

The Federal Manager



COVER

Resuscitating a Troubled Workplace 3



FEATURE

The New Generation of Government Employees 8



DEPARTMENTS

President's Page 2
Happy Birthday, FMA!

Policy & Legislation 13
FMA's Legislative and Administrative Priorities for the 113th Congress
FMA-PAC Thanks Its 2012 Supporters

Meet Your Legislators 16
U.S. Senators Angus King and Michael Lee

Federal Sector FYI 19

Making a Difference 21
Finding New Ways to Work for You!

Achievements 24
FMA Welcomes New Members

Between the Lines 30
Collaborating Internally at DOE

FMA Corporate Partners

Avue

BlueCross
BlueShield
Federal Employee Program

FSA
FEDS

GEICO
DIRECT

Long Term Care
Partners, LLC

Madison National
Life Insurance Company
Independence Holding Group

PRESIDENT'S PAGE



*FMA National President
Patricia Niehaus*

Happy Birthday, FMA!

A Century of Dedicated Service to America. What an incredible accomplishment! As I write this, we are busy preparing for our 75th National Convention and Training Day which will be capped off with our 100th Anniversary Gala on March 6, 2013. I am happy to say that our Immediate Past President, Darryl Perkinson, and our President Emeritus, Mike Styles, will be participating in sharing the history of FMA at the Gala.

One of the most important parts of our national convention is the Day on the Hill, when we go to Congress and talk to our elected officials about the issues facing the Federal Managers of today. I wish each and every one of you could be with us for this effort. Because I know that is not possible, I would like to ask you to make an effort to meet with your elected officials in their local offices and address our issues with them. You can download our Issue Briefs from the website or ask the National Office Staff (NOS) to send you copies. It is vitally important that your Representatives and Senators hear that you are their constituents and how their actions, or lack of action, impact you, your family, your employees, and your community. One of the reasons FMA has had so many doors remain open to us over the past century is our conversational not confrontational approach. Please keep in mind when meeting with your elected officials that this approach has served us well in the past and will continue to do so in the future. Both the Senate and the House have scheduled time in their local districts April 29-May 3, May 27-31, July 1-5 and August 5-September 6. Please contact your local offices now to schedule appointments. If you're planning a vacation in the D.C. area, please don't hesitate to ask the NOS to help you make appointments on Capitol Hill. Don't forget to let the NOS know who you met with and what you discussed and please forward copies of any pictures you take with your Members of Congress. Are you interested in attending a local fundraising event for your Member of Congress? Ask their staff to let you know when your elected official is having a fundraising event. Then, contact Katie Maddocks in the National Office to discuss the use of PAC funds to send you to local events. We get more bang for our bucks at a local event than one in D.C. and your elected officials get to see that the faces behind FMA are their constituents.

I know that the Chapters of our Association do great things; unfortunately, we don't do a great job of sharing that information with each other. I would like to see more of your efforts recognized in our "Making a Difference" section of the magazine but we need your help to make that happen. Please send the NOS a note (and, if at all possible, pictures) whenever your chapter has an event or participates in some community function. Maybe you'll even inspire another chapter to follow in your footsteps.

We are working on revitalizing our Retiree Conference. Region 3 Director, Pat Spade, is co-chairing this committee with Sherie Lewis, our Past Treasurer. Please let Pat or Sherie know what you'd like to see FMA offer our retired members. You are a valued part of our organization and we want to be sure we're meeting your needs.

Thank you for everything you do every day to serve this great country. Please don't let the actions, or inaction, of our elected officials discourage you. We've accomplished truly great things in our century of dedicated service to America and I know we'll continue to do so for the next 100 years. ■

