

HUMAN RELATIONS

Interpersonal Job-Oriented Skills

TWELFTH EDITION



ANDREW J. DUBRIN

T W E L F T H E D I T I O N

HUMAN RELATIONS

INTERPERSONAL JOB-ORIENTED SKILLS

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PREFACE

Welcome to the 12th edition of *Human Relations: Interpersonal Job-Oriented Skills*. Success in any position involving interaction with people requires two broad sets of competencies: functional skills and generic skills. *Functional skills* refer to knowledge of one's discipline (or organizational function), technical skills, specialty skills, or simply details of the job. *Generic skills* refer to competencies important in a variety of jobs. Among these generic skills are interpersonal skills, good work habits and time management, information technology skills, and ethical behavior. Among other skills presently in demand by employers emphasized in this book are verbal communication, teamwork, and group problem solving, along with high self-motivation.

My purpose in writing this book is to help readers enhance their interpersonal skills, including ethical behavior, in the workplace. By enhancing interpersonal skills, a person has a better chance of capitalizing upon his or her other skills. Two primary approaches are used in this text to achieve the lofty goal of improving interpersonal skills. First, basic concepts are introduced to enhance understanding of key topics in interpersonal relations in organizations.

Second, skill-building suggestions, exercises, self-assessment quizzes, and cases are presented that are designed to improve interpersonal skills related to the topic. Chapter 6, for example, presents general information about the nature of teamwork, followed by suggestions for improving teamwork. The chapter also includes several exercises or experiential activities and two case problems—all designed to improve teamwork skills.

Third, examples and box inserts provide insight into how a particular skill is applied on the job. For example, Chapter 8 describes how call center operators learn another culture so that they can relate effectively to their customers.

CHANGES IN THE NEW EDITION

The new edition of *Human Relations* focuses on updating content throughout the text, as well as replacing most case problems and introductory cases and introducing more role-plays. In several places throughout the text, we add a third level of heading to better organize the information for the student. We have added three new skill-building exercises, five new self-quizzes, and fifteen new role-playing exercises. New information, research findings, and examples appear throughout the text. Twelve of the chapter openers and 24 of the cases are new. Material that may have lost some of its relevance has been selectively pruned. The new topics in the text are as follows:

- Revised and simplified discussion about practical intelligence (Chapter 2)
- Consequences of self-esteem divided into positive and negative (Chapter 3)
- Self-assessment quiz about core self-evaluations (Chapter 3)
- Getting help from others to boost self-esteem (Chapter 3)
- Description of self-compassion (Chapter 3)
- Guidelines for detecting lying through nonverbal communication (Chapter 4)
- Communication problems caused by converting too many nouns into verbs (Chapter 4)
- The interpersonal consequences of nomophobia, the fear of being without a mobile phone (Chapter 5)

- Interpersonal skill consequences of telepresence (an advanced form of videoconferencing) (Chapter 5)
- Communicating frequently and assertively to enhance teamwork (Chapter 6)
- New version of nominal group technique (NGT) (Chapter 7)
- Recognition of one's own cultural and demographic biases (Chapter 8)
- Drama as a source of conflict in the workplace (Chapter 9)
- Task versus relationship conflict (Chapter 9)
- Authenticity as a key leadership trait and behavior (Chapter 10)
- Interacting frequently with team members to enhance teamwork (Chapter 10)
- Work engagement and motivation (Chapter 11)
- Expanded discussion of e-mentoring (Chapter 12)
- Etiquette for working in open-seating arrangements in the office (Chapter 13)
- Conforming to a manager's work style to build a good relationship (Chapter 13)
- Focusing on a customer's problem rather than his or her emotions for dealing with customer dissatisfaction (Chapter 14)
- Moral disengagement as a source of unethical behavior (Chapter 15)
- Motivated blindness as a source of unethical behavior (Chapter 15)
- Engaging in unethical behavior to benefit the company (Chapter 15)
- Seeing the big picture to facilitate ethical behavior (Chapter 15)
- High reactivity as a personality factor contributing to being stressed (Chapter 16)
- Figure showing New Dietary Guidelines for Americans developed by the US Department of Agriculture (Chapter 16)
- Strategies for enhancing energy by engaging in job-related and positive activities (Chapter 16)
- Internet addiction disorder as a contributor to time wasting (Chapter 16)
- Go where the jobs are as a job-search technique (Chapter 17)
- A figure showing business-related and health-related industries with growth possibilities through 2020 (Chapter 17)
- The job résumé in the form of a tweet (Chapter 17)
- Prosocial motivation as a strategy of career advancement (Chapter 17)
- Expanded discussion of proactive personality (Chapter 17)

AUDIENCE FOR THE BOOK

The primary audience for this book is people taking courses that emphasize the development of interpersonal skills. Such courses typically include the term *human relations*. Because interpersonal relations contribute so heavily to effective leadership, the text is suited for participants in leadership and supervisory training courses that emphasize interpersonal skills rather than leadership theory and research.

