

Leaders' Alert

*A newsletter for Executives, Managers, and Management Officials
of the Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services*

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Developing Senior Leaders Who Build the Next Generation of Talent

Brian Marincic, Human Resources Specialist
Leadership and Employee Development Branch

As the Farm and Foreign Agricultural Service continues to focus on leadership and adapt a corporate-wide approach to employee development, FFAS leaders are encouraged to continually enhance themselves as well as improve employee performance.

Through the Corporate Leadership Council's (CLC) Manager Excellence Resource Center (MERC), FFAS managers and supervisors can utilize a wide variety of Web-based resources to better meet the needs of their employees and their own careers. For example, the CLC will host a Webinar entitled "Developing Senior Leaders Who Build the Next Generation of Talent" on July 14. During this webinar, discussions will cover the five key roles senior leaders should play in developing rising leaders and present the two core foundations for high-impact senior leader-led development. Registration instructions for this Webinar can be found [here](#). There is no cost for this training and it is available to all FFAS employees.

Note: Those who do not have a MERC account will not be able to register. To obtain a MERC account, you must first access the system by doing the following.

- Go to: www.merc.executiveboard.com
- Under **Getting Started**, click on "Get a Username and Password". This link will prompt you to fill out a short form to establish membership.
- **Please make sure to use your business email address.** This will be your user name.
- **Note: All FFAS Employees should select "Farm Service Agency"**
- Check "Remember me" to directly log into the site for future visits
- Once you have completed this form, please click submit

For information about this training contact Brian Marincic (202) 401-0353.

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or fax to 816-926-1825, Attention: Editor, Leaders' Alert



The New HRD
*Where Our Customers
Experience Our Value Everyday*

Get your Team on Board the Change Train

Valman Cummins and Brian Marincic
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As our Agency continues to face challenges related to budgets and resources, it is inevitable that our status quo way of doing business may require us to change or improve processes in order to sustain high performance.

No matter how beneficial a change might be or how clearly and frequently you communicate the change, employee resistance to change is the greatest barrier. You will inevitably experience at least some degree of resistance by someone on your team, whether it's broadcast loudly by your employees or communicated in a subtle, passive way. Resistance can be particularly damaging to change initiatives because it can lead to decreased productivity and increased turnover. While it's difficult to prevent resistance altogether, there are some helpful strategies you can use to get your team on board.

Outlined below are five strategies that leaders can adopt to support change:

Strategy 1: Allow Time to Digest the Change

Once your team has learned about the impending change, allow time for it to sink in. Step back and give them some space to think about the change and accept it. While they may resist it at first, resistors often come around with time.

Strategy 2: Track the Response

Organizational changes generally take place over a period of time—particularly large-scale initiatives—and your team's response will fluctuate. Keep track of the responses over time so you can react quickly as resistance issues arise. To track the response, consider:

- What is my team saying about the change? What questions are they asking?
- Is there a change in employee productivity? Absenteeism?

Strategy 3: Ask for Feedback

Ask your team for feedback about the change, and cascade any noteworthy suggestions or criticism upwards. Your team can draw on its varied experience to avoid obstacles, improve planned processes, and save time and money on the change. Most importantly, they will feel heard and respected.

Strategy 4: Get Your Team Involved

Where possible, assign members of your team with tasks or projects related to the change. Specifically, consider their expertise or interests to identify aspects of the change they may be able to assist. For example, if your organization is implementing a new customer relationship management system, see if your team can participate in a pilot run. Make sure to recognize their efforts and provide clear directions.

Strategy 5: Look for Development Opportunities

Development-based strategies are particularly effective for preventing resistance to change. Changes often provide opportunities for employees to step into new roles or perform new tasks, so consider the options the change might provide for on-the-job development.

Get your Team on Board (continued)

Resources related to this topic are available through AgLearn, or through the books 24/7 portal also hosted on AgLearn. Other Change Management resources are also available through the Manager Excellence Resource Center (MERC) (www.merc.executiveboard.com).

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Information for this article was selected in part from FSA membership in the Manager's Excellence Resource Center Consortium

Succession Planning

Julie Bowen, Human Resources Specialist
Human Capital Strategic Planning and Initiatives Branch

Agencies are experiencing employee attrition due to retirement, voluntary early retirement authority, and separations to other agencies. The Federal workforce is turning over at an increased pace and a plan should be in place to quickly replace lost staff and knowledge. This can be achieved through a succession plan.

