Strategy for Administrative Professionals

“The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do.”

— Michael Porter
Strategist, author and professor



Organizations rely on administrative professionals to help them live their mission and achieve their vision. The better you understand the business strategy behind your day-to-day tasks, the more effectively you can contribute to your company’s success.

In this session, you’ll explore the role that administrative professionals play in an organization and learn how you can become a more strategic and essential team member. You’ll examine business planning strategy, decision-making approaches and methods to measure success.

Learning objectives

By the end of this session, you’ll be better able to:

- Define business strategy as it pertains to administrative professionals.
- Describe effective decision-making strategies and when to use them.
- Identify practical KPIs that promote continuous improvement.

Business Strategy and Strategic Planning



EXERCISE

Consider your role within your organization. What are your responsibilities and performance goals as they relate to your company's success? Create a snapshot of your position by writing words and/or drawing visuals that you associate with your role and responsibilities.

Business strategy: The master plan for achieving tactical organizational goals — Business strategy involves many moving parts, including strategic planning, decision making, key performance indicators and continuous improvement.

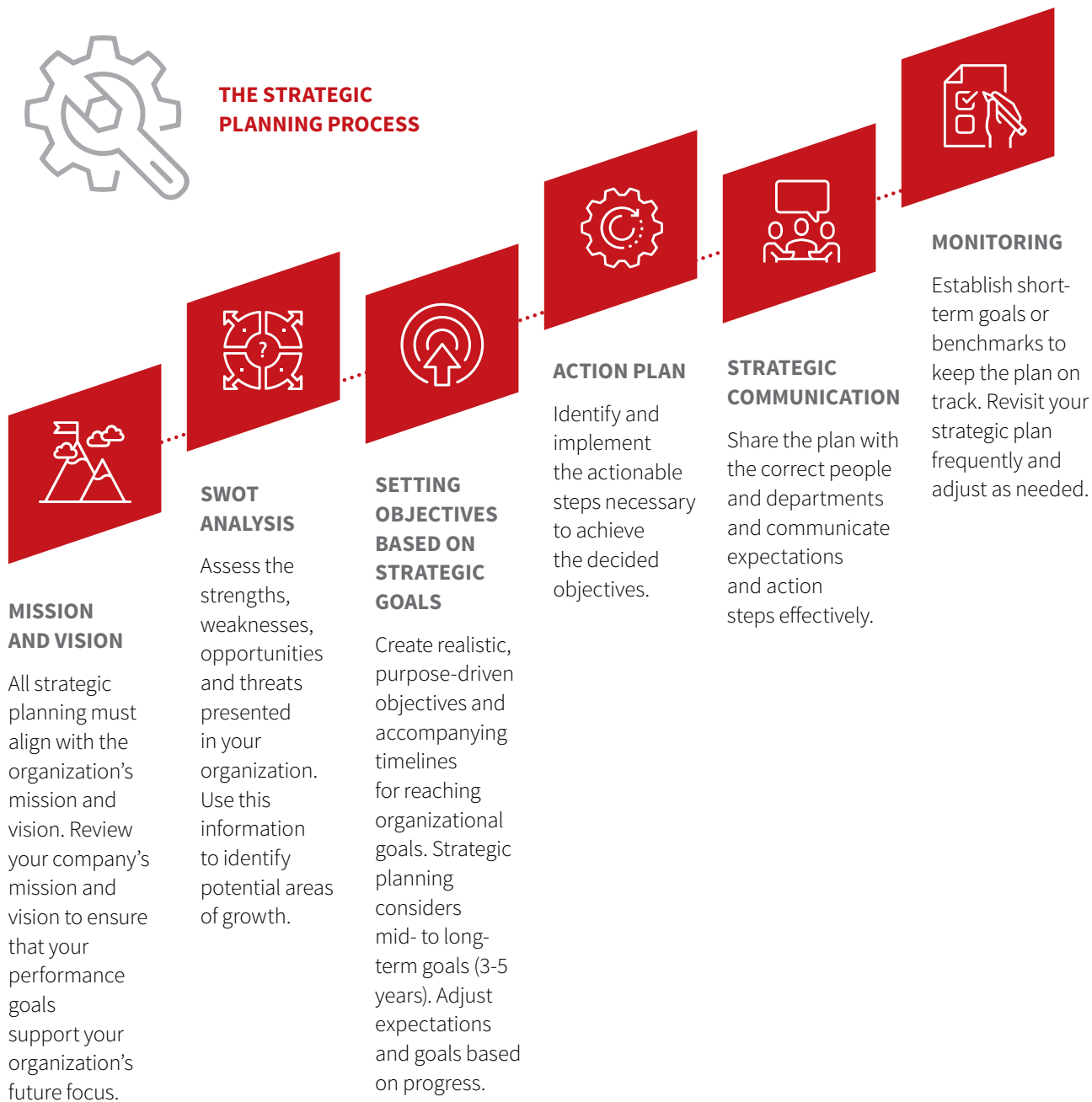


Strategic planning: The ongoing process of evaluating data and adjusting the goals and priorities of an organization to meet its mission and vision — As an administrative professional, you affect this process because your role requires you to have knowledge of multiple departments, resource allocation, communication, etc., all of which are essential to the running of your organization.





THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS





TIP

When conducting a SWOT analysis, create a SWOT table, particularly when you'll be presenting your information to others. Each point in the table visually represents key insights into the balances of opportunities and threats and advantages and disadvantages.



EXERCISE

Your company has used Vance's Office Supplies for eight years. Their prices are high, but their customer service is excellent. Everything Offices, a competitor, submits a bid for your company's business. Their prices are substantially lower than Vance's and switching companies could save your organization several thousand dollars per year. An online search shows that Everything Offices has a 3.5-star rating as opposed to Vance's 4.7. You wonder if part of this is that Everything Offices just opened for business, so they might still be getting their feet under them. You decide to do a quick SWOT analysis.

STRENGTHS

Vance's Office Supplies:

Everything Offices:

S

WEAKNESSES

Vance's Office Supplies:

Everything Offices:

W

OPPORTUNITIES

Vance's Office Supplies:

Everything Offices:

O

THREATS

Vance's Office Supplies:

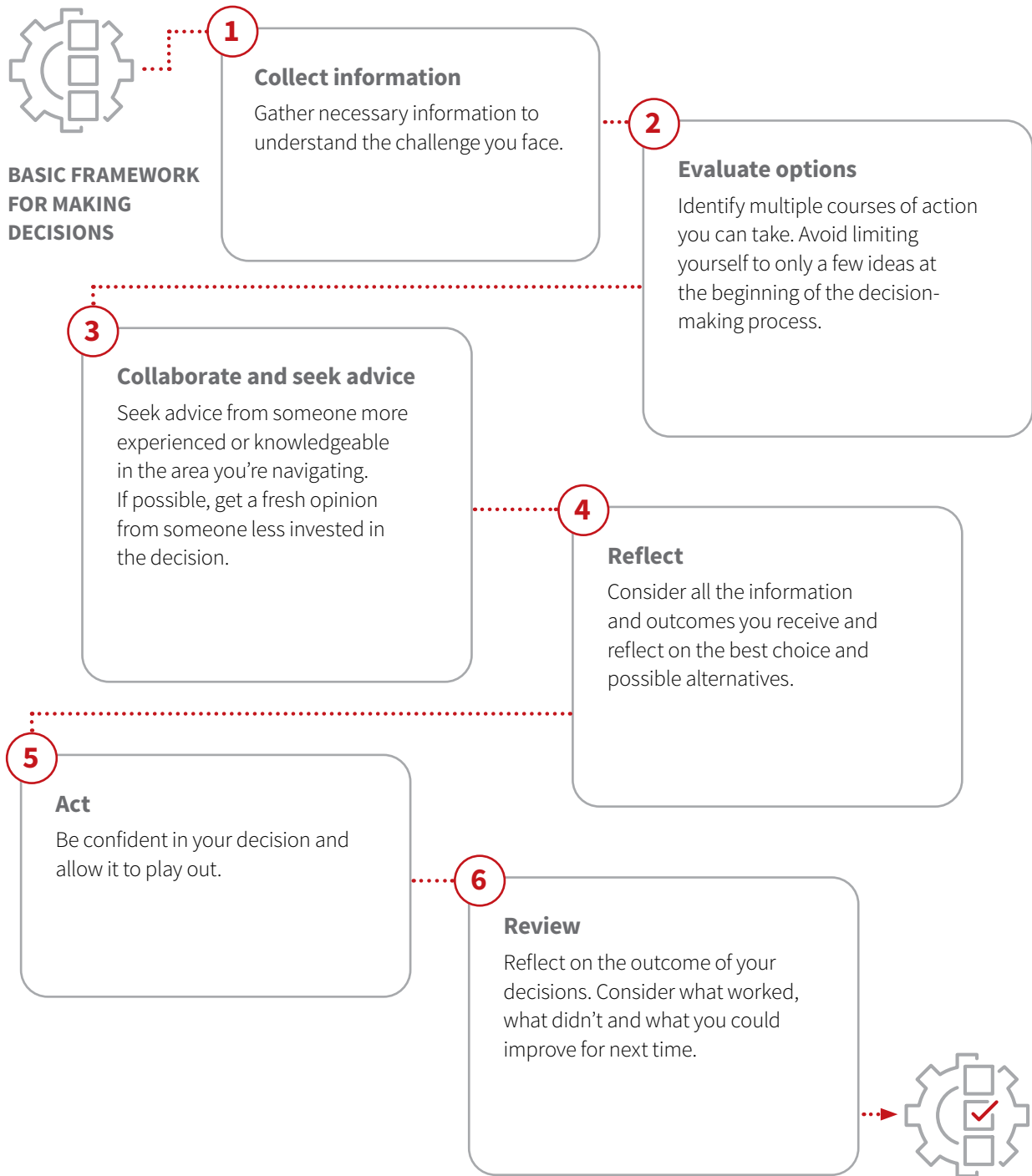
Everything Offices:

T

Effective Decision Making

The ability to evaluate situations and be decisive is an extremely valuable trait in an administrative professional. Learn from every decision you make, so you know what to do/not do in the future.

