Module Nineteen: Conditions of Quality

In module 17, we discussed the four types of relationships--friend/friend, counselor/counselee, teacher/student and manager/worker. The Conditions of Quality are critical elements to attend to when operating in the manager/worker relationship. This means anytime you are supervising at work or leading a group of any kind, whenever you are teaching something your students may not know they want to learn, or when you are counseling non-voluntary clients.

Need-Satisfying Environment

The first condition to pay attention to is the environment. We know from Lesson 11 how important creating an environment that's conducive to change is to the counseling relationship. Well, it's even more important in the manager/worker relationship. We also know this means establishing a need-satisfying environment. If you think it's a challenge to create a need-satisfying environment for one person, try doing it for a group! Yes, it is more challenging but certainly doable.

The idea is not for the manager to meet everyone's needs. That would be impossible. The idea is for the manager to create a workspace where workers are able to get their needs met if they choose to.

SURVIVAL

This means managers need to ensure safety at work. Naturally, there are some jobs filled with inherent risks. Workers know these when they accept the job. However, given any inherent risks, managers work to maximize the safety within them. Other elements of safety on the job are job security, freedom from oppression, and freedom from gossip. Of course, managers aren't completely in control of these elements but they will work their best to minimize their occurrence. This does not mean they will coerce people into not gossiping. That would never work. However, if gossip is an issue, they make clear the expectations of no gossip and work hard to create a sense of team which would reduce the desire for people to gossip about one another.

LOVE & BELONGING

The need for love & belonging at work translates into relationships. Managers are certainly responsible for their part in their relationships with their workers. They want to communicate to

their workers that they care about them and are concerned about their well-being both in and out of work. Then, it is a manager's job to facilitate a sense of team as much as possible to create positive relationships among workers. When a manager perceives a problem between two workers, he or she may attempt to intervene to work toward quicker reconciliation.

It is also a manager's job to facilitate the relationship between workers and upper management. This is accomplished by skillfully walking that fine line between supporting one's workers and fairly representing and supporting the decisions of management. Managers do not want to create an "us" versus "them" mentality at work. This is incredibly destructive.

Another responsibility of managers is to ensure each of their supervisees recognizes his or her contribution to the vision and mission of the company, agency, or group. Each person must experience their relationship with the overall direction of the group or they feel disconnected and thus are not meeting their need for love & belonging.

POWER

The need for power is critical in the workplace. Each person must feel important, knowing they have something worthwhile to contribute. Managers need to listen to and respect workers. Workers need to know that they are important and what they say matters. Workers need to be given an appropriate amount of responsibility so they are being challenged but are not overwhelmed in order to feel in control and powerful.

FREEDOM

Freedom in the workplace involves creativity, choices, and independence. Managers want to provide workers with as many options as they can think of so they feel in charge of the direction of their work to the extent it's possible. Good managers also support creativity in their workers. They do not attempt to put people in "boxes" but rather give them freedom to try new things without fear of reprisal. Managers also want to give workers the proper amount of freedom that they have responsible behaviors to manage that freedom. Managers don't want to give workers more freedom than they can responsibly handle, or they will be over their heads. However, nothing empowers workers more than knowing they are trusted to handle things they know how to handle. This translates into freedom from micromanagement.

FUN

Fun in the workplace is essential to worker's happiness. Of course, some people need more fun than others just as with all the needs. However, managers need to allow workers freedom of expression to create fun at work as long as that fun is not hurtful to others. Having fun at work does not always mean a person is not working. There are many ways to incorporate fun into one's workday that makes the day so much more enjoyable. Good leaders know to encourage, rather than discourage, fun-making at work.

And remember, useful learning counts for the fun need, as well. You want workers to get the proper training so they can do their jobs even better and be trained for promotions possibilities, too.

INDIVIDUAL WORKERS

These are general considerations to create a need-satisfying environment at work, however, if you are experiencing difficulties with individual employees, a manager may want to check in with that employee to see if his or her needs individually are being met at work. It could be that John's need to have fun is interfering with Mary's need for power as she can't concentrate on her work when John is throwing objects in his wastebasket and yelling, "Score." When this occurs, you want to see if you can help each individual achieve a need-balance at work and if necessary, you would mediate the conflict between workers so everyone is able to meet their own needs. It's an awesome responsibility but well worth the effort.

Dr. Glasser says, "When we are both learning and having fun, we often look forward to hard work and long hours; without fun, these become drudgery." You want workers who are happy and energized.

