



Leadership Letter

Reducing Employee Turnover

Studies show that much of the typical employee's job satisfaction is determined by the quality of his/her relationship with the manager/director. Surveys consistently show that a large percent of people who quit their jobs do so, not because of the money, but because they feel they aren't appreciated for their contributions. Lack of appreciation, lack of teamwork, and the perception that employees aren't cared about are consistently high-rated reasons for low job satisfaction.

Lack of appreciation is itself a negative. Tell employees that you appreciate their contributions; if you don't tell them, they often think you don't.

Don't punish your better performers by giving out positives equally to everyone. When giving out positives, treat people on the basis of merit, not just seniority or position.

Deal effectively and efficiently with problem performers. Don't tolerate poor performance; others will misinterpret why you're not addressing the issue.

- Adapted from *How to Prevent Employee Turnover*, by Aubrey C. Daniels
<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/0,4621,307637,00.html>

*“There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals.”
(Vince Lombardi)*

Guidelines for New Supervisors

When you're new to the job, have a plan for establishing yourself with those you lead. Here are a few ideas to consider:



- Delay making major decisions. Get to know people before disrupting the status quo.
- Identify the informal leaders and befriend them.
- Find the history of your group. Discover what successes your group is proud of and recognize those accomplishments.
- Interview each person in your group; get to know everyone. Ask questions like, "What can I do to help you accomplish your job?"
- Begin problem-solving. Begin making changes to some common problems you learned about through your interviews.
- Conduct a group meeting, but not until you have something to say and enough background to speak with authority.
- Set goals for the future from directions constructed through your interviews and group meetings.

- Adapted from *Top 7 Leadership Guidelines For New Supervisors* by Gregory P. Smith.
<http://top7business.com/?Top-7-Leadership-Guidelines-For-New-Supervisors&id=405>

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Effective Planning through SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is one approach to gathering information for creating plans to shape future actions of your organization, center, or business. SWOT stands for **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. When trying to develop a plan of action for improvement, leaders can benefit their organizations by analyzing the situations at hand. What are the strengths of your organization; what are its weaknesses? What opportunities do you see and what threats exist to present challenges? With better awareness of what you know as the “givens,” you and your team will be better able to develop clearer plans for meeting or setting your goals.

Today, with professional associations competing for memberships, it is important to realize whether or not anything sets you apart from those others. Why should students, caregivers, teachers, etc. in early care and education join your organization over others available to them? To answer this question, try a SWOT analysis and then set your goals accordingly.

Strengths—What do we do well? What do others see as our strengths? What advantages does our association offer over others? What unique resources do we have access to or offer?

Weaknesses—What could we improve? What are others likely to see as our weaknesses? What should we avoid?

Opportunities—What are the opportunities facing us? What trends could we take advantage of? How can we turn our strengths into opportunities?

Threats—What trends could harm us? What obstacles do we face? What is our “competition” doing? What threats do our weaknesses expose us to?



SWOT analysis offers a key.

- Adapted from *Creating a Brighter Future for Your Program through Strategic Planning*,
by Ken W. Mikesell
<http://cecl.nl.edu/public/issues/dlsu06.pdf>

- *SWOT Analysis: Discover New Opportunities, Manage and Eliminate Threats*
http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm#

“Leadership is action, not position.”
(Donald H. McGannon)

Layer Your Presentations So You Can Finish On Time

Have you ever sat through a presentation that was supposed to last an hour and stretched to almost two? It shows not only a lack of awareness on the speaker’s part, but also a lack of respect for the audience’s time. It happens frequently, yet it is entirely avoidable---through layering. Try it yourself: If you’ve said you need an hour to present your material, plan to end your delivery within forty-five minutes to give your audience or staff ample time to ask questions. When preparing your presentation, develop multiple places to bring it to an end so that you have several options. Cover your most critical material at the beginning---the need to know elements---and distribute the useful-but-not-necessary details in each subsequent layer. During the presentation, as you approach the end of each layer, consider whether time will permit you to proceed to the next level of information or oblige you to wrap up the layer you are in. With this format, no matter where you have to stop, you can both deliver the information and easily end on time, every time.