Having a sound process for making decisions, big and small, will help you hone your skills.





TIP

Pushback is a normal response to change. When there is fallout over a decision you make, remain confident in your choices and communicate your reasoning and expectations to help others accept the decision. As time passes, and as your decision proves itself, those who are resistant to change will get on board.

Strategies to Support Decision Making

As an administrative professional, you have a deep understanding of your organization that most employees don't have. Use the framework for decision making as your foundation and apply these strategies to ensure you make the best possible decisions for you and your team.



Data-driven decisions

Using data-driven decision making allows you to be more confident in your choices.

To become more data-driven:

- Look for patterns
- Root your reasoning in data
- Visualize data

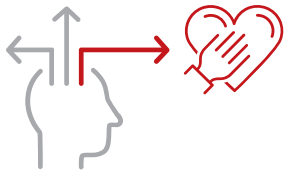


Leveraging technology

Technology can streamline and expedite the decision-making process.

Use technology to:

- Generate and pull data
- Improve communication
- Increase efficiency

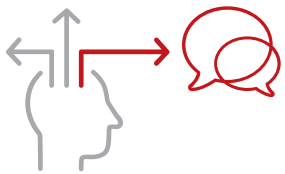


Ethical decision making

Ethics are the standards that determine the appropriate way to behave. It's important to approach decisions from an ethical standpoint, particularly if there could be negative effects from your decision.

Take a more ethical approach:

- Have open discussions
- Consider the potential effects of your decision
- Establish guiding principles



Communication

Whether you're deciding on your own or with a team, it's vital to communicate with others about the decision, timelines, expectations, etc.

To strengthen your communication skills:

- Choose the right tools
- Involve your team and communicate rationale
- Reflect on every decision

Key Performance Indicators

A key performance indicator (KPI) is a quantifiable indicator of progress towards a specific objective or result. KPIs accomplish a few things: They hold you and your team accountable, provide you with data about your successes and failures, keep you and your team aligned and moving towards similar goals, and give a realistic health check of your organization.

Types of KPIs



Five common measures for administrative professionals

1. Organization
2. Communication
3. Support
4. Documentation
5. Time management



THINK ABOUT IT

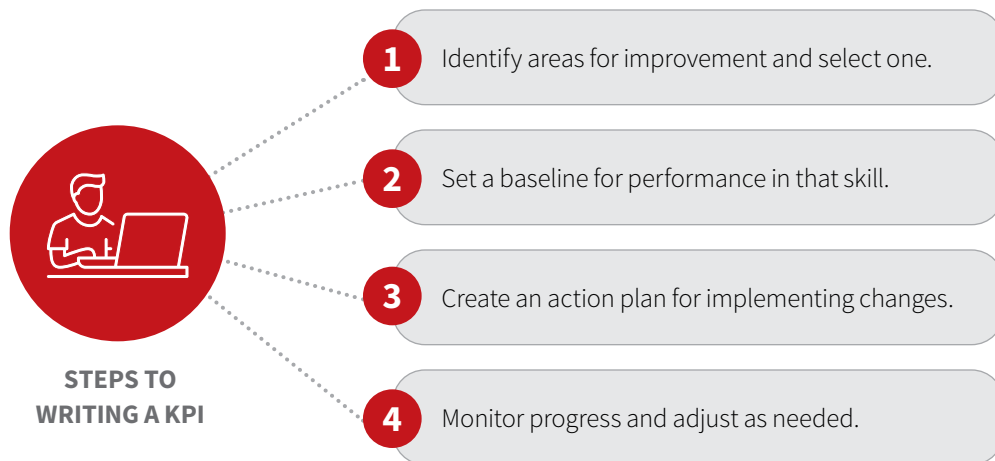
Where do you need to improve professionally? Brainstorm some realistic, measurable goals to improve your efficiency and performance at work.

Setting KPIs for Continuous Improvement

Effective KPIs are an important part of business strategy; all employees and the organization as a whole must have measurable goals they are working toward.

Setting KPIs

You can create a KPI to measure almost anything. If you're setting your own KPIs, align them with the overall mission and vision of the organization and focus them on growing your skills over time.



SMART KPIs

To write goals that support achievement of your KPIs, keep them specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (SMART).

Examples of goals that use the SMART method:

- Implement new technology rollouts and upgrades to the marketing department within four weeks.
- Respond to client emails and messages within one hour of receiving them.
- Limit scheduling conflicts so all attendees are available for monthly sales meeting.



EXERCISE

1. Review the scenario and discuss the decision points.
2. Identify a business strategy.
3. Based on the strategy, list three KPIs the company could measure during the period of change it faces.

Tech Solutions is a renowned technology consulting firm that specializes in providing cutting-edge solutions to clients across various industries. Currently, the company excels in offering IT consulting, software development and tech support services. The industry is evolving, with emerging technologies like artificial intelligence reshaping the landscape quickly. To maintain its competitive edge, Tech Solutions has set a strategic goal to expand its services.

Tech Solutions boasts a talented pool of software developers, data scientists and IT consultants. The company is known for its commitment to staying ahead of the tech curve and providing innovative solutions to its clients. Financially, Tech Solutions is stable, with the capacity to invest in new ventures and technology.

Decision points:

1. **Service expansion strategy:** Do you believe the company should pursue a gradual, phased expansion into new tech areas or opt for a more rapid introduction of services? What factors in the scenario can help you determine this?

2. **Internal process optimization:** To integrate new services, the administrative team must optimize internal processes. This could involve restructuring workflows, encouraging collaboration among work teams, adopting new project management tools, etc. What changes might the administrative team need to make internally to support the expansion?

3. **Communication strategy:** How can the administrative team support creation of a communication plan to inform clients about new services, potential concerns and benefits of the expansion?

List three KPIs for the company to measure that align with the chosen business strategy:



Conclusion

Administrative professionals are key to an organization's ability to implement its business strategy. Your knowledge of the company and strength in communicating with and supporting others are crucial. Use what you learned in this session to become more confident in your abilities and grow your skills. Reflect on your strengths and weaknesses and set KPIs to promote continuous improvement.

Front Desk Safety and Security

“Safety is something that happens between your ears, not something you hold in your hands.”

— Jeff Cooper
Military and police instructor



As a front-desk worker, you are the gatekeeper for and front-line protector of your workspace. This is a big responsibility that can feel stressful, scary or overwhelming. Thankfully, you're not alone. Everyone in your organization needs to know how to handle risks and emergencies and work together to keep the workplace safe.

While you can't always accurately predict what will happen at the front desk, you can equip yourself with knowledge and skills so you're ready to act when (or before) a potential disaster strikes.

In this session, you'll learn what safety information to share with all employees so that together, you and your co-workers can keep your workplace safe and secure.

Learning objectives

By the end of this session, you'll be better able to:

- Describe procedures for screening visitors and deliveries.
- Identify behaviors that could become a safety risk.
- Discuss strategies for confidently handling difficult interactions at the front desk.
- Summarize the emergency-preparedness information you need to know and share with your company.