Succession planning is a process for identifying and developing a work force that has the potential to fill key leadership positions and mission critical occupations. Once developed, these capable employees are prepared to assume these positions as they become available. Instituting such a plan will help develop and retain knowledge of critical positions and leadership skills. Moreover, it will help ensure staff is ready and able to assume these positions. Operating from this vantage point, an office also addresses specific human capital challenges such as diversity, leadership capacity, and retention.

Several functions available to consider when addressing changing organizational staffing needs are:

- Identify critical competencies and proficiency levels for key technical positions and leadership
- Identify key technical expert and leadership job characteristics and results that are critical to job success
- Identify talent from multiple organizational levels with these critical skills
- Develop individual development plans for each employee with activities to leverage the strengths, broaden experiences, and overcome weaknesses
- Engage leadership in supporting the development of high-potential leaders
- Develop on-going leadership development programs
- Build a data base of critical skills that can be used to make better staffing decisions for key jobs



The New HRD
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Succession Planning (continued)

It is critical that Agencies ensure continuity of achieving their mission by developing and retaining internal knowledge of its products and services. Customers, clients, vendors, and employees all want and need to know that an Agency will continue to function even when there is an employment change. Choosing and developing successors will help this happen.

“Getting the Medical Information Supervisors Need to Maintain a Safe Workplace”

Irene Rubin Seastrum, Coordinator

FFAS Workplace Violence Prevention & Response (WVP&R) Program

Scenario: Over a period of time, Judy, an employee in the Administrative section, has exhibited increasingly emotional behavior. Most recently, in tears she has repeatedly communicated the following to co-workers: “Joe in Admin is obsessed with me! I don’t know what to do! I know he wants to hurt me because one time he asked me out for a drink after work, and I refused! I emphatically told him: ‘I don’t go out with married men!’ and then I quickly walked away!’ Since then, I know he’s hired someone to follow me almost everywhere I go! I’m thinking of buying a gun to protect myself from him!”

Employees interviewed under oath revealed they overheard Joe telling Judy about a new club to which he had taken his wife, and he recommended it to Judy and others in the office. Further, Joe was completely shocked that Judy told employees that he had hired someone to follow her, and she was thinking of buying a gun to protect herself from him. Joe was so worried about Judy’s distorted view of reality that he asked management to require Judy to stay away from him.

In the above scenario, Judy’s behavior generated fear and apprehension, but standing alone does not justify removal from her position. However, supervisors must be proactive in order to ensure workplace safety. The WVP&R Program Coordinator can assist in this case by helping management determine whether Judy, based on her emotional demeanor, bizarre statements and unfounded accusations, poses a potential risk to Joe’s and/or other employees’ safety. One option is for the Coordinator to prepare a medical letter to be issued to Judy by management. Among other things, the letter would express concern for her wellbeing and the safety of her conduct in the workplace and would pose a series of medical questions to be answered by Judy’s treating healthcare provider. The letter would also request that her treating healthcare provider send his/her responses directly to the Agency’s Designated Psychiatrist for his evaluation and recommendations to the Agency. (The Designated Psychiatrist’s services are obtained through an agreement with Department of Health & Human Services, Federal Occupational Health.) **Note:** If Judy’s behavior has generated a great deal of fear and disruption in the office, it may be necessary to place her on administrative leave (paid, non-duty status), until the safety concerns are resolved.

Maintain a Safe Workplace (continued)

If Judy refuses to provide the requested medical information, or if her treating healthcare provider fails to cooperate with the process or provides documentation that is incomplete, then it may be necessary for the Agency to offer or order Judy to undergo a “fitness for duty examination” at the Agency’s expense, in order to determine whether or not she poses a safety risk.



These types of cases can be complicated; however, as noted earlier, supervisors must be proactive in taking steps to ensure a safe work environment. The above scenario involving a fictitious “Judy” is only one example of various workplace matters in which the WVP&R Program can be of assistance.

Leaders’ Link

Please suggest articles *you* want more information about to Whilemenia.duncan@kcc.usda.gov.

View past issuances of the **Leaders’ Alert** at:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=newsroom&subject=landing&topic=lal>

Leadership Quote of the Day

“Leadership is not magnetic personality - that can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not making friends and influencing people -- that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to high sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations.”

-- Peter F. Drucker