FMA Magazine Staff

Publisher

Patricia J. Niehaus

Editor

Todd V. Wells

Associate Editor

Katie Redmond

Contributors

Katie Maddocks
Greg Stanford

Editorial Board

Patricia A. Spade
John C. Priolo
Sherman G. Williams

Advertising

Todd V. Wells

Circulation Coordinator

Latorea Wilson

Graphic Design and Production

www.digitdesign.net

FMA General Executive Board

National President

Patricia J. Niehaus

National Vice President

George J. Smith

National Secretary

Richard J. Oppedisano

National Treasurer

Katherine L. Smith

Region 1 Director

Michael E. Donovan

Region 2 Director

Dora L. Quinlan

Region 3 Director

Patricia A. Spade

Region 4 Director

Leonard F. Lew

www.fedmanagers.org

Annual Subscription Rate: \$30

Single Issue Rate: \$8.50

Advertiser/Subscription Inquiries

The Federal Manager

1641 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-2818
Tel: (703) 683-8700 • Fax: (703) 683-8707
E-mail: info@fedmanagers.org
www.fedmanagers.org

Article Submission

All materials submitted to *The Federal Manager* should pertain to public service managers. Copy should be double-spaced, no longer than 10 pages. High resolution color images, charts, or illustrations should be included if possible. Text should be submitted by email or on compact disc. Include a biography of the author.

Submit unsolicited articles to:

The Federal Manager

1641 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-2818
Telephone: (703) 683-8700
Fax: (703) 683-8707
E-mail: info@fedmanagers.org

Resuscitating a Troubled Workplace

By Joe Schumacher

Program Director/Faculty

OPM's Center for Leadership Development, Denver



Resuscitating a Troubled Workplace

continued from page 3

The views and opinions presented herein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of OPM or the federal government.

Most of us either step up to leadership, are methodically guided up over time by a patient mentor, or rise up to meet exceptional circumstance. On the other hand, the incoming manager taking over a troubled workplace often feels shoved because they are seldom told that the workplace has challenging issues. Yet, taking over a workplace caught in the cross-fire of bad leadership and in a straightjacket of disgruntlement is the sine qua non leadership opportunity and should never be viewed as an uphill slog. This is the milieu in which the best and brightest are moved by the sheer challenge of making a tangible difference and achieving the near impossible. This is also a matchless, real world leadership opportunity to recalibrate the workplace trajectory, and to be Mr. Wizard and work Disney-like magic. No other occasion licenses one to apply epic themes to fuse and harmonize a team from the bottom up – using the systematic attention to detail of a legendary Swiss watchmaker.

Anyone can captain a ship in calm seas so few assignments are as exhilarating or rewarding as taking the helm of a workplace hit by a tsunami of mindless bureaucracy, dysfunctional process, fault-finding, malaise and palpable discontent. In structural engineering terms, a troubled workplace has experienced an unbearable load of fatally failed leadership which quickly over stressed the office until the seams unzipped resulting in a total breakdown of its most essential component – the team.

Moreover, this leadership job is bigger than just holding the ship's helm then

ordering the barnacles scraped from the bow. Navigational errors of the previous captain must receive a course correction, and those errors often were not the result of a bad compass. The past needs to be undone by addressing a poorly treated team in their undervalued workplace. The team seeks someone to stir their emotions and earn their respect and admiration — that person can easily be you.¹

Inability to embrace the childishly simple precepts of leadership is the root cause of leadership failure and the stunning reality of a meltdown. When a bad boss complains about team performance, he or she should look inside themselves for the singular cause. Nonetheless, a strong leader taking over can stand apart by seeding a spiritual awakening of the team's suppressed and dormant capabilities. This same team looks both inward and outward for motivation and strong leadership to amalgamate and ennoble cause and mission.

Under the atypical conditions of a meltdown, the leader must function foremost as a forensic engineer with analytical handiness and utility to move the collective workplace reputation from second class to unmatched. This frequently occurs in sports when the only difference from last year's losing team to this year's titleholder is the leadership quality of the new coach. The main problem is seldom bad players.

Same Players + New Leadership = Worst to First Record

As shown in Table 1, previous terminal leadership mistakes caused the workplace to bottom out leaving no direction to go but true north. Accordingly, in this matchless milieu, there's little time to kick the tires and determine Blue Book value.