Prepare Yourself and Your Organization



EXERCISE

Select how often you think each statement applies to you, from Never to Almost Always.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1. I feel safe working at the front desk.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I feel confident handling difficult visitor interactions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I feel prepared to respond to emergencies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Get everyone on board with standard safety procedures

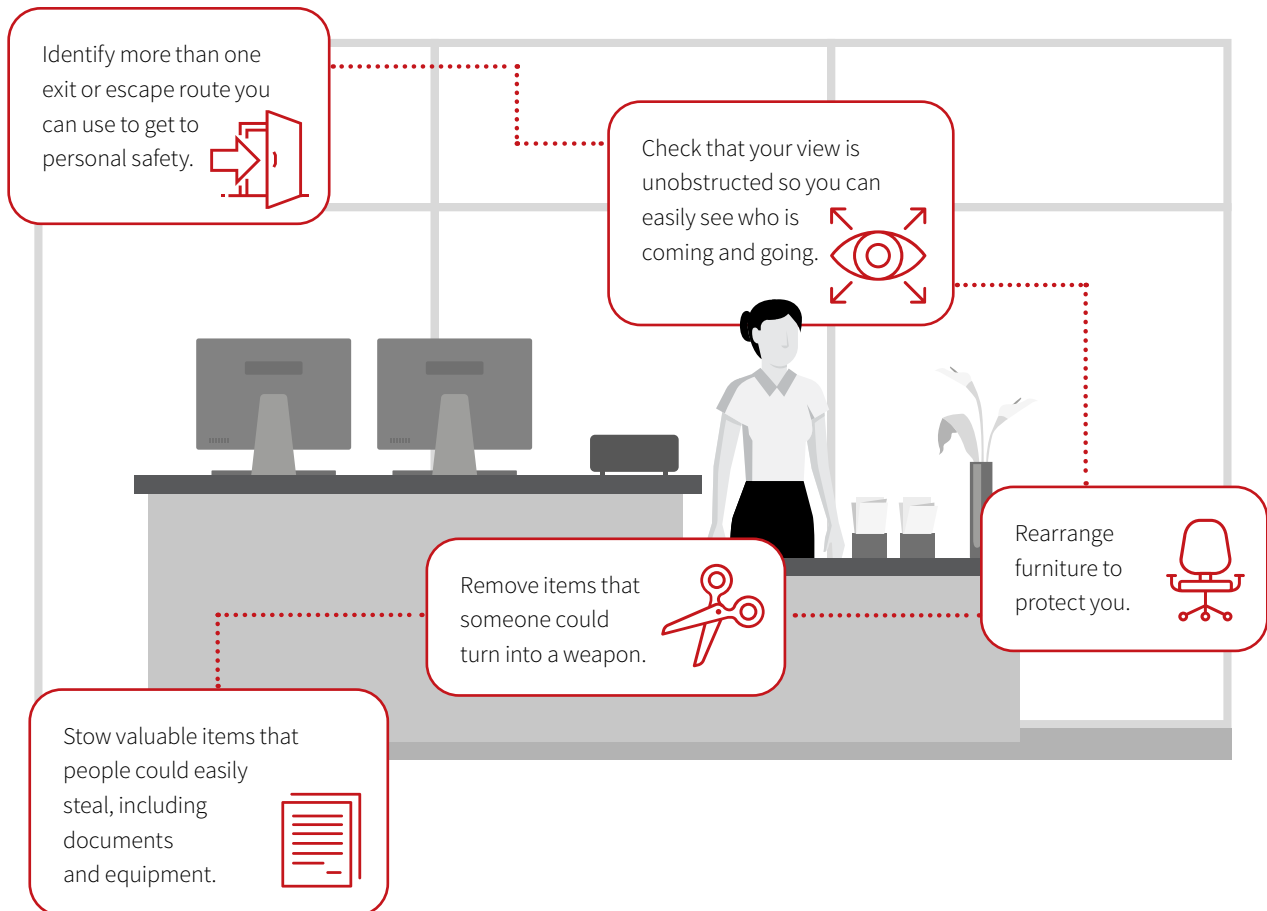
You need everyone's support and cooperation to keep your workplace safe.

- Share safety information with your entire organization. Emphasize the power of awareness and preparation.
- Make a case for why everyone needs to follow the rules.
- Identify people you can collaborate with to develop front desk security policies and emergency plans.
 - Human Resources
 - Legal
 - IT
 - Facilities and maintenance
 - Security team
 - Local emergency responders

Manage Traffic Into and Out of Your Building

You're in a high-visibility position where you see who enters and exits the workplace. This means you're one of the first people to see any potential threats. Make sure you know the safety protocols and how to enforce them.

Front desk layout: Safety analysis



Screen visitors

1. Even if you have security cameras, always track who is in the building: visitors and employees.
 - Keep a visitor’s form or log.
 - Require visitor badges.

2. Enforce the screening procedures for everyone, no exceptions.



EXERCISE

You’re at the front desk when four visitors walk in. They say they don’t want to take the time to fill out the visitor form. What could you say to acknowledge their feelings while still enforcing the visitor policy?

VISITOR

YOU

“I just have to pop into the back for a second.”

“Michael is already expecting me.”

“You know me! Why do I have to sign in?”

“I’m running late.”

Screen deliveries

Besides keeping track of people coming in and out of the office, it's also important to screen deliveries, whether it's the daily mail drop-off or packages from delivery drivers.

Before you open anything, inspect it first.

- ✓ Check the to and from addresses for anything unusual.
- ✓ Look at the postage.
 - Does the postmark match the return address? Is there excessive postage?
- ✓ Look for unusual labels or restrictive markings.
 - For example: Personal, Confidential, Private, Do not X-ray
- ✓ Look at the packaging.
 - Check for powdery residue or stains.
 - Check for wires or unidentified protrusions.
 - Check for excessive tape
- ✓ Note anything else unusual. For example, does the package have a strange smell?

1

If you have any doubts about a piece of mail, don't open it.

2

Don't touch the mail anymore. Leave it where it is.

3

Isolate the area so everyone can keep a safe distance from the item.

4

Wash your hands.

If you suspect an urgent threat (e.g., an explosive), call 911 immediately. Otherwise, contact the police or your supervisor, depending on your company's policy.

For more information to help you develop a mail screening policy, consult the Guide to Mail Center Security from the United States Postal Service: <https://about.usps.com/publications/pub166>



DISCUSSION

Share one great safety strategy or policy your company uses to manage front-desk traffic (layout, visitors, deliveries).

Others' inspiring ideas:

Identify and Handle Problematic Behavior

Stay vigilant at the front desk. Look out for red-flag behaviors so you can defuse situations before they get out of control.

Be aware

- Be a keen observer.
 - Learn the typical warning signs of escalation so you're more likely to spot behavior that could lead to a potentially risky situation
- Be careful not to make assumptions or jump to conclusions.
 - Mentally note the behavior
 - Try to react neutrally to the person whose behavior concerns you
 - Set yourself up for safety

Project confidence and authority

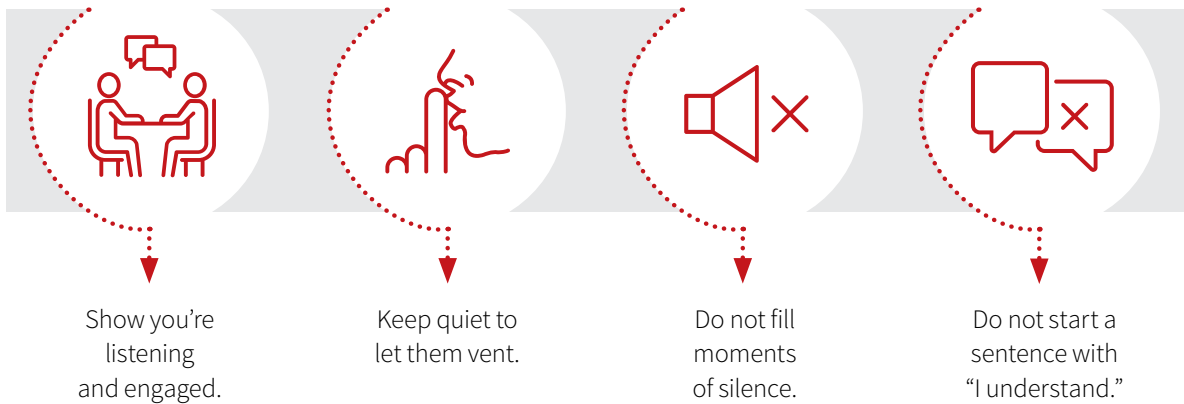
If you are concerned about someone's behavior but you deem it safe to address them, calmly and respectfully interact with the person, without judgment.

- Look them in the eye.
- Stand tall and relaxed.
- Use a firm voice.
- Don't mumble.
- Don't talk too fast.

Stay in control of difficult interactions

When you're speaking with someone who is angry, frustrated or otherwise aggravated, here are some ways to handle the conversation:

Show them you care.



Offer assistance.

- Ask “How can I help?”
- Tell them what you can do to proactively handle the issue.

Have a plan for seeking help

If you aren't certain you can handle a situation, don't try. Seek help instead.

- Use your escape route if needed.
- Keep a list of numbers to call in an emergency.
- Establish codes/alarms to let colleagues know when you need help.

Document incidents

Create a workplace incident reporting system to document every situation that escalates. Use this as a tool for improving procedures and performance at the front desk.