Usefulness

Have you ever been asked to do something at work that made no sense? Me too! Did you do it? If you did it, did you do it well? Usually, those of us with high freedom needs don't even attempt to do those things that don't make sense to us. But even if you tried, it's difficult to do it well because you don't understand the purpose behind it.

Whenever you ask your workers to do something, you want to be able to explain the WIIFM of the situation. WIIFM stands for "What's in it for me?" If you, as the manager, don't know the answer to that question for your workers, then you need to keep asking questions until you find a satisfactory answer. Occasionally, the answer will be, "I don't know why. It's a regulation from our governing body. I'm sure it makes sense to someone somewhere. We need to do it if we want to keep our license or our funding." Those are compelling reasons to do something as long as that doesn't become the answer to everything. That should be the exception rather than the rule. For most requests, you should be able to help workers understand how doing so will help them in some way.

And if, after asking for a purpose, you come to realize there isn't a good one, then the request itself can be questioned, combined with something else, or possibly eliminated altogether.

Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation is often misunderstood. Some people take it to mean that when using Lead Management, you just ask people to decide if their work is quality and you simply accept their answer. This is not what it was intended to be at all.

Self-evaluation does not eliminate the need for outside inspection and co-verification, however, we recognize that no one knows better than the person himself whether or not the work done was quality as long as two main conditions are present.

Opponents of self-evaluation are against it because they don't think they will get honest self-evaluation from their workers and they are concerned what to do if the accuracy of the self-evaluation does not match his or her own. Both concerns are quite valid and have an appropriate explanation.

Let's start with honesty. How do you get your workers to be honest with you? The only way I know to get honesty is to eliminate the punishment for telling the truth. In the workplace, this translates into: You can't ask workers to self-evaluate and expect them to be honest if they are worried you will hurt them with the information they give you. When you ask for self-evaluation, the workers need to know your sole purpose is to support them and help them get the supervision, assistance, tools, and resources required to do a higher quality job. There can be no blame or punishment. In this situation, you are much more likely to get honest self-evaluation.

So then, how do you ensure accurate self-evaluation? The best way I know is to have a set of co-developed standards of quality for the worker to measure against. How can a person give you an accurate evaluation if he or she doesn't know what quality looks like? Whenever a new task is required, then a lead manager sits down with the people being asked to perform the task and discusses what quality will look like, what time, energy, and resources will be needed to get the job done well, what support will be needed, and if there are any suggestions for streamlining or doing the task even better.

If this process has already been done, then a worker may be asked to do things they had no role in developing the measures for. This is fine as long as that person realizes they may make suggestions for improvement at any time.

Once the competencies or standards of quality have been developed, then it is relatively easy for a person to evaluate how they are measuring up. In my experience in supervising, the person generally is much harder on themselves, than I would be as their manager. I have never had the situation where I had to point out something to a worker that I thought was a deficit while they saw it as a strength. However, should that situation apply, then all the manager does is ask questions highlighting that particular area.

For example, a person self-evaluates that they have met all standards of quality for a counselor. However, my concern is how they get along with their co-workers. They do not seem to be much of a team player. I might ask, "How are you doing in the area of relationships with your co-workers"? If the person answers, "Fine," then I may ask a follow up question such as, "How do you think your co-workers would answer this question"? Or I may ask, "Would you be interested in knowing how I see it from my perspective"?

Self-evaluation does not happen in a vacuum. There will occasionally be situations when you as the manager will have to point out things to workers that they may not see the same way as you. This will open the topic for discussion. It's not meant as criticism, nor is it meant that the boss is

always right. It is recognized there may be different perspectives. Talk about them. Then decide how to proceed from that spot.

The idea is that you and your workers have a partnership to produce high quality results for the mission and vision of the company/agency/group. You both have valuable information and input into that goal. You can help each other move in the direction of quality when you recognize you

are a team, rather than at odds with each other.I am providing you with a checklist for situations when you aren't necessary getting the results you hoped for in a Lead Management situation. You simply record the situation at the top of the page and then self-evaluate how you are doing in providing the three Conditions of Quality. If you are doing all you can, then you can go home and rest at night knowing you have done your part.

Many times, however, particularly if you are experiencing resistance and/or difficulties, there is something missing from the Conditions of Quality. Once you are able to identify what it is that's missing, then you can create and implement a plan for addressing the missing components.