

An effective public works manager...helps others to succeed

George Haines

Public Works Director

City of Gillette, Wyoming

Member, APWA Leadership and Management Committee

Note: The APWA Leadership and Management Committee has developed a set of core competencies for public works managers. The series of articles in the APWA Reporter based on these competencies—entitled “The Baker’s Menu”—is designed to help public works professionals recognize and develop managerial talent. Included in this issue is the twelfth in the series of competencies recommended by the committee. For more information please contact Ann Daniels, APWA Director of Technical Services, at (800) 848-APWA or adaniels@apwa.net.

What turns you on about managing? In Marcus Buckingham’s book, *The One Thing You Need to Know*, one of the responses he received to that question was **“I love helping other people succeed.”** That’s a manager I’d like to work for. They get it! When you make it your mission to

help others succeed, the outcome will be that everyone succeeds—the employee, the manager and the organization.

Now comes the big question: What is success? Each person you work with is going to have a different definition, so you can’t apply a one-size-fits-all approach in helping others to succeed. As Ken Blanchard, author of *The Servant Leader*, says, “There is nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals.” To test this, I took the opportunity to ask a number of public works employees two questions: What is success? And, if we could do something to help you succeed, what would it be? The answers were interesting.

On defining success, answers included the following: accomplishing a goal; doing your very best; giving to others; making things better for those around me; confidence and

REGISTER **NOW** FOR...

World Environmental & Water Resources CONGRESS 2006

May 21-25, 2006

Qwest Center / Hilton Omaha
Omaha, Nebraska

“A top eco-city!”

“Examining the Confluence of Environmental and Water Concerns”

Share your knowledge and experiences and learn new ideas to address nature's challenges in...

- **600 PRACTICAL PRESENTATIONS in 26 TRACKS including**
Adaptive Management in Water and Natural Resources • Applied Research in Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater • Climate, Meteorology, and Water Resources • Computational Hydraulics • Education and Research • Emerging Technologies • Engineering History and Heritage • Established Development & Funding of ASCE/EWRI Standards • Evolutionary Computation • Hydraulics and Waterways • International Issues • Irrigation and Drainage • NSF Environmental Observatories Initiative • Planning and Management • River and Wetlands Restoration • Sustainable Development in Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater • Watershed Management
- **TWO FOCUSED SYMPOSIA:**
 - Groundwater Hydrology, Quality, and Management • Urban Watershed Management
- **TWO PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS:**
 - Treatment of Uncertainty in Water Resource Modeling and Analysis
 - Curve Number Rainfall-Runoff: Professional Application
- **FIVE AWARDS LECTURES**
- **FOUR TECHNICAL TOURS**



Register online at www.asce.org/conferences/ewri2006



Presented by the Environmental & Water Resources Institute of the American Society of Civil Engineers



contentment; putting forth the effort with a positive approach and dedication that helps achieve the desired result; to be self-sufficient, balancing personal and professional life; accepting a challenge, making a commitment and achieving the goal; and living honestly without regret.

When asked if we could do something to help them succeed, they said: Give responsibility; compliment when we do a good job; keep giving constructive suggestions; provide training and opportunities; good verbal communication; provide the resources needed to do the job; keep doing what we're doing; and focus on support and teamwork.

It is clear from these responses that success isn't the same for any two people, but there are some consistent themes that can be taken from these responses. They can be summed up in a definition from John Maxwell's book, *Your Roadmap for Success*. He says: "Success is...knowing your purpose in life, growing to reach your maximum potential, and sowing seeds that benefit others."

The other thing we should remember about success is that it doesn't have a finite end. It is a continuing journey marked by the achievement of goals along the way. I haven't met the person yet who is ready to hang up their cleats because they have achieved all that they can in life. Success is an ongoing process of learning and doing. One of my favorite baseball managers from my days growing up was Earl Weaver of the Baltimore Orioles. He was colorful to say the least. One time when he experienced a few bad calls that affected his team, he went up to the umpire and said, "Are you going to get any better, or is this it?" The point is we *can* get better. We need to keep learning to keep up in this fast-paced world, and as a manager, you have an important role to play in making that happen for others. So, as a manager, how can you help others to succeed? Try this simple acronym:

 **FROG: Focus...Roles...Opportunities... Goals**

Focus – Focus means understanding how a particular job contributes to the success of the organization. All organizations have a mission. To accomplish the mission, you need a competent workforce. In our public works department, we have people who operate equipment, maintain buildings, take care of trees and landscaping, pick up trash, handle administrative duties, just to name a few. For them to be effective in what they do, they have to understand the mission of the department and how the work they do contributes to the organizational purpose, which in our case is the Strategic Plan. When they understand how they "fit in," they gain a better sense that the work they are doing is meaningful. Focusing also means setting priorities. You have to assess your life and identify those things that are most important, so you know where you must devote your time. Oftentimes we are so busy being busy that setting aside the time we need for personal growth doesn't happen and before long, an opportunity passes us by because we didn't

prepare. In Habit 3 of the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People ("Put First Things First"), it says "Do the important things first, because where you are headed is more important than how fast you are going."