Respond to Emergency Situations

It's important to know your role in preparing for and responding to emergencies.

Have plans for every type of emergency

Your company should have written documents that outline how to respond to different emergencies. These documents should include instructions, roles and relevant contact information.

Know your role and also know how to direct other people to safety.



Distribute

Figure out where and how to share the plans so everybody knows what to do.

Practice

Coordinate drills for emergencies.

Revise

Update plans as needed after drills or in response to feedback or concerns.

To develop or improve emergency plans, refer to the Ready.gov website from the Department of Homeland Security: [ready.gov/business](https://www.ready.gov/business)

General emergency preparation

- Be familiar with the physical premises.
 - Exits
 - Doors that do and don't lock
 - Rooms with and without windows
- Ensure emergency equipment is up to date.
- Update the emergency contact list.



PREPARE FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

- Make sure there is an AED (automated external defibrillator).
 - Alert everyone where the AED is stored.
- Make sure there are first aid kits.
- Make and distribute a list of anyone in your organization who is trained in CPR, first aid or AED operation.

Respond to a medical emergency

1. Call 911.
2. State your specific location (address, floor, etc.).
3. State the nature of the injury or condition you see.
4. Follow any instructions the dispatcher gives you.
5. Stay on the line until they instruct you to hang up.
6. Administer first aid as needed if you or anyone nearby are trained.
7. Have someone stay with the victim until professional help arrives.



HANDLE AN EVACUATION

- Know the layout of the entire building and be familiar with different escape routes.
- Establish a meeting site outside the building.
- Assign floor wardens.
- Assign evacuation captains.
- Assign elevator and stairwell monitors.
- Develop a head count procedure.
 - You can provide valuable information about people who are unaccounted for since you keep your eyes on who and who isn't in the building.
- Develop a process for floor searches.



RESPOND TO A FIRE

Make sure that you and everyone else can:

- Recognize the sound of the alarm
- Identify the nearest exits
- Locate the fire extinguishers
- Locate the alarm pulls

Make sure that everyone knows to:

- Exit the building immediately when an alarm sounds
- Not use the elevators
- Feel any door before opening it — and to not open doors that are hot to the touch
- Assist people who need help exiting



RESPOND TO A WEATHER WARNING

- Identify shelter-in-place locations and develop procedures for different weather phenomena.
- Store emergency supply kits.
- Determine how to get weather warning alerts and updates.
- Establish company-wide communication methods.



GO INTO LOCKDOWN

- Establish primary and back-up lockable meeting points in advance.
- Gather people in the middle of the room, not by windows or doors.
- Stay out of sight.
- Turn off lights.
- Keep quiet.
- Lock entry points if possible.



EXERCISE

List at least two emergency preparedness action items you learned about today that you'd like to research at your own workplace to feel better equipped to handle emergencies.



Conclusion

As a front desk professional, you have insight, experience and observations that are crucial for workplace safety. Managing the front desk with the risk of hostility, violence and extreme situations may feel understandably overwhelming. Remember that information-sharing, awareness, preparation and training are integral components of keeping your office safe. Start researching, planning and collaborating now to strengthen your security measures and ensure your emergency preparedness.

Getting Results Without Authority

“Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence.”

— Sheryl Sandberg



Leadership in today’s world no longer fits the top-down model of a high-ranking person directing groups of people from above. Modern leaders know that people do their best when treated with respect and engaged with projects and duties that naturally motivate them.

In this session, you’ll learn what it means to be a leader at any level of an organization and find out how to build on your existing characteristics and attributes to inspire others to follow your lead.

Learning objectives

By the end of this session, you’ll be better able to:

- Use personal accountability to positively influence others’ behavior.
- Establish your expertise and competence to build credibility and earn others’ trust.
- Build strong relationships that lead to win-win solutions.

Be Seen as a Leader at Every Level of the Organization



EXERCISE

Qualities of a leader

In the space provided, write down what you think are respected, admirable qualities of a leader. As others in the session share their responses, list those, too.

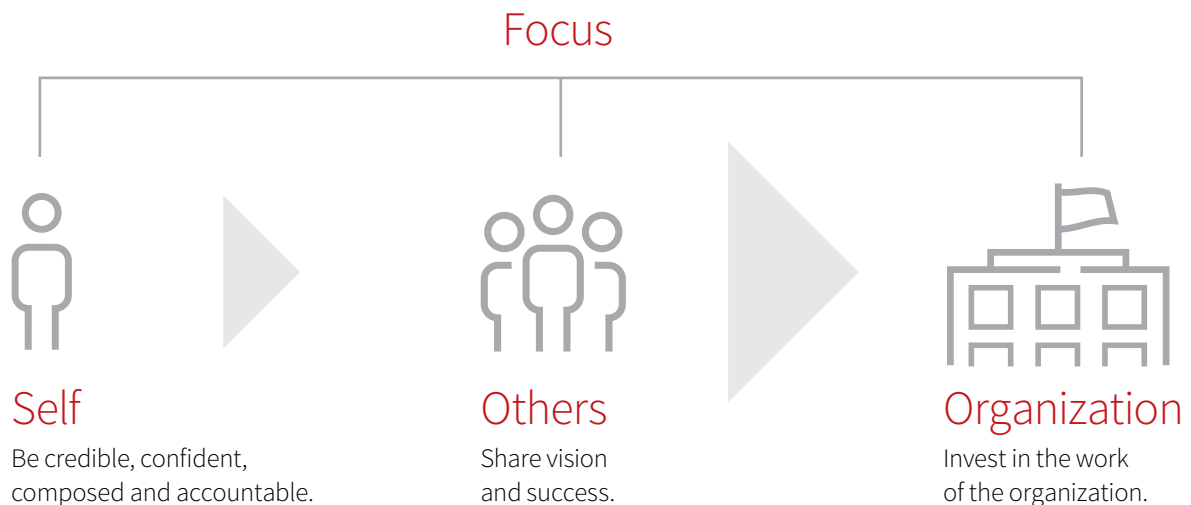


THINK ABOUT IT

How well does the combined list of respected, admirable qualities match your own skills? How does that affect your view of yourself as a leader?

Focus on self-image, a shared vision and common goals

Leadership begins with developing a stronger self-image. It then transitions to a shared vision of supporting others and working toward a common goal with and for the organization.



The foundation of leadership is the ability to motivate others to work together toward a shared goal. In organizations where everyone takes responsibility for leadership, employees ask, “What am I trying to achieve for myself, others and the organization?”

Take Personal Accountability

Being accountable — taking responsibility for every decision you make and every action you take — is an important component of leadership. It shows you're dedicated to your work and to the people around you.



EXERCISE

Accountability assessment

Read each statement and choose the letter that you think your co-workers (including your boss) would use to rate you. Take some time to think about all your interactions over the past few days when assessing these statements (conversations, text messages, emails, conference calls, meetings, etc.)

Key: "N" for needs improvement, "O" for often and "A" for always.

	N	O	A
1. I am the first to admit my mistakes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I can easily adjust when circumstances or expectations change.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I am good at prioritizing my work so that I am mostly working on activities that support organizational goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I am not afraid to ask questions and admit when I don't understand something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I am not afraid to take ownership for poor results.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I speak up if I know I can't complete a task or expectation in a professional manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I seek and accept constructive feedback so that I can improve my results.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. My actions are predictable and steady; I can be trusted to complete my part of the work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I am careful not to exaggerate issues — positively or negatively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. When results are not met or deadlines are missed, I first seek to understand my role in the situation instead of blaming circumstances beyond my control or others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I don't make prejudgments about how co-workers perform.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I listen for intent rather than just to the words a team member says.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. I don't vent about how awful my situation is or compare my workload to others on my team or in the organization.
14. I am not critical of the organization.
15. I don't blame my boss for my inability to meet expectations.



THINK ABOUT IT

Review your responses and make a mental note of where you need to improve. During the coming week, catch yourself if you start down a negative path. Change your response in the moment.

In every situation, ask yourself:

- How can I contribute?
- What can I do to make a positive difference?
- How am I modeling personal accountability?
- How does taking accountability promote my credibility?

Build Credibility Through Competence

Credibility is how much others believe, trust and respect you. When you learn how to build, demonstrate and offer credibility, you become a model of leadership within your team and organization.

Ways to establish expertise and competence



Research your ideas to ensure/
support their feasibility.



Cite trusted sources that
others will respect.



Prove an idea's merit through
testing or pilot projects.



Make your credentials known
in an appropriate way.



Get endorsements and
recognition from others.



Hire other people with
credibility and integrity.

Confidence: Another Critical Element of Credibility

Think about a situation that required trust in another person. Did it make a difference how confident they seemed? Does it make a difference if all parties involved seem confident in their ability to do what's required?



EXERCISE

How do we demonstrate confidence?