Nor can rebuilding be done with inflated talk and overheated rhetoric. This gelatinous scene of strife needs a back-of-envelope size-up, then clearness of direction, boldness of leadership, a mega dose of pure kindness, massive application of common sense, and both a focus on people and speed of execution across the landscape. With many jobs frustratingly empty, a leader can now create the necessary and sufficient condition for all to feel significant and excel, and for the team to craft magic. Good people search for a leader who brings meaning to work and leads with deeds such as sound action and quality decisions. All crave a spiritual on-the-job experience approaching religious zeal and when motivated by inspirational leadership, will readily rise to a higher level and will give their last measure.

Conversely, a wait-and-stall mindset is anathema to fixing this workplace. Wade in fast to set pace and tone. You'll need to quickly diagnosis the current ills of this disordered workplace in order to treat disturbances and maladies. Nonetheless, when taking over, expect to make mistakes as no part of leadership is fallacy-proof. Don't expect instant stardom or a quantum leap in results either. Successful leaders have the intuition, instinct, and confidence to tolerate the unknown for extended periods. Be comfortable with ambiguity and some disorder. Success comes from steady progress measured by innumerable small, daily, and incremental improvements.

When taking over, recognize that respect is never forthcoming and teams purposely withhold collective respect pending an extensive leadership size-up.

¹Leadership is both a position of privilege and an unquantifiable attitude making it the strongest force in the universe. Leadership is neither a cosmic scheme nor complex alchemy realized by a fortunate few, yet it remains a paradox as the most invisibly obvious of all human behaviors. Accordingly, neither incandescent brilliance nor being a leadership savant are essential elements of success because it's the seemingly trifling and unattractive practices of leadership that produce a model leadership legacy.

After being weighed and measured, and if labeled measly, the boss gains no respect, traction, or success and becomes a mere nominal leader.

Here are two notes of caution when taking over. First, steer clear of the theoretical and often alluring “Bromide of the Month” remedy taken from a book. Most of these tactics are a shrouded attempt to bend and fold folks to do more with less. Moreover, people are weary of “best seller management techniques;” they know this cyclical drill and the smell of its fusty elixir and attendant gimmicks, buzzwords, traps, and frustrations. Savvy teams simply wait for the latest fad to fade – along with leadership trust and credibility. The boss becomes a pretentious actor in a preconceived setting, no more than a card-board cut out playing out a leadership role. The best practices of best-sellers have few take-aways, as they lack universal and enduring workplace application. Moreover, there are no leadership secrets—only the hallowed practices heretofore undiscovered by you.

Finally, resist the natural impulse to implement the big bang strategy. This is typically applied by a boss to impress upon all that the new, more enlightened sheriff is in town and everything is to change — fast. The boss will then go about ordering changes for no obvious or explained reason other than “I said so.” This snobbish behavior, diametrically opposite that of great leaders, is rooted in arrogance. A flurry of bustle and endless decrees that “everything must change” is insulting, disdainful, and just naive. The team knows that little material change results from the white noise of white-collar chatter. Any public touting of title

Terminal Leadership Mistakes

Lose integrity, credibility, and team trust.
Tolerate marginal performers. ²
Fail to make the tough choices.
Fail to provide tools, training, trust, and technology.
Fail to reward exemplary performance.
Be aloof.
Place self over team.
Dictate to a job-mature team.
Fail to find motivational triggers.
Be secretive and restrict information flow.
Change everything upon arrival.
Fail to pry up the entrenched.
Fail to instill a sense of urgency.
Be the Invisible Man (absent or deskbound).

Table 1

and authority is showy pageantry anyway; and resist the temptation to default to “command and control” simply because it’s the path of least resistance.

Finding Root Cause

Table 2 lists the common symptoms of a troubled workplace, but leadership needs to know root cause in order to apply a workable solution. What’s really wrong and how do you get at it? Overall, lower forces have ruled the workplace. Team trust is broken and there’s no easy claw back. So initially, be a section surveyor and take the broadest perspective to triangulate the lay of the leadership land. Determine the extent of individual spirits and collective morale before drilling to a granular degree and implement specific fixes unless you see something illegal or unethical.

continued on next page

“ The past needs to be undone by addressing a poorly treated team in their undervalued workplace. The team seeks someone to stir their emotions and earn their respect and admiration — that person can easily be you. ”

²Bad bosses are experts at avoiding the inconveniences of leadership including unpleasant HR matters, while successful leaders take the knottier issues head-on.