FRAMEWORK FOR THE BOOK

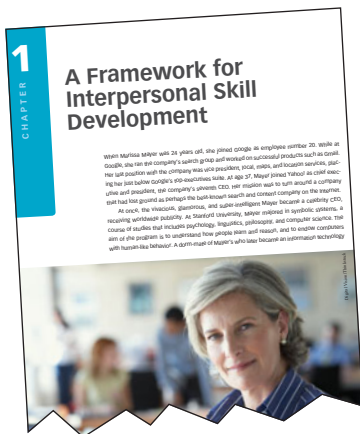
The book is a blend of current and traditional topics dealing with interpersonal relations in organizations with a heavy component of skill development and self-assessment. The information is organized into chapters, all emphasizing interpersonal relations between two or more people. Chapter 1, "A Framework for Interpersonal Skill Development," sets the stage for improving one's interpersonal skills on the job. Chapter 2, "Understanding Individual Differences," presents information that is the foundation of effective interpersonal relations. Chapter 3, "Building Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence," describes how to develop self-esteem and self-confidence both for oneself and to improve relationships with others. Chapter 4, "Interpersonal Communication," deals with skills in sending and receiving messages.

Chapter 5, “Interpersonal Skills for the Digital World,” describes how interpersonal skills can enhance the use of digital devices, as well as how these devices lend themselves to poor interpersonal skills, such as cell phone abuse. Chapter 6, “Developing Teamwork Skills,” sensitizes the reader to a vital set of skills in the workplace. Chapter 7, “Group Problem Solving and Decision Making,” provides additional skill in collaborative effort. Chapter 8, “Cross-Cultural Relations and Diversity,” is about developing cross-cultural skills in a diverse workforce. Chapter 9, “Resolving Conflicts with Others,” helps the reader develop skills in finding constructive solutions to differences of opinion and disputes with others.

Four consecutive chapters deal with exerting influence over others: Chapter 10, “Becoming an Effective Leader,” presents information relevant to exercising leadership in the workplace; Chapter 11, “Motivating Others,” emphasizes skills in getting others to work hard to achieve goals; Chapter 12, “Helping Others Develop and Grow,” is about coaching, counseling, and teaching others; and Chapter 13, “Positive Political Skills,” describes how to use power and influence for constructive purposes.

Chapter 14, “Customer Satisfaction Skills,” describes several approaches to enhancing skills in satisfying customers, and thus lies at the heart of the importance placed on pleasing customers. Chapter 15, “Enhancing Ethical Behavior,” translates ethical principles into usable skills. The rationale is that an ethical base is important for achieving career-long effectiveness in interpersonal relations. Chapter 16, “Stress Management and Personal Productivity,” supports development of interpersonal skills by showing that productive people who have stress under control can relate more effectively to others. Chapter 17, “Job Search and Career Management Skills,” includes information about the application of interpersonal skills (such as networking) to enhance one’s career.

EXPERIENCE THE DUBRIN TOTAL LEARNING SYSTEM



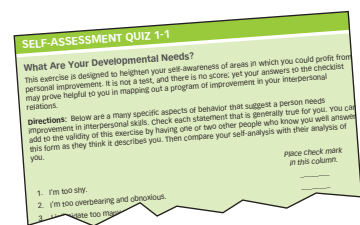
Human Relations: Job-Oriented Skills 12e is not just a textbook. The twelfth edition includes a wealth of experiential exercises, including new cases and self-assessment quizzes that can be completed in class or as homework.

CHAPTER OPENING CASES SET THE STAGE

Following a listing of the chapter learning objectives, all chapters begin with a case scenario that deals with the chapter topic and sets the stage for the chapter narrative.