EYE CONTACT	VERBAL HABITS
COMPOSURE	ABILITY TO ACCEPT FEEDBACK
BODY LANGUAGE	WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU ADD?

Building Strong Relationships

A strong relationship with your peers and co-workers is critical if you're going to persuade, motivate and influence. Never underestimate the importance of building a trusting relationship with others, especially when you have little or no authority over them.

Ways to build relationships

1. Praise people in front of their peers, and send notes of acknowledgment when they do an exceptional job.
2. Acknowledge someone else's idea and give credit where it's due.
3. Continually look for ways to protect and enhance others' self-esteem.
4. Give people the benefit of the doubt. Assume the best intentions.



DISCUSSION

Seeking win-win solutions is believing that what both parties want is equally important. Discuss how win-win solutions help to build trusting relationships.

Three Things Relationships Require



Time: Bonds are not formed overnight. Allow time for the bond to form.



Establishment of trust and commitment: Demonstrate trustworthiness and commitment to a bonded relationship.



Understanding: No one is without faults. Replace a judgmental attitude with one of understanding.



TIP

“Faux bonding” doesn’t work

The major components of bonding are trust and commitment. Creating solid relationships takes time. When relationships are rushed or faked, the other person may feel cheated, manipulated or used.

Learning How to Influence

Persuasion is motivating someone to change or reinforce their beliefs, values, attitudes, point of view or behavior. Formal authority is not required for positively persuading and influencing others to accept ideas and suggestions.

Ways to set the stage

- Understand the motives and interests of everyone involved, including yourself.
- Help others solve challenges and feel good about themselves.
- Talk *with* other people, not *at* them.
- Display empathy.
- Build relationships.

Ways of persuading

- Discuss differences of opinion.
- Discuss options — be flexible.
- Identify your listeners' needs.
- Explain the benefits (WIIFM).
- Use positive and negative motivation.
- Ask for their ideas.

How to agree to disagree

- Express respect for other people.
- Acknowledge the validity of their position or specific points they've made.
- Express confidence in your position.
 - Avoid saying “but” or “however” at the beginning of this statement. Instead, use a one-second pause and then make your statement.
- Stay positive about the ability to work together in the future.



Want to learn more?



To learn more about how influence and persuasion operate and how leaders at all levels learn to enhance and focus theirs to achieve goals, try these books:

The Leadership Challenge
by James Kouzes and
Barry Posner

P.E.R.S.U.A.D.E.
Communication Strategies
That Move People to Action,
by Marlene Caroselli, Ed.D.



Conclusion

Positive relationships are foundational to a motivated, engaged team environment. Fostering transparent communication and holding everyone accountable to excellence leads to the open exchange of information and superior support at all levels of the organization. The ability to build positive work relationships is a fundamental competency for those who want to assume an informal leadership role.

Writing for a Digital World

“Having excellent writing skills can make you an indispensable member of your team or company. And it’s one of the best ways to remain consistently employable — no matter your profession.”

—Greta Solomon, author, *Just Write It!*



It’s a short-attention-span world. Getting and keeping readers’ attention while delivering must-know information is a challenge.

Following best practices will help you achieve the most efficient, but professional, communication and reduce the number of exchanges needed to achieve an objective. Respecting people’s time increases your credibility and the impact of your digital communication.

This session will help you present your digital written content as effectively as possible.

Learning objectives

By the end of this session, you’ll be better able to:

- Get and keep readers’ attention.
- Express yourself clearly and concisely.
- Call readers to action.

Write for Digital Readers



DISCUSSION

People read digital content differently than they read print. Discuss and list the differences.

Keep these things in mind:



Get and keep readers' attention.

Make your content scannable — with bullet points, callouts and other graphic design elements.



Use headings and subheadings to attract and guide readers.

- Be brief. Don't make your audience wade through nonessential words and punctuation in your headings.
- Front-load them. Put key words at the start of the heading.

Examples:

- Districts 3, 7 and 9 decide on new home office location in Detroit
- Detroit is new home office location

- Keep headings specific and meaningful so they can stand alone.

Example:

- Picnic in Wade Park this year

Examples:

- Jazz dancing increases flexibility
- Flexibility is a side benefit of ballet and jazz dancing

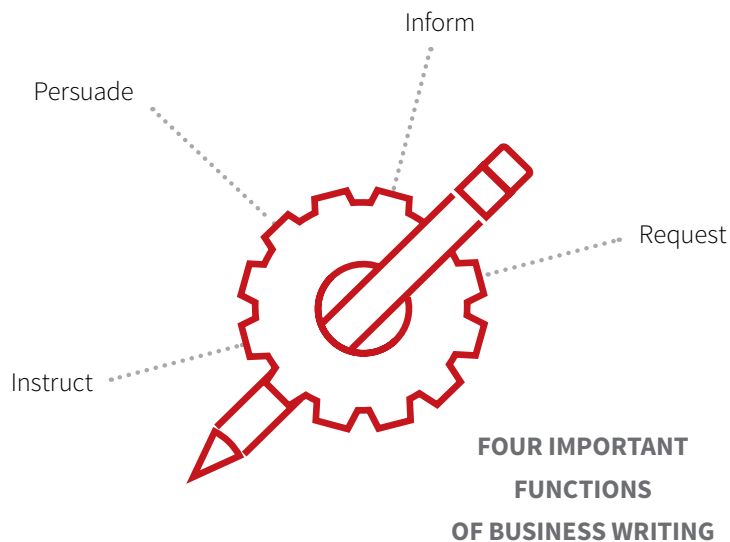
- Make a statement rather than ask a question.

Examples:

- Write an effective email
- How do you write an effective email?

Define Your Purpose

If you don't know why you're writing, your audience won't know why you're writing either. Always define your purpose before you start writing.



Sum up your purpose in one phrase or sentence. Imagine writing it on the back of a business card.



EXERCISE

Think about the last business-related content you wrote and distributed. In one phrase or sentence, sum up your purpose.

Your boss just asked you to let the team know about participating in the company's charity clothing drive. She wants everyone to contribute in some way. What is your purpose?

Identify Your Audience

Knowing your audience will let you tailor your communication to their needs, which increases the likelihood they will understand and respond appropriately to your message.

Ask yourself:



Who?	What?	Where?	How?	Why?
Is it an external or internal audience? What is their department or function?	What type of information am I conveying? What is the objective?	Where is the reader in the organization's hierarchy?	How interested in the subject is the reader? How will they feel about it?	Why am I writing to this reader?

Think about:

- Where they are likely to read the message (device, surroundings)
- How the format affects the message (Should you say it in person instead?)
- How they prefer to receive communication
- What they already know about the topic
- What you need them to do
- Whether there are deadlines
- Secondary audiences



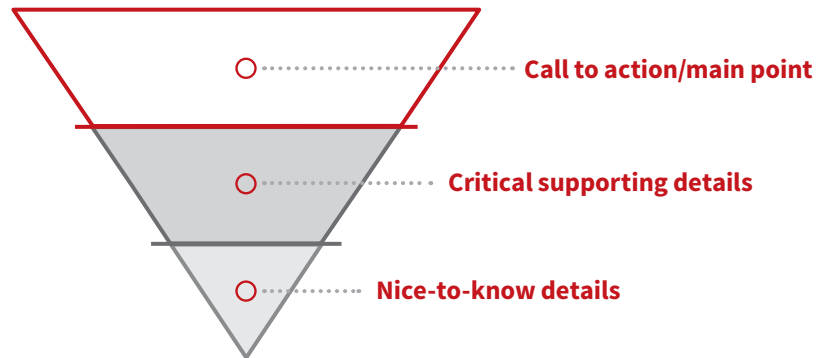
DISCUSSION

Who is the audience for the charity clothing drive message your boss asked you to send? What do you need to consider?

Express Yourself Clearly and Concisely

Don't let your message get lost under the weight of your information.

- ✓ Use the inverted pyramid structure: most important point up front, details thereafter.



- ✓ Ask yourself, "What do they need to know to do what I need them to do?"

- ✓ If in doubt, leave it out. Say it in as few words as possible.

- ✓ Use active voice.

Examples:

- Evaluations should be submitted by supervisors before 3 p.m.
- Supervisors, please submit evaluations before 3 p.m.

- ✓ Call readers to action more than once, especially in longer messages.

Example:

We'll need the McKenzie and the Johnson projects on Monday, so please bring both.

Jackie has us scheduled from one to three in the front conference room. Tonya asked me to let you know that Doug from Ginsburg will be there. Also, *(message continues with supporting details)*

Again, please bring both the McKenzie and the Johnson projects. I look forward to seeing you on Monday at one.

Thanks!