- Adapted from *Communication Solutions*, June 2006

“I am a man of fixed and unbending principles, the first of which is to be flexible at all times.”
(Everett Dirksen)

Board Orientation

Board member orientation is critical. Whether you conduct one-on-one or group sessions, taking the time to be sure new board members understand the structure and operations of the organization is important. They must also know their board member role and be acquainted with all board roles to know how they fit into the organization. To the chart below, add columns identifying the “Person Responsible” and “Date Training Will Occur” to further assure orientation success. Choose folks who are effective teachers to do the orientation session(s). Make training fun — have a scavenger hunt through your association’s printed history and play a Jeopardy-type game about board roles and responsibilities. The responsibility for developing and implementing an effective program of board orientation is shared between the board’s head and the board itself. Success doesn’t just happen, it must be planned for. Be committed to developing a well-informed board. Take the necessary action.



Board members are diverse; treat them as individuals.

Effective board member orientation is critical.

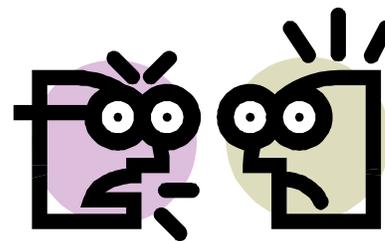
Sample Board Orientation Chart

- Adapted from 2004 VAECE Policy Manual

Information	Issues	Presentation Options and Materials
History	Provide sufficient knowledge about the past so the present makes sense. Also, help new board members see their own participation as a part of the organization’s ongoing story.	Written materials; Pictures
Strategic Direction	Present a framework for new members to participate effectively. Clarify the mission, vision, organizational values, and goals that inform organizational actions.	Presentation / discussion
Organizational Structure	Help new board members understand who does what and lines of accountability.	By-laws; Organizational chart; Member lists; Introduction to key members
Board Roles	Ensure that new members understand the roles of the board.	Presentation / discussion; Written materials of job descriptions
Board Member Responsibilities	Ensure that new board members understand their own responsibilities as board members.	Presentation / discussion; Signed agreement including conflict of interest and ethics statement
Board Operations	Help new board members understand how the board operates so that they may participate effectively.	Committee charges; Meeting schedule; Attendance policy; Reimbursement form; Parliamentary procedure
Program	Offer new board members a feel for the work of the organization – what it does, whom it serves, what difference it makes.	Newsletter; WebPages; Special projects; Awards and scholarships; Conference
Finances	Help new board members become informed about where money comes from, how it is spent, and the state of the organization’s financial health.	Budget; Quarterly financial statements

You Can't Avoid Every Conflict, But You Can Manage Them

Disagreements, arguments, and other conflicts are part of everyday life in most centers. Smart directors realize that there is no way to eliminate conflicts: instead, they put their energy into managing them properly. When a conflict flares up in your program, remember this advice:



Conflicts are a part of life.

- **Figure out the underlying cause of the conflict as fast as you can.** Often, the true source of the trouble goes much deeper than what is on the surface. When coming up with solutions, make sure you are getting to the root of the problem.
- **Start doing two-way communication.** Too often, directors faced with conflict tend to impose quick solutions. Solutions must involve the people having the conflict. Make sure you get input from all of the involved parties as you craft your solutions. This method will allow those involved an opportunity to buy into the solution, assuring a better chance it will actually work.
- **Leave your emotions at home.** No matter how worked up employees or parents are, they need you to remain calm. Even when people are yelling, you need to stay focused, remain calm, and work toward solutions. To do this, focus on the issues at hand and not on the finger-pointing, name-calling, and accusations that may go hand-in-hand with workplace conflicts.

-Adapted from Effective Personal Relationships by Robert W. Lucas (McGraw Hill)

Leadership has a harder job to do than just choose sides. It must bring sides together. (Jesse Jackson)


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*Promoting Quality Care and Education for
Young Children and Their Families*

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The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) is a regional organization committed to promoting quality care and education for young children and their families. SECA is committed to providing leadership and support to individuals and groups by:

- *Enhancing the quality of young children's lives through early childhood care and education.*
- *Supporting families in their roles of caring for their children.*
- *Fostering the professional growth and status of individuals working with young children and their families.*
- *Increasing public understanding and support for policies and programs which ensure developmentally based services to young children and their families.*
- *Focusing on Southern issues concerning children and families*