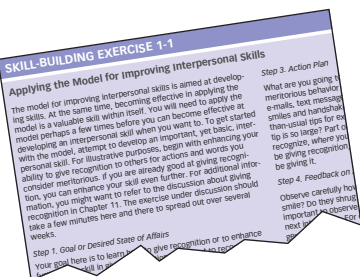
PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES RELATE CONCEPTS TO WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY, PERSONALLY AND IN THE WORKPLACE

- **Self-Assessment Quizzes** give students the opportunity to explore their own opinions, feelings, and behavior patterns related to chapter topics. All chapters include one or more self-assessment quizzes.
- **Job-Oriented Interpersonal Skills in Action** in selected chapters illustrate a human relations business practice in today's business world.
- **Skill-Building Exercises** provide students with opportunities to apply concepts at the point at which they are being discussed in the textbook.



ASSIGNMENT MATERIAL REINFORCES CONCEPTS AND BUILDS SKILLS

End of chapter assignment material has been reorganized and expanded into two sections: **Concept Review and Reinforcement**, featuring exercises that focus on concept retention and developing critical thinking skills, and **Developing Your Human Relations Skills**, focusing on developing skills that can be used immediately in life and on the job.



Concept Review and Reinforcement

Key Terms reviews the key vocabulary covered in the chapter.

The **Summary** provides an excellent detailed review of key chapter concepts.

Questions for Discussion and Review objectively review key chapter topics.

The **Web Corner** provides informational Web sites and asks students to use the power of the Web in researching outside resources.

Developing Your Human Relations Skills

Interpersonal Relations Case Studies put students into a realistic scenario so that they can practice making decisions in tough situations.

Interpersonal Skills Role-Play exercises provide students with the opportunity to develop personal insight through interactive exercises.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTORS:

At the Instructor Resource Center, www.pearsonhighered.com/irc, instructors can access a variety of print, digital, and presentation resources available with this text in downloadable format. Registration is simple and gives you immediate access to new titles and new editions. As a registered faculty member, you can download resource files, and receive immediate access to and instructions for installing course management content on your campus server. In case you ever need assistance, our dedicated technical support team is ready to help with the media supplements that accompany this text. Visit <http://247.pearsoned.com> for answers to frequently asked questions and toll-free user support phone numbers.

The following supplements are available for download to adopting instructors:

- **Instructor's Resource Manual and Test Bank**—The Instructor's Resource Manual contains chapter outlines and lecture notes, answers to case problems, and comments about the exercises. The Test Bank contains multiple-choice and true/false test questions followed by their correct answers and the learning objectives and AACSB categories they tie to.
- **TestGen[®] Computerized Test Bank**—TestGen is a test generator program that helps instructors easily create tests and quizzes. It is PC/MAC compatible and preloaded with all of the Test Bank questions. Powerful filter and sort functions let instructors easily locate and arrange questions in the order preferred by dragging and dropping. Questions can also be added or modified, allowing instructors ultimate flexibility, and printed in a variety of formats. TestGen conversions are also available for other course management systems such as BlackBoard, BlackBoard Campus Edition/Vista, Angel, Desire2Learn, Moodle, Respondus, and Sakai.
- **PowerPoint Presentation**—A full set of PowerPoint slides is provided. The chapter files contain the relevant material from each chapter and are suitable for leading class lectures and discussion.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS:

CourseSmart eTextbook—CourseSmart eTextbooks were developed for students looking to save on required or recommended textbooks. Students simply select their eText by title or author and purchase immediate access to the content for the duration of the course using any major credit card. With a CourseSmart eText, students can search for specific keywords or page numbers, take notes online, print out reading assignments that incorporate lecture notes, and bookmark important passages for later review. For more information or to purchase a CourseSmart eTextbook, visit www.coursesmart.com.

Self-Assessment Library (S.A.L.)—If you are interested in additional self-assessments, this valuable tool includes 67 individual self-assessment exercises that allow students to assess their knowledge, beliefs, feelings, and actions in regard to a wide range of personal skills, abilities, and interests. Provided scoring keys allow for immediate, individual analysis. S.A.L. is available as a printed workbook, a CD-ROM, and by an access code, so students have a choice of how they want to complete the assessments. S.A.L. ISBN 0-13-608375-7. Please contact your Pearson representative to obtain a review copy or for information on packaging options.

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My family members give me an additional reason for writing, so I extend my appreciation to Drew, Douglas, Melanie, Gizella, Will, Rosie, Clare, Camila, Sofia, Eliana, Julian, Carson, and Owen. I thank Stefanie for her contribution to my well-being.