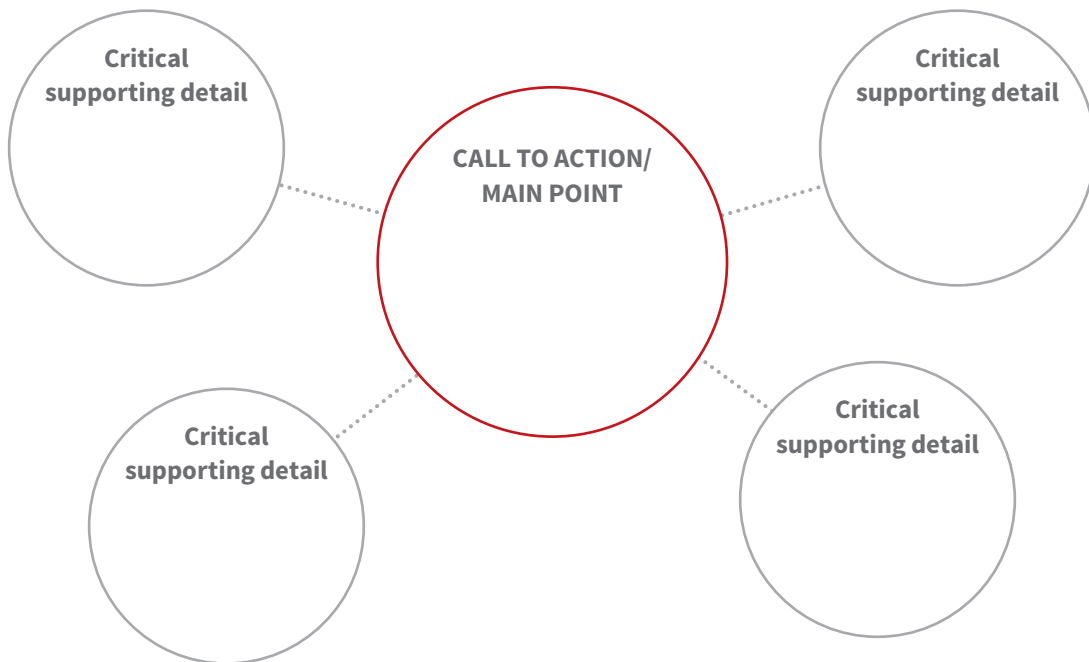


EXERCISE

It's time to draft the message about the company's charity clothing drive.

1	2
Transfer your purpose to the space provided. Purpose:	Transfer your audience considerations to the space provided. Audience:

3 Now, map your message.



4 Next, put the supporting details in order, from most to least important.

5 Finally, write the message and add a heading.



Conclusion

Digital communication must get straight to the point, efficiently convey the necessary information and directly state the call to action. “Concise” and “brief,” however, are not the same concepts: A concise message shares the entire collection of thoughts without wordiness, whereas a brief email can be short on information as well as words. Use all you learned in this session to digitally communicate more efficiently on your readers’ — and your own — behalf.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

“Openness is a central value of critical thinking, and you show that openness by your eagerness to listen and discover.”

— Neil Browne and Stewart Keeley
Authors, *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*



Critical thinking is the ability to understand other perspectives, distinguish facts from assumptions and eagerly pursue better conclusions. This skill is essential for developing a more global perspective on seemingly obvious problems.

With improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills, you'll be equipped to analyze current and potential outcomes, assess risks and benefits, generate new and different ideas and make reasoned and informed decisions.

In this session, you'll get tips and techniques for broadening your perspective so you can recognize hidden value and new opportunities in the ideas you and others generate.

Learning objectives

By the end of this session, you'll be better able to:

- Develop an inclusive perspective that benefits from everyone's unique contributions.
- Ask the right questions to identify and address root causes.
- Break free of thinking ruts and release a flow of ideas.

Prepare to Think Critically

Using critical thinking skills will help you solve problems with reason rather than just intuition or the “this is how we’ve always done it” approach.



EXERCISE

Read each statement and choose whether you perform the described activity Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often or Almost Always.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1. I consciously focus on learning new information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I naturally evaluate the facts and what I know to be true.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. When interacting, I consider what others mean and their intent or purpose in communicating it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I look for patterns, parts and components when analyzing and problem solving.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I consciously evaluate options through comparisons, advantages/benefits, biases and objectivity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Don't Get Stuck in the “Know”

Knowing is being aware of the facts of something. Rote memorization leads to knowing. You know not to touch a hot stove. You know to wait until the light turns green before driving through an intersection.

Thinking takes effort. It involves considering or reflecting on something and forming an opinion about its accuracy. To build your critical thinking skills, remain open to challenging what you know and having others challenge what you know.



To prepare yourself for being challenged, ask yourself these questions:

- Would others accept my thought as fact?
- What objective evidence do I have to back it up?
- Is my thought based on an assumption about someone else?
- Am I assuming my view is the only one possible?
- Is the way I'm thinking reflecting my personal values and goals?
- Am I thinking in all-or-nothing terms?
- Is this a blanket judgment based on a single event?
- Is there someone else with more expert knowledge?
- Am I predicting the future rather than reading the facts?

Opinions, beliefs and perceptions inform good decision making. But be aware of how outside influences might be shutting out other ideas or clouding opportunities for development.

Change How You Think

Taking a new, different or more objective approach to a problem requires you to step outside the situation, accept that there is more than one answer and develop an inquisitive nature.



People who ask questions — particularly follow-up questions — are more educated about other perspectives, and they are better conversation partners. But not everyone is interested in being questioned or asking questions.

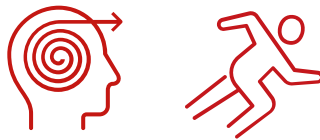


THINK ABOUT IT

- What makes people reluctant to answer questions?
- What keeps people from asking questions?

Set the stage for critical thinking

- Make it clear your intention is to gain knowledge and understanding, not to interrogate.
- Provide concrete examples and information to inspire thought, not to limit it.
- Acknowledge biases.
- Have and foster a questioning, invested attitude.
- Keep egos subdued.
- Listen actively, considering and consuming everything that is said.

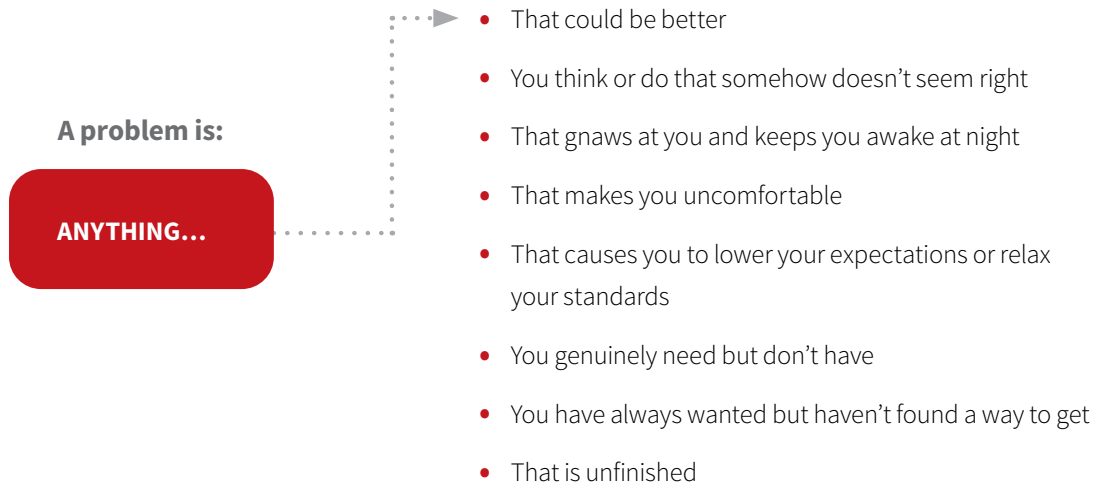


THINK AND ACT IN A WHOLE NEW WAY GOING FORWARD

- Own your feelings and opinions.
- Speak without hesitation.
- Challenge the seemingly obvious.
- Seek a second and third viewpoint.
- Ask colleagues on other teams to review your work and offer suggestions.
- Consider opposites.
- Dissect things.
- Visualize the “impossible.”
- Take risks.

What Is a Problem?

We often think of problems as brick walls — obstacles that keep us from getting where we want to be. Instead, think of problems as questions in need of answers.



Use the parameters of problem solving and decision making as a framework

- Identify options: a list of possible solutions to a problem
- List potential consequences: the real or perceived costs and benefits of a decision (chosen solution)
- Examine outcomes: the results of selecting one of the options as a solution

Consider personal values and attitudes

The amount of emotional attachment you have to a problem will influence your personal definition of what the problem is. Although it makes sense to follow a careful process to analyze a problem and use good data to inform decisions, there's still an important place in decision making for unique views of a problem and its solutions.

