



# **IN-BASKET FEEDBACK REPORT**

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Half Court Press, Inc.

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# **IN-BASKET FEEDBACK REPORT INTERPRETATION**

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## **CONFIDENTIAL**

This confidential summary feedback report summarizes your result on the In-Basket Simulation exercise. The In-Basket simulation exercise required you to respond in writing to a set of 23 memos, letters, notes, and problems that a supervisor or manager might typically be asked to handle in a limited time period.

Your In-Basket Simulation results are based on other individuals who recently completed this exercise. These individuals are part of the growing supervisory and managerial In-Basket Simulation data pool.

Your In-Basket Simulation results consists of scores on eight independent scales that are reported in a range from Extremely Low to Extremely High. The scales include: 1) Initiative; 2) Interpersonal Sensitivity; 3) Planning, Organizing, and Scheduling; 4) Delegation; 5) Administrative Control; 6) Problem Analysis; 7) Judgment; and 8) Decisiveness.

A graphic summary of your results are provided on the next page and are followed by detailed explanations and specific developmental recommendations. Should you have any questions about your results, or any aspects of this feedback report, please feel free to call Organizational Performance Dimensions at 1-800-538-7628.

## **INTERPRETATION**

In order to help you understand this report and the scoring, a detailed summary of each In-Basket scale is provided on the following pages. Each In-Basket scale is scored from Extremely Low to Extremely High based on standard scores (t-scores) with a mean of fifty and a standard deviation of ten.

Keep in mind that your feedback report summarizes how much of each skill area was expressed and observed in the In-Basket Simulation relative to other supervisors and managers who have taken this exercise in similar work environments. So, your scores are relative to others in the large data pool compiled for the In-Basket Simulation.

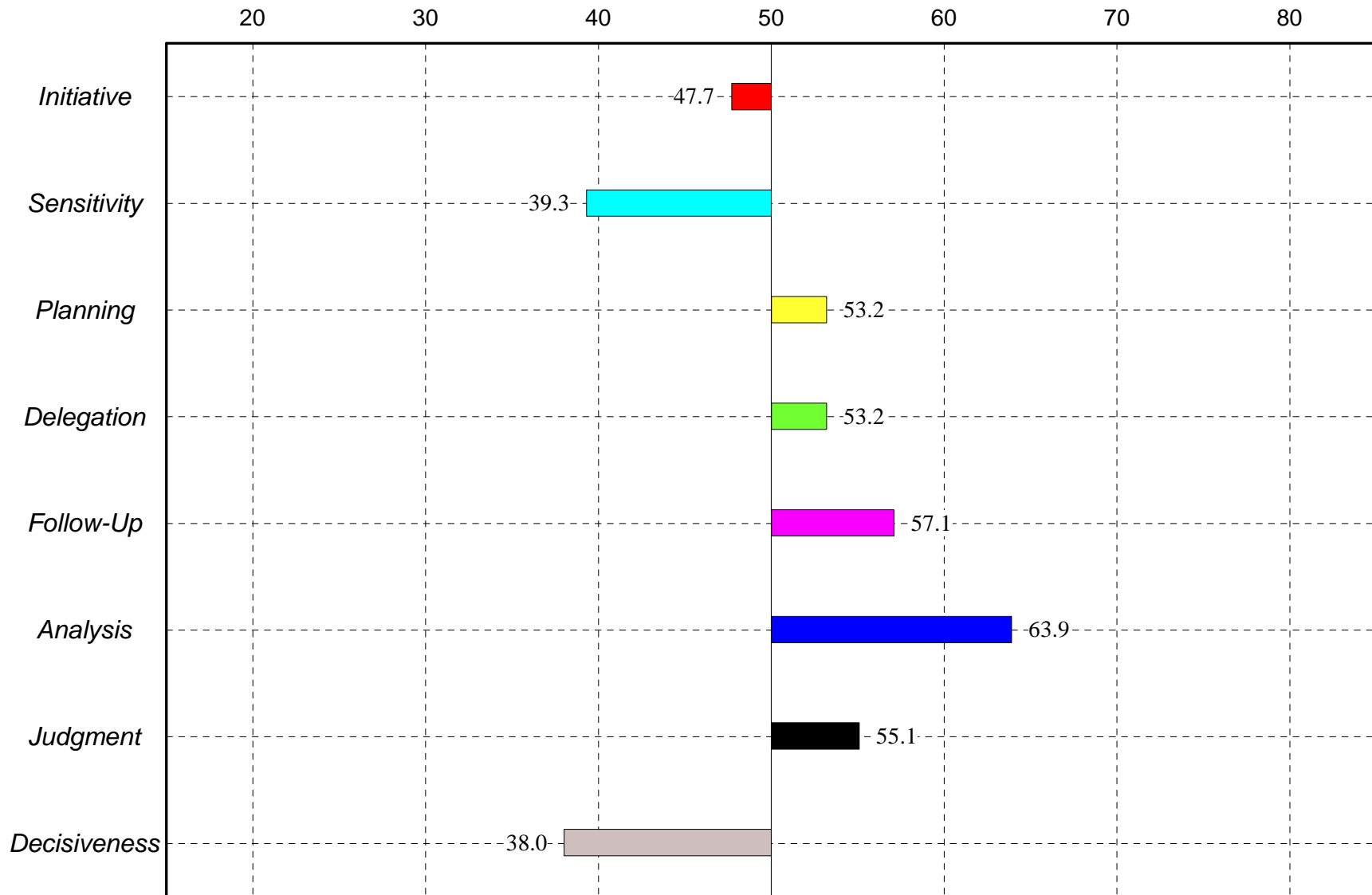
Your in-basket scores are based upon an objective scoring system that allows raters to assign specific point values to desirable written responses to each in-basket item. Total scores are calculated for each of the eight in-basket scales.