Andrew J. DuBrin
Rochester, New York

A Framework for Interpersonal Skill Development

When Marissa Mayer was 24 years old, she joined Google as employee number 20. While at Google, she ran the company's search group and worked on successful products such as Gmail. Her last position with the company was vice president, local, maps, and location services, placing her just below Google's top-executives suite. At age 37, Mayer joined Yahoo! as chief executive and president, the company's seventh CEO. Her mission was to turn around a company that had lost ground as perhaps the best-known search and content company on the Internet.

At once, the vivacious, glamorous, and super-intelligent Mayer became a celebrity CEO, receiving worldwide publicity. At Stanford University, Mayer majored in symbolic systems, a course of studies that includes psychology, linguistics, philosophy, and computer science. The aim of the program is to understand how people learn and reason, and to endow computers with human-like behavior. A dorm-mate of Mayer's who later became an information technology

LEARNING Objectives

After reading and studying this chapter and completing the exercises, you should be able to

1. Explain how interpersonal skills are learned.
2. Explain the model for interpersonal skills improvement, including how to set goals effectively.
3. Pinpoint your needs for improvement in interpersonal relations.
4. Describe potential opportunities for developing interpersonal skills on the job.

executive said that although Mayer was shy, she was not a loner. He claims that Mayer stood out because she had unusual balance along with a deep understanding of people and how to relate to them effectively.

Mayer was a standout at high school, too being captain of the debate club and the pom-pom team. She was known for scheduling long pom-pom practices to make sure that everyone was synchronized. She was also recognized for her exceptional talent in choreography as well as her fairness; she made sure the best dancers made the team.

At Google, Mayer was obsessively driven, working 90 hours per week when necessary to complete a key project. She developed a reputation for being brusque with people and quick to criticize team members when she disagreed with their ideas. Yet at the same time, Mayer respected others' talents and had many positive personal qualities that helped her attain popularity. At Google, Mayer became a leader who motivated individuals because she nurtured talent.

Part of Mayer's leadership style is to empower employees and urge them to make constructive changes. In her first few months at Yahoo!, she personally approved every new hire to help assure that talented and well-motivated people were joining the company. One of her first moves at the company to please employees was to provide free food in the company cafeteria and free smartphones for all employees.

Mayer's interest in employees also includes establishing a connection with Yahoo!'s programmers by engaging them in regular e-mail exchanges with software engineers who report to other managers in the company. She also initiated weekly "FYI" meetings every Friday in which employees are able to ask her questions, and new hires are announced.^[1]

One of the several themes in this story about the famous Internet executive is that even at the highest level in an organization, skill in human relations facilitates success. Mayer may be work-obsessed and technology-obsessed, but at the same time she relates well to many people and has a deep concern for the welfare and development of others. The Dale Carnegie organization explains that because the workplace today emphasizes collaboration, motivation, and leadership, outstanding interpersonal skills are quite important.^[2]

Effective interpersonal relations must be combined with technical knowledge and good work habits to achieve success in any job involving interaction with people. Workers at all levels are expected not only to solve problems and improve processes (how work is performed), but also to interact effectively with other employees.^[3] Two employment specialists found that being enjoyable to work with is the most important indicator of employability. Joyce Hogan and Kimberly Brinkmeyer analyzed the content of employment ads across the United States. Of the total positions advertised, 47 percent required strong interpersonal skills. The same skills were

identified as essential for 71 percent of the positions involving client contact and 78 percent of the positions requiring coworker interaction.^[4]

The viewpoint of Bob McJury, the vice president for sales of a graphics company, places the importance of interpersonal skills on a more personal and less statistical basis. He observes that the basics of being courteous to people are very important for the success of his company.^[5]

Furthermore, the lack of good interpersonal skills can adversely affect a person's career. A study found that 90 percent of firings result from poor attitudes, inappropriate behavior, and problems in interpersonal relationships, rather than substandard technical skills.^[6] An example of poor interpersonal relations that led to job loss was a receptionist at a boat dealer who told several potential customers something to this effect: "Are you just here to look? You don't look like you could afford one of our speedboats."