Change problems into opportunities

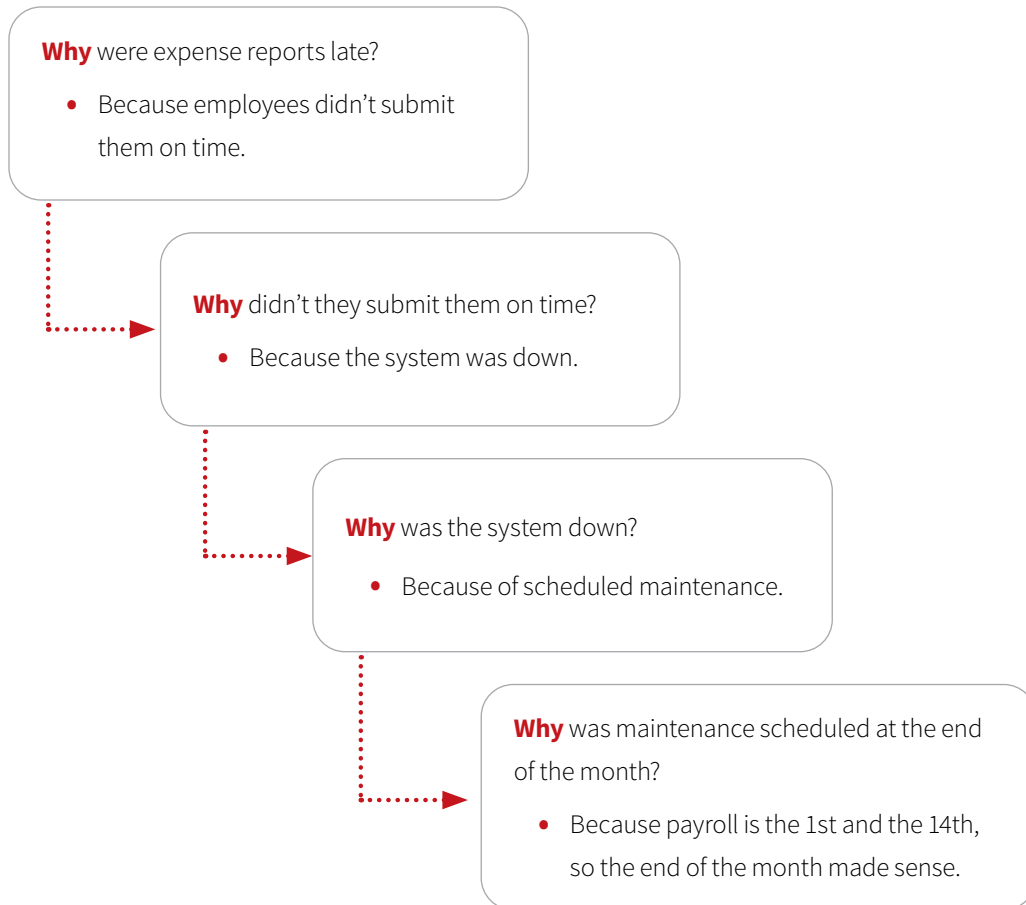
When you encounter a problem, you might immediately say to yourself, "I can't do it because _____" or, "I can't have it because _____." These are dead-end statements that do nothing to address the problem. Instead, pose the problem as a question and give your brain time to formulate some answers. You might find that what you thought was an obstacle is actually a door to an opportunity.

Get to the Root Cause of a Problem

Some problems are relatively simple. For more complex problems, data and information can shed light on a possible root cause. Addressing that root cause is critical to solving the problem.

Ask the Five W's and an H

Though it's a common starting place, asking "Why?" on its own is not always the best way to get to the root of a problem.



As you can see, "Why?" on its own can lead to a pattern of blame without resolution.



DISCUSSION

Talk about other questions you could ask in the above scenario to get to and address the root of the problem. Form three questions using *Who*, *What*, *Where*, *When* or *How*.



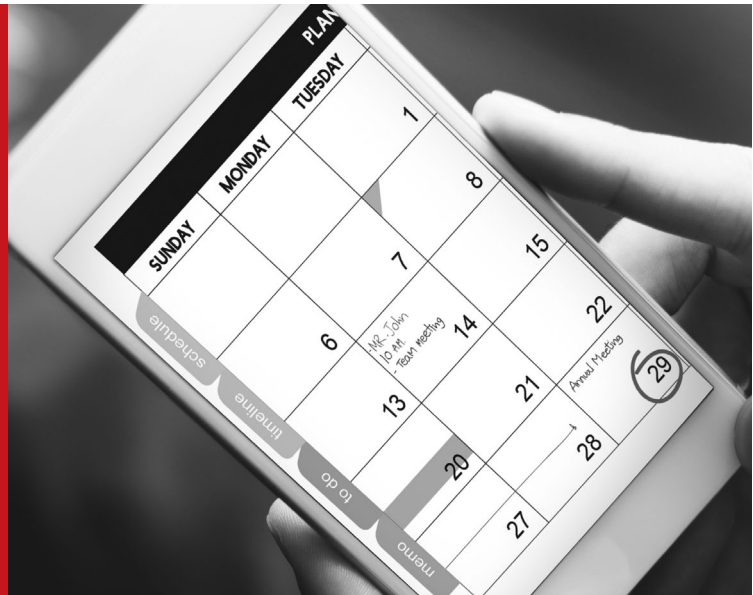
Conclusion

Developing a critical-thinking approach to problem solving means seeing problems in terms of options, outcomes and potential consequences. This means that to critically evaluate situations, we must remain optimistic and look for the seeds of hope in every idea. Thinking more deeply and broadly is essential to developing a strategic plan for long-term results.

Organization and Time Management

“Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of a commitment to excellence, intelligent planning and focused effort.”

— Paul J. Meyer
Personal development author and pioneer



In this session, you'll learn how to prioritize your tasks, organize your workload and improve your focus so you can be more productive.

Learning objectives

By the end of this session, you'll be better able to:

- Prioritize more accurately and efficiently.
- Manage your time and tasks.
- Use attention-management techniques to stay focused and on track.

Get Organized

Turn chaos into momentum by recording what needs to be accomplished and when it has to be completed. A simple method is developing an accountability sheet. Streamline productivity by developing a method to view tasks and schedules in one place.



Action



Time estimate



Actual time



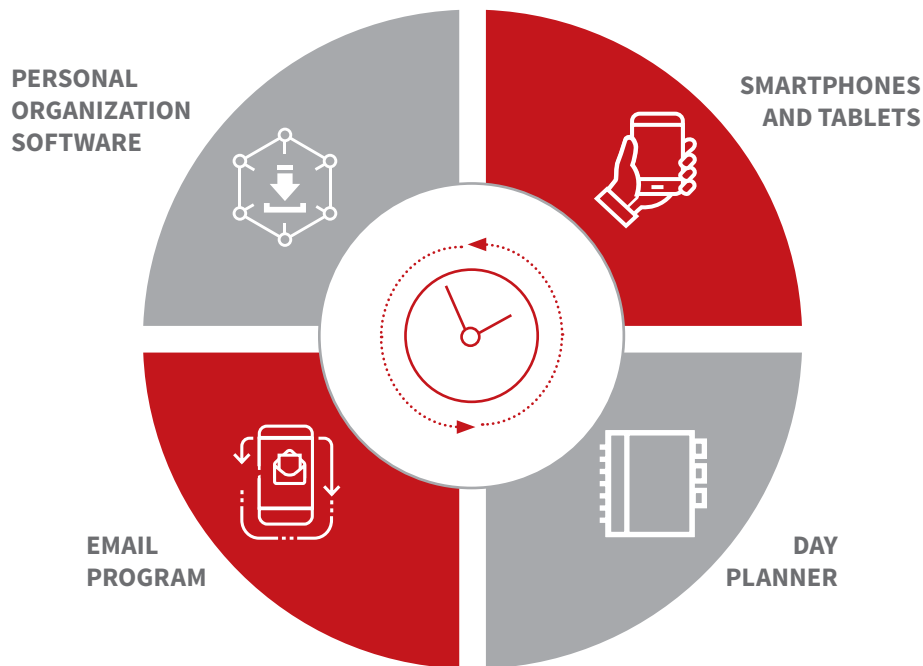
Due date



Recipient

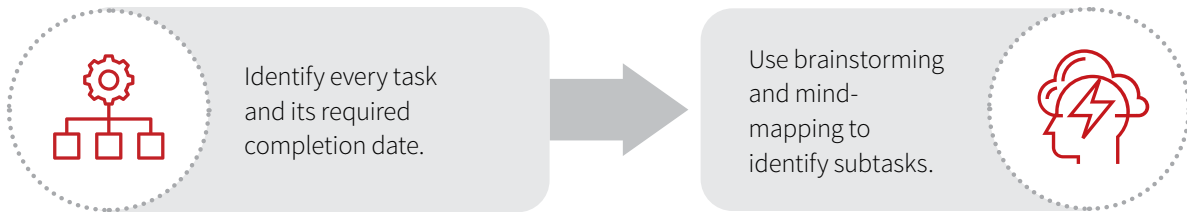
Time management tools

There are many organization tools available, and it's important to understand when a tool promotes efficiency or distracts from it. Avoid allowing tools to control the day. Select tools that improve focus and motivate accomplishment.