Roles – Understanding your role in the organization is explained well by Jim Collins in his book, *Good to Great*. He talks about having the right people on "the bus" and in the right seats. It is not likely that everyone in your organization is in the right seat on the bus, and quite possibly, they shouldn't be on the bus at all. You can help people succeed by helping find the seat on the bus that fits them best. We have some of our City employees that started out in one job and have taken on other positions throughout their careers. For some, they found the right seat; others moved up by getting a seat closer to the front of the bus; and some have elevated themselves to positions where they are now driving the bus. There are also some that no longer work for us, and helping them make that decision has helped them succeed by moving on to other opportunities. As a manager, you also need to understand that people don't define their success solely by the roles they play at work. Outside of work, they can be a husband, wife, friend, volunteer and coach, among others. We all are looking for the balance between our work life and personal life.

PUBLIC WORKS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Become a member today!

PWHS membership helps:

- Foster scholarly research and publication;
- Support collaboration among public works practitioners, historians, and educators;
- Encourage the preservation of historically significant public works;
- Promote historical awareness and activities throughout APWA; and
- Collect and preserve records of individuals and groups engaged in important public works activities.

Benefits include:

- Subscription to the *Essays in Public Works History* and the *Public Works History Newsletter*.
- Periodic reports on Society research and publishing work.
- Voting rights at meetings and elections.
- Membership certificate and annual membership card.
- Access to Society archives and collections.

You can join online at www.apwa.net

- \$35 US
- \$52 CN

PWHS Contact APWA Member Relations for more information about the Society or APWA.

Opportunities – When employees understand how their work contributes to the success of the organization, they can help their manager understand the training they are going to need to be able to contribute. Through our pay-for-performance evaluation system, we have developed expectations of competency for the various job classifications. For example, a street maintenance worker needs to be able to operate certain pieces of equipment by year one of their employment and should be familiar with the use of all pieces of equipment we use by year three. We do in-house training to help them meet these goals and we also send them to at least two classes per year put on by the Wyoming Technology Transfer/Local Technical Assistance Program (T2/LTAP). Apart from technical training, we have a City-wide Leadership Development Program to help current and aspiring leaders develop their leadership skills. We also have a tuition reimbursement program for those taking college courses. Your support of training and development will help others to succeed and make them more valuable to the organization.



City of Gillette Leadership Development Program

Goals – Every successful person I know has goals. You can't drift through life and hope that good things will happen or doors will open without preparation on your part. In our city, we set goals at the macro level through our strategic planning process. We then set them at the department, division, and individual levels through our performance evaluation process. Some goals are project oriented. Some are geared toward training and development. Invest in goal setting with your staff and it will pay dividends in both the short and long term. The next time you think you don't have time to spend on goal setting, think about a time that you achieved a goal you set for yourself and how rewarding a feeling that was for you.

When you help someone **Focus**, understand their **Roles**, enable them to take advantage of **Opportunities**, and help them set and realize their **Goals**, you are helping them "find their voice," as described in Stephen Covey's book, *The 8th Habit, from Effectiveness to Greatness*. He says: "The highest

challenge inside organizations, including families, is to set them up and run them in a way that enables each person to inwardly sense his or her innate worth and potential for greatness and to contribute his or her unique talents and passion—in other words, voice—to accomplish the organization's purpose and highest priorities in a principle-centered way."

A final thought: Being an effective *and* successful manager means helping others to succeed.

"Leadership is helping other people grow and succeed. Leadership is not just about you. It's about them." – Jack Welch, former Chairman and CEO, General Electric

"The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership." – John Maxwell, author, *Your Roadmap for Success*

"Leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves." – Stephen R. Covey, author, *Principle-Centered Leadership*

"The greatest leaders are those that serve others. A good leader exists for the people, not the other way around." – Rick Warren, author, *The Purpose Driven Life*

George Haines can be reached at (307) 686-5320 or george@ci.gillette.wy.us.

R



CORE COMPETENCIES at a GLANCE

- Encourages Team Building
- Involves Others
- Possesses Oral/Written Skills
- Builds Trust/Respect
- Prioritizes
- Sets Realistic Goals
- **Helps Others to Succeed**
- Resolves Conflict
- Manages Time
- Manages Workload
- Develops Staff
- Anticipates Future Needs
- Is Flexible