Resuscitating a Troubled Workplace

continued from page 5

Symptoms of a Troubled Workplace

The team ³ looks like they just lost the homecoming game.
Palpable tension, turbulence and discontent.
Mind-sets shifted from “want-to” to “have-to.”
Sagging morale (apathetic, frustrated, disgusted).
Deadlines are consistently missed as a matter-of-course.
Low team spirit drives even lower productivity.
Folks want out (watch as absenteeism and churn go up).
Little engagement or initiative.
Strong resistance to both change and new ideas.
Almost no focus on what’s important.
The team harbors major grievances.
The team feels they are faceless cogs in a machine.
The team perceives little importance in their daily work.
Processes are badly broken.
There is little collaboration and outright refusal to cooperate.
The team doesn't know whom to trust and wears the mask of fear.
The team is callously competitive.
The workplace is too toxic to breathe.

Table 2

Given that leadership trust and respect are bestowed by the team before their stamp of approval is bequeathed, start with leadership by example then focus on the core human values of trust, integrity, decency, kindness, and teamwork. This is often the missing, fundamental reality and it can be restored with laser-cut precision.

A deep dive requires limitless listening,

and focused attention in small groups, or even purposeful one-on-one interaction. Mistrust of leadership likely prevails so consider a neutral, third-party to gather group or individual responses. An HR tech taking notes — and making no attribution — works well as those who survived a dose of bad-boss judgment will be pleased to provide plethoric feedback to one or more of these critically revealing questions:

- What’s on your plate, on your mind, and on fire?
- What should we start, stop and continue to do?
- What should we maintain, modify or slay?
- What five changes can we make right now to improve the organization-processes-relationships?
- What is getting in your way?
- What barriers can we break down right now?
- What resources do you need?

In sum, it’s a mathematical certainty that the diameter-to-circumference cause of this “movement of retrogression” is bad leadership and you won’t need a Sherlock Holmes magnifying glass to find it. As shown in Table 3, the “Bad Boss Stiff-Arm” phenomena may paralyze team engagement, resolve to action, and will-to-work. This means forward motion and productivity are at a standstill. Thus, the initial fix is inspirational leadership by example, then better solutions for systems and processes, because assuming it’s all about a lazy team is a poisonous non-remedy. Moreover, success won’t come from one grand and splendid event that sustains impact and crafts a leader’s legacy and concluding imprint of their masterwork. Rather, real success will come from many small and seemingly incidental, but always deliberate, daily acts that cumulatively build trust, credibility, and a reputation for sturdy common sense and plain and simple dealings.

The Bad Boss Stiff Arm

Withholds information as a power play.
No visibility and no walk-around.
No 1:1 guidance.
Fails to celebrate team success.
Deliberately heavy on command and control.
“Now hear this” broadcasts.
“Do it because I said so” explanations
“100 people are lined up for your job” assumption.
“Vote with your feet if you don’t like it” mind-set.

Table 3

What the Team Wants Most

Each of us has a motivational trigger, but to the team, gratitude and recognition from above is synergistic dynamite.

Successful leaders know that the team wants core needs fulfilled, more than they want goodies such as free pizza, office parties, or even “employee-of-the-month” awards. And that means getting the nuts ‘n bolts right by committing deliberate acts of thoughtfulness and distributing intentional accolades through small gestures of kindness, gratitude, and appreciation.

Leadership is the tradecraft of getting the right job done on time and on budget by galvanizing the collective efforts of others. This requires useful tools, spot-on training and mutual trust. So what does the team want most to help them rise to a high level?

- To work alongside a compassionate leader who serves and protects and accepts nothing less than a culture of CPR⁴ in the workplace.
- To be respected as “talented”; to be treated as a subject matter expert and to

³Team members hate to be referred to as subordinates, head count, human resources, “my people” etc. “Colleague” seems appropriate across any workplace.

⁴Courtesy, professionalism and respect; and if you choose just one, make it respect all around.