Prioritize Tasks and Their Subtasks

One of the biggest time-management challenges is identifying and tracking all the tasks you need to complete. But unless you track every detail, pieces can slip through the cracks.



When a task is delegated to you:

- Ask how you should prioritize the tasks among your other tasks.
- Find out what the deadlines are.
- Communicate any existing or potential conflicts.
- Offer alternatives.



With every task, ask yourself:

- Is it urgent?
- Is it important?
- Does this task contribute to the department's/organization's/my goals?
- Does this task jeopardize or contribute to another goal?
- Are others waiting on the outcome of this task?
- Will there be negative consequences if I don't complete it immediately?

The Reactive Process

Unexpected, urgent situations are a threat to daily time and task management. Responding to urgent requests and last-minute details interrupts crucial tasks and can dominate the day. Create a reaction plan to combat disruption and prepare for urgent tasks.

Three components of a reaction plan

1.
TRANSPARENCY

Be transparent about resources.
Prepare in advance and know where to find what is needed.



2.
URGENCY

Learn how to identify true urgency. Perform tasks that pose a greater threat to these areas first.



3.
ACCOMPLISHMENT

Set realistic goals for urgent situations. Accept that not all urgent matters require the perfect solution.



Overcome Procrastination

You know procrastination puts you in a bind. But knowing it doesn't always equate to doing something about it.

Common reasons for procrastination:

- Boring, routine tasks
- Dauntingly large, complicated tasks
- Unsure of expectations
- Unsure how to meet expectations
- Perfectionism

Techniques for overcoming procrastination:

- Break tasks into smaller pieces and tackle one small chunk at a time.
- Schedule the task chunks into your day, and stick to that schedule — or ask someone to hold you accountable.
- Set up a reward system of some sort.
 - Breathe and be mindful of the relief you feel after accomplishing the task.
 - Go outside.
 - Take a walk.
 - Stretch.

Focus

Task management is the ability to concentrate on an individual task, see it through to completion and move to the next. However, the very act of identifying tasks can be distracting. Listing tasks and identifying subtasks can lead to longer lists and more stress. When developing priorities, keep it simple.

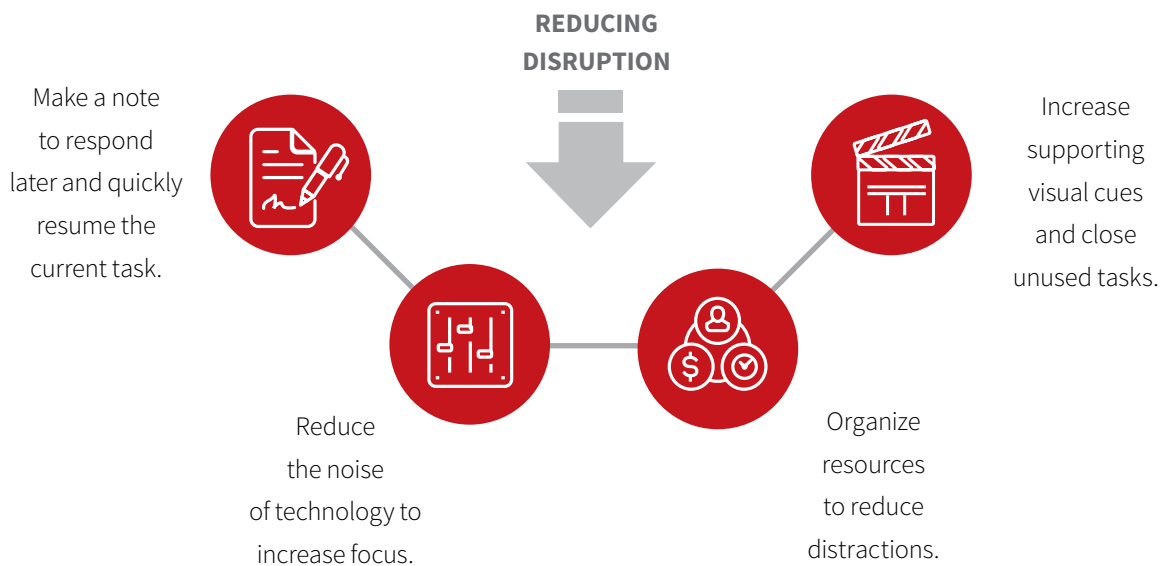


TIP

Be present in every task. Being present includes not only focusing on the task at hand, but also tuning in to personal feelings and emotions. If productivity is being influenced by exhaustion or frustration, take a moment to recognize the emotion and regain attention.

Disruption and Recovery

Distractions are commonplace and, though employees make concerted efforts to limit distractions, the best defender is using techniques and technology to improve recovery time. Recovery tools can reestablish visual cues, limit suspension time, trigger memory and reinforce concentration.

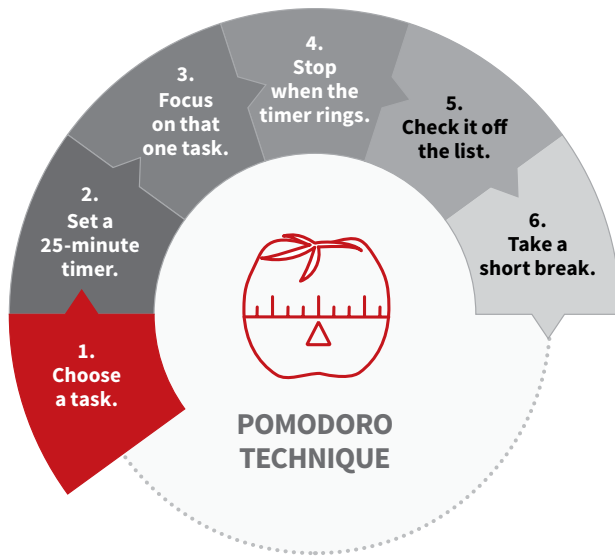


TIP

In addition to becoming more efficient, technology has also become more distracting. One of the most important tools for reducing interruptions and increasing focus is silencing technology tools.

Strategy for Limiting Interruptions

The Pomodoro Technique was invented by Italian time management expert Francesco Cirillo. This strategy trains the brain to intensely focus on one objective for 25 minutes without interruption to build greater productivity.



TIP





Check email, social media or take a walk during each break. Rest your brain. For every four “checkmarks,” take a 20 – 30 minute break to assimilate new information and rest.



EXERCISE

Prepare for efficiency

Plan for efficiency before diving in. Follow the six steps above, and prepare to put the Pomodoro Technique into action.

			
TASK	RESOURCES	TIME	DISTRACTIONS



Conclusion

Being in control of your time and tasks will help you manage your workload with more confidence. Use this session's tips and techniques to prioritize each day's events, adjust when unexpected situations arise, get organized, set and reach time-management goals, overcome procrastination, stay focused and get things done.

Action Planning Worksheet

It's critical to have a plan for how you'll put into practice what you've learned during this training. When you develop specific steps for professional development, you're committing to your own success.

Make a Statement to Make a Change

Set yourself up for success by expressing how you'll use the skills and tools in this training to move in the right direction. Use the area below to set an intention and state your desired result.



If I...

(the action you plan to take)

Then...

(the desired impact of your action)

Planning to Make a Change

According to psychology professor Icek Ajzen and his Theory of Planned Behavior, there are three components to making a change: attitude, social support and perceived effort. Get ahead by setting the stage for your intention to become reality. Use the area below to plan for change.

Attitude

When I am successful,
I will (feel/think/act) ...

Social support

I will share my intention with...

*(make a list of people who
will help you be accountable)*

Perceived effort

List any potential obstacles and
ways you plan to overcome them:

Reinforcing Accountability

Consider the more manageable steps for your intention and what you might be able to accomplish in the next 30 days. Use this chart to set a plan and discuss it with your social support (colleague, mentor or supervisor).

Anticipated completion in the next 30 days

Manageable step		0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
1.		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Continuing on the Path to Success



Now that it has been 30 days, you might have accomplished far more than you anticipated and want to go farther or, like most people, you might have fallen behind schedule. That's okay. The important thing is not giving up on your intention. Continue to make plans and strive to reach your goals. Use the area below to design a new plan for the next 30 days.

If I...

Then...

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Notes

CERTIFICATE

OF COMPLETION

This is to certify that the following participant has successfully completed:

The Conference for
Administrative Professionals

Participant Name

Attending a SkillPath course may qualify for Continuing Education Credits based on program length and completion in accordance with the National Task Force for Continuing Education guidelines. Save this Certificate of Completion and your course outline — and contact your professional licensing board or organization to verify specific requirements. This course qualifies for 3 contact hours.



Course Date and Location

Michele Markey

Michele Markey, SkillPath CEO

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