Another way of looking at the importance of interpersonal skills is that they enable you to connect with others, thereby being more successful in business. Author Susan Scott observes that the next frontier for growth in business lies in the area of human connectivity.^[7]

This chapter explains how people develop interpersonal skills and presents a model that can serve as a foundation for improving your interpersonal skills. In addition, the chapter explains how the workplace can be a natural setting for developing interpersonal skills.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1

This entire book is devoted to many different ways of improving interpersonal relations in organizations. A three-part strategy is presented for achieving the high level of effectiveness in interpersonal relations required in today's workplace.

First, each chapter presents key concepts required for understanding a particular aspect of interpersonal relations, such as resolving conflict. Second, the chapter provides specific suggestions or behavioral guidelines for improvement in the aspect of interpersonal relations under consideration. Third, a variety of exercises give you the opportunity to work on and improve your skills. Among these exercises are self-assessment quizzes, skill-building exercises, and cases for analysis. In addition, the questions at the end of each chapter give you an opportunity to think through and apply the key ideas in the chapter. Figure 1-1 illustrates the plan of the book.

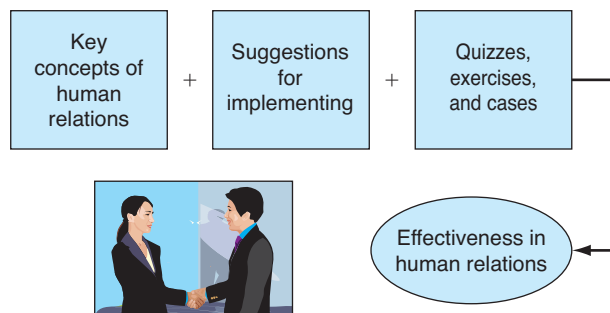
Much of this book is concerned with **interpersonal skills training**, the teaching of skills for dealing with others so they can be put into practice.

Interpersonal skills training is referred to as *soft-skills* training to differentiate it from technical training. (Technical skill training is referred to as *hard-skills* training.) Soft-skills training builds interpersonal skills, including communication, listening, group problem solving, cross-cultural relations, and customer service. In recent years, business schools have pushed the teaching of soft skills such as accepting feedback with grace and speaking

interpersonal skills training

The teaching of skills for dealing with others so that they can be put into practice.

FIGURE 1-1 Plan for Achieving Effectiveness in Interpersonal Relations



with respect to subordinates. The reason is that many corporate executives think that these skills are essential for future business leaders.^[8] Several other specific competencies related to soft skills are as follows:

- Effectively translating and conveying information
- Being able to accurately interpret other people’s emotions
- Being sensitive to other people’s feelings
- Calmly arriving at resolutions to conflicts
- Avoiding negative gossip
- Being polite^[9]
- Being able to cooperate with others to meet objectives (teamwork)
- Providing leadership to others in terms of the relationship aspects of leadership

Soft-skills training is more important than ever as organizations realize that a combination of human effort and technology is needed to produce results. Multiple studies have shown that soft skills can compensate somewhat for not having superior cognitive (or analytical) intelligence. For example, a supervisor with good interpersonal skills might perform well even if he or she is not outstandingly intelligent.

Soft skills are often the differentiating factor between adequate and outstanding performance because dealing with people is part of so many jobs.^[10] Assume that a company establishes an elaborate social networking site to enable employees to exchange work-related information with each other. The system will not achieve its potential unless employees are motivated to use it properly and develop a spirit of cooperation. The employees must also be willing to share some of their best ideas with each other. Consider this example:

Sonya, a newly hired intake receptionist in a cardiac clinic, notices that too often the patients present incomplete or inaccurate information, such as omitting data about their next of kin. Sonya spends considerable amounts of time reworking forms with the patients, until she begins using soft skills more effectively. With coaching from her supervisor, Sonya learns that if she attempts to calm down a patient first, the patient is more likely to complete the intake form accurately.

Well-known executive coach Marshall Goldsmith reminds us that building relationships with people is important for workers at every level in the organization, including the CEO. An example of an interpersonal skill that can help build relationships is demanding good results from others and showing them respect at the same time.^[11]

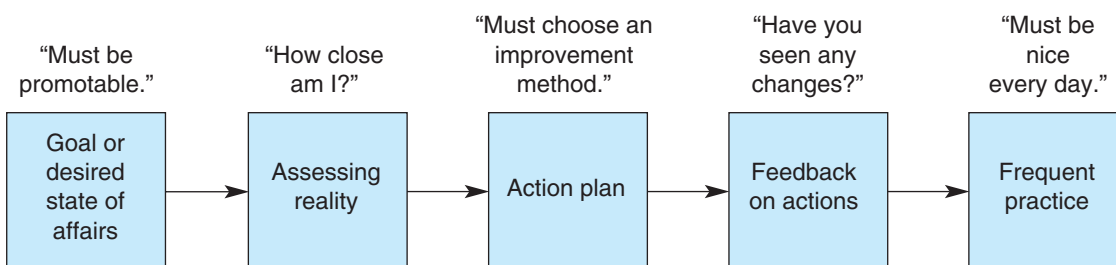
The following Job-Oriented Interpersonal Skills in Action box can jumpstart a person’s career.

A MODEL FOR IMPROVING INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Acquiring and improving interpersonal skills is facilitated by following a basic model of learning as it applies to changing your behavior. Learning is a complex subject, yet its fundamentals follow a five-part sequence, as shown in Figure 1-2. To change your behavior,

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2

FIGURE 1-2 A Model for Improving Interpersonal Skills



Jeremy Gets Rewarded for His Interpersonal Skills

Jeremy works as an electronics technician for Event Planners, a company that specializes in setting up exhibits for companies and trade associations at business meetings and conventions. Jeremy's work is highly specialized and requires installing and uninstalling electronics in compressed periods of time. All of the electronics have to work well, including panel displays, television sets, and computers. The planned events usually take place over a three-day to one-week time period, leaving little time to make repairs if the displays are set up incorrectly.

While returning home from a convention in Chicago, Jeremy received a text message from Katie, his manager: "Can you make a Monday 9 a.m. meeting in my cubicle? Have good news for you." Jeremy thought, "If Pamela wants to meet with me in person rather than virtually, this must be big." Jeremy sent back a text message immediately that he would make the meeting.

At the meeting, Pamela offered Jeremy a promotion to the position of team leader. The present team leader was moving to another position in the company, creating the vacancy. Jeremy would still have some responsibility for installing the electronic

parts of exhibit booths, but his primary role would be as a team leader (also known as a crew supervisor). Jeremy's salary would be immediately increased by 10 percent.

With a big smile on his face, Jeremy said, "Wow, Pamela, that's a great offer, and I accept immediately. I love Event Planners, and I really want more responsibility. But why did you choose me? A few of the other members of the team have more experience than me, and they are very good workers."

Pamela replied, "My boss and I both chose you for the same reason. In addition to your good technical qualifications, you work great with people. You are polite and friendly, and from what I hear, you give your coworkers encouragement when they need it the most. When the pressure is enormous, you help others stay calm."

"Thank you for your encouragement, Pamela," said Jeremy. "I can't wait for our next exhibit installation."

Questions

1. To what extent is Pamela justified in promoting Jeremy to team leader over other, more experienced workers just because he has good people skills?
2. From the few statements made by Jeremy above, which good interpersonal skills are you able to detect?

and therefore improve, you need a goal and a way to measure your current reality against this goal. You also need a way to assess that reality and a way to obtain feedback on the impact of your new actions.^[12]

Goal or Desired State of Affairs

Changing your behavior, including enhancing your interpersonal relations, requires a clear goal or desired state of affairs. Your goal can also be regarded as what you want to accomplish as a result of your effort. A major reason having a specific goal is important is that it improves performance and increases personal satisfaction. With a goal in mind, you keep plugging away until you attain it, thereby increasing personal satisfaction and improving your performance. Goals are also important because if people perceive that they have not attained their goal, they typically increase their effort or modify their strategy for reaching the goal.^[13]

Having a goal helps provide motivation and makes it possible to exercise the self-discipline necessary to follow through on your plans. In short, the goal focuses your effort on acquiring the improvements in behavior you seek.

Here we turn to Sean, a credit analyst who is being blocked from promotion because his manager perceives him as having poor interpersonal skills. After a discussion with his manager, Sean recognizes that he must improve his interpersonal relations if he wants to become a team leader.

Sean's goal is to be considered worthy of promotion to a leadership position. To achieve his goal, he will have to achieve the general goal of improving his interpersonal relations. By conferring with the human resources director, Sean learns that his broad goal of "improving my interpersonal relations" will have to be supported by more specific goals. Having poor interpersonal relations or "rubbing people the wrong way" is reflected in many different behaviors. To begin, Sean selects one counterproductive behavior to improve: He is exceptionally intolerant of others and does not hide his intolerance. Sean's goal is to become less intolerant and more patient in his dealings with others on the job.

FIGURE 1-3 Guidelines for Goal Setting

1. State each goal as a positive statement.
2. Formulate specific goals.
3. Formulate concise goals.
4. Set realistic goals as well as stretch goals.
5. Set goals for different time periods.

Fine Points about Goal Setting. So far, we have made goal setting seem easy. A truer description of goal setting is that it involves several fine points to increase the probability that the goal will be achieved. Key points about setting effective goals are outlined in Figure 1-3 and described next.

1. State Each Goal as a Positive Statement: To express your goals in positive statements is likely to be more energizing than focusing on the negative.^[14] An example of a positive statement would be, “During the next year when I am attending networking events, I will create a positive, professional impression with everybody I meet.” The negative counterpart would be, “During the next year, I will avoid making a fool of myself when I am attending networking events.” Despite this suggestion, there are times when a negative goal is useful, such as in reducing errors.

2. Formulate Specific Goals: A goal such as “attain success” is too vague to serve as a guide to daily action. A more useful goal would be to state specifically what you mean by success and when you expect to achieve it. For example, “I want to be the manager of patient services at a large medical clinic by January 1, 2018, and receive above-average performance reviews.”

3. Formulate Concise Goals: A useful goal can usually be expressed in a short, punchy statement; for example: “Decrease input errors in bank statements so that customer complaints are decreased by 25 percent by September 30 of this year.” People new to goal setting typically commit the error of formulating lengthy, rambling goal statements. These lengthy goals involve so many different activities that they fail to serve as specific guides to action.

4. Set Realistic as Well as Stretch Goals: A realistic goal is one that represents the right amount of challenge for the person pursuing the goal. On the one hand, easy goals are not very motivational; they may not spring you into action. On the other hand, goals that are too far beyond your capabilities may lead to frustration and despair because there is a good chance you will fail to reach them. The extent to which a goal is realistic depends on a person’s capabilities.

An easy goal for an experienced person might be a realistic goal for a beginner. **Self-efficacy** is also a factor in deciding whether a goal is realistic. (The term refers to the confidence in your ability to carry out a specific task.) The higher your self-efficacy, the more likely you are to think that a particular goal is realistic. A person with high self-efficacy for learning Chinese might say, “I think learning two new Chinese words a day is realistic.”

Several goals that stretch your capability might be included in your list of goals. An extreme stretch goal might be for a store manager trainee to become the vice president of merchandising for Target within four years. Another type of stretch goal is striving for a noble cause. A Home Depot supervisor might not get excited about having the store associates load lumber onto the steel shelves, but she might get excited about the lumber being used to build homes, schools, and hospitals.

5. Set Goals for Different Time Periods: Goals are best set for different time periods, such as daily, short range, medium range, and long range. Daily goals are essentially a to-do list. Short-range goals cover the period from approximately one week to one year

self-efficacy

The confidence in your ability to carry out a specific task.

into the future. Finding a new job, for example, is typically a short-range goal. Medium-range goals relate to events that will take place within approximately two to five years. They concern such things as the type of education or training you plan to undertake and the next step in your career.

Long-range goals refer to events taking place five years into the future and beyond. As such, they relate to the overall lifestyle you wish to achieve, including the type of work and family situation you hope to have. Although every person should have a general idea of a desirable lifestyle, long-range goals should be flexible. You might, for example, plan to stay single until age 40. But while on vacation next summer, you might just happen to meet the right partner for you.

Short-range goals make an important contribution to attaining goals of longer duration. If a one-year career goal is to add 25 worthwhile contacts to your social network, a good way to motivate yourself is to search for two contacts per month for 11 months, and search for three in the remaining month. Progress toward a larger goal is self-rewarding.

Assessing Reality

The second major requirement for a method of changing behavior is to assess reality. Sean needs a way to assess how far he is from his goal of being eligible for promotion and how intolerant he is perceived to be. Sean has already heard from his manager, Alison, that he is not eligible for promotion right now. Sean might want to dig for more information by finding answers to the following questions:

“If I were more tolerant, would I be promoted now?”

“How bad are my interpersonal relations in the office?”

“How many people in the office think I rub them the wrong way?”

“How many deficiencies do my manager and coworkers perceive me to have?”