A very low score on a particular scale (e.g., follow-up or administrative control) suggests that very little of that behavior (e.g., setting up mechanisms for tracking, follow-up, and evaluation) was demonstrated and observed in the exercise. On the other hand, a very high score suggests that a great deal of these specific behaviors were demonstrated and observed in the In-Basket Simulation.

# IN-BASKET SUMMARY RESULTS

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STANDARDIZED T-SCORES

## **SCALE 1: INITIATIVE**

Initiative is defined as the ability to influence events to achieve specific outcomes through individual actions (i.e., originates action rather than waiting for input and/or approval from others). Individuals who take initiative tend to make plans, decisions, and solve-problems without waiting for direction from others.

Individuals who scored high on this competency made decisions, took actions, and delegated assignments to others that indicated a willingness to frequently take initiative and to go beyond merely responding to the presenting issue or challenge (e.g., tried to identify reasons for the problem, sought to research the issues further, suggested mechanisms to track and monitor progress on delegated assignments, or developed a process to improve productivity or quality). These individuals did not express hesitation to act and make decisions in specific situations. For example, those with high scores tended to request additional information about a problem or decided to hold a special meeting to resolve an important issue. Individuals with low scores did not tend to take such actions or make such decisions as frequently. Individuals with low scores should seek additional feedback from his/her manager to discuss how much direction they are perceived to need on his/her job and in what areas that he/she should be taking greater action without seeking input or approval from others.

### **INSIGHTS AND LEARNINGS**

Being proactive and taking initiative is easier when we are familiar with our job, understand our tasks and assignments, and know what is expected from our manager and other team members. In this simulation you were asked to respond to a number of challenging situations, requests, and problems under time pressure. A low score does not suggest that you don't take initiative on the job but does imply that under time pressure and ambiguity that you did not express and display a high level of initiative in this particular exercise.

The following questions will help you to further develop the level of initiative you take on the job:

- 1) What does this Inbasket simulation tell you about the amount of initiative you tend to take under time pressure?
- 2) How much initiative do you typically take in your current position?
- 3) What insights and learning about your initiative skills did you get from this exercise?
- 4) Under which circumstances could you take more initiative in your current position?
- 5) What developmental activities and action steps can you take to continue to enhance your effectiveness in taking initiative on the job?

**YOUR RESULTS:** You expressed a moderate level of initiative compared to others who have taken the In-Basket Simulation. You may tend to make decisions, implement plans, and solve problems without much input and direction from others. As a result, you may sometimes take advantage of opportunities to take appropriate and prudent risks when the situation calls for it.

Developmental suggestions for increasing the level of initiative that you can take on the job might include: 1) Avoid reporting problems without recommending specific solutions to your manager; 2) Determine specific actions and then take them without waiting for direction from others (e.g., initiate a meeting with a senior level manager, draft a project proposal, prepare a management briefing to address an important organizational issue);

3) Analyze reasons why you should act now on problems that have remained unsolved for extended periods; 4) Volunteer to take on additional assignments or projects; and 5) Ask for more decision-making authority on your job.

Suggested Readings/Resources: Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization*. Doubleday Books (ISBN:0-385-26094-6); Fisher, R. & Ury, W. (1981). *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. New York: Penguin Books (ISBN: 0140157352); Nirenberg, J. (1984). *How to Sell Your Ideas*. New York: McGraw-Hill (ISBN: 0070465770); Kriegel, R. & Patler, L. (