What the Team Needs From Leadership

Issue	Rx
1. Alignment of personal and professional values with workplace reality.	1. Inclusiveness through a sense of common purpose, shared meaning to work and a work unit blueprint; high standards and written performance expectations and regular feedback; key performance indicators; a level playing field and equal opportunity to display their initiative. ⁵ The work and workplace are ennobled and all feel “special.”
2. Professional development	2. Technical training and soft skill development, greater challenge and responsibility; merit promotions and a career path.
3. Hard resources	3. Tools, equipment, supplies and material; a physically and psychologically safe work environment.

- be engaged in genuinely meaningful work — these are the elementary human expectations that most bosses perceive as confounding calculus.
- To have tasks placed in their heads and hands with sufficient ownership and accountability for the final work product.
 - To receive an occasional “thank you” or “nice job” from upstream (its mental chocolate and workplace catnip).
 - To have key information shared so they feel clued-in, current, and conversant.
- Everyone wants an emotional salary as much as take-home pay. And most will sit with butt-in-chair at their workstation for years waiting for a simple “great job” or “thank you” from the boss. Likewise, and more than anything else, the team wants your undistracted time. Ironically, a simple “great job” as well as all items listed above, is cost free. Sadly, a sincere “well done” from upstream still remains the most elusive of all compensation, and this is mystifying indeed, as a timely, true, and targeted “thank you” carries an 8x benefit, or more mathematically precise x8, as this exponentially magical phrase ...
- is tangible and heartwarming to

- receiver
- is gratifying to sender
 - enhances the sender’s image
 - shows a touch of class and extra effort
 - rewards what you want more of
 - underscores leadership by example
 - applies the best practice of “catch ‘em doing things right”
 - costs nothing
- In closing, leadership is the tradecraft of making others matter, and in a troubled workplace, denuded leadership (and not bad people) is the first place to apply “Leadership 9-1-1.” You can be the stimulating, electroshock therapy. Remember, most teams are parched for high-order leadership and will readily embrace a diametrically different, albeit refreshing, style and approach if their well-being is high on your priority list – think servant leader.
- Finally, as the incoming “director of trauma recovery”, you’re inside the crucible from which the finest leadership mettle is tempered and a championship comeback strategy is launched. Legends arise from an injection of flash leadership and a massive dose of common sense. And, there’s no greater buzz or opportunity to stand apart than

Common Elements of Uncommon Leaders

- Legacy⁶ of developing leadership bench strength and preparing “ready now” leaders.
- Track record of continuous improvement of self, others, and process.
- Trust builder and custodian of workplace values.
- Authentic and deliberately transparent role model.
- Communicator with polished eloquence.
- Forward-tilt optimism and sturdiness of spirit.
- Quiet dignity with deliberately suppressed ego.
- Anneals the workplace by matching individual passions and skill sets with jobs.
- Carefully balances a laser focus on results (Key Performance Indicators) with general goodness (Courtesy, Professionalism, and Respect).
- Decisive, but not woodenheaded
- Zero tolerance for disrespect, office bully, pettiness, and silliness.

performing lifesaving resuscitation on a near-death workplace. If you can bring around a troubled workplace as the beacon in the fog, and foster camaraderie and boost a higher sense of self, team, and organizational worth, then update your resume because you’ll be in demand. ■

Joe Schumacher is a Program Director and Faculty Member at OPM’s Center for Leadership Development in Aurora, Colorado, where he specializes in the design and delivery of leadership programs. He frequently speaks to federal audiences and most recently delivered multiple leadership workshops at the Federally Employed Women’s National Training Conference in Detroit, Michigan.

⁵Not surprisingly, good people in fact covet dashboard metrics—the vital signs of the workplace. They want boundaries, personal accountability, to be challenged and the joy of big accomplishments. Moreover, they will indeed perform to high standards and elevated expectations. These are huge, often unleveraged drivers of performance where goals are hammered into reality. And standards are stress reducers because success is clearly defined and everyone knows the specific route, mode of transportation and final destination of the bus. Otherwise, all must be a master mind-reader and guess at what success looks like.

⁶Legacy is an accounting of one’s stewardship, and the greatest of all leadership legacies is betterment of the workplace (continuous improvement of self, others, and process) along with building other leaders, uprightness of character, and a residue of common sense.