A starting point in answering these questions might be for Sean to confer with Alison about his behavior. To be more thorough, however, Sean might ask a friend in the office to help him answer the questions. A coworker is sometimes in an excellent position to provide feedback on how one is perceived by others in the office. Sean could also ask a confidant outside the office about his intolerance. Sean could ask a parent, a significant other, or both about the extent of his intolerance.

An Action Plan

The learning model needs some mechanism to change the relationship between the person and the environment. An **action plan** is a series of steps to achieve a goal. Without an action plan, a personal goal will be elusive. The person who sets the goal may not initiate steps to make his or her dream (a high-level goal) come true. If your goal is to someday become a self-employed business owner, your action plan should include saving money, establishing a good credit rating, and developing dozens of contacts.

Sean has to take some actions to improve his interpersonal relations, especially by reducing his intolerance. The change should ultimately lead to the promotion he desires. Sean’s action plan for becoming more tolerant includes the following:

- Pausing to attempt to understand why a person is acting the way he or she does. An example is attempting to understand why a sales representative wants to extend credit to a customer with a poor credit rating.
- Learning to control his own behavior so that he does not make intolerant statements just because he is experiencing pressure.
- Taking a course in interpersonal skills or human relations.
- Asking Alison to give him a quick reminder whenever she directly observes or hears of him being intolerant toward customers or workmates.

A fundamental reason that action plans often lead to constructive changes is the “do good, be good” method. It capitalizes on the well-established principle that our attitudes

action plan

A series of steps to achieve a goal.

and beliefs often stem from our behaviors rather than precede them.^[15] If Sean, or anybody else, starts being tolerant of and accepting toward people, he will soon believe that tolerance is important.

In addition to formulating these action plans, Sean must have the self-discipline to implement them. For example, he should keep a log of situations in which he was intolerant and those in which he was tolerant. He might also make a mental note to attempt to be cooperative and flexible in most of his dealings at work. When a customer does not provide all of the information that Sean needs to assess his or her creditworthiness, Sean should remind himself to say, “I want to process your credit application as quickly as possible. To do this, I need some important additional information.” Sean’s previous reflex in the same situation had been to snap, “I can’t read your mind. If you want to do business with us, you’ve got to stop hiding the truth.”

Feedback on Actions

The fourth step in the learning model is to measure the effects of one’s actions against reality. You obtain feedback on the consequences of your actions. When your skill-improvement goal is complex, such as becoming more effective at resolving conflict, you will usually have to measure your progress in several ways. You will also need both short- and long-term measures of the effectiveness of your actions. Long-term measures are important because skill-development activities of major consequence have long-range implications.

To obtain short-range feedback, Sean can consult with Alison to see whether she has observed any changes in his tolerance. Alison can also collect any feedback she hears from others in the office. Furthermore, Sean will profit from feedback over a prolonged period of time, perhaps one or two years. He will be looking to see whether his image has changed from an intolerant person who rubs people the wrong way to a tolerant person who has cordial interactions with others.

You will often need to be persistent and encouraging to obtain useful feedback from others. Many people are hesitant to give negative feedback because of a conscious or pre-conscious recognition that the recipient of the negative feedback might become hostile and retaliate.^[16] The recipient of the negative feedback might appear hurt and respond with a statement such as, “I’m not perfect, and neither are you.”

Frequent Practice

The final step in the learning model makes true skill development possible. Implementing the new behavior and using feedback for fine-tuning is an excellent start in acquiring a new interpersonal skill. For the skill to be long lasting, however, it must be integrated into your usual way of conducting yourself.

In Sean’s case, he will have to practice being tolerant regularly until it becomes a positive habit. After a skill is programmed into your repertoire, it becomes a habit. This is important because a skill involves many habits. For example, good customer service skills include the habits of smiling and listening carefully. After you attempt the new interpersonal skills described in this book, you will need to practice them frequently to make a noticeable difference in your behavior. Changes may appear unnnatural at first, but with practice they become ingrained behavioral tendencies and a means of relating to other people.^[17]

A sports analogy is appropriate here. Assume that Ashley, a tennis player, takes a lesson to learn how to hit the ball with greater force. The instructor points out that the reason she is not hitting with much force is that she is relying too much on her arm and not enough on her leg and body strength. To hit the ball with more force, Ashley is told that she must put one foot out in front of her when she strikes the ball (she must “step into” the ball).



Ryan McVay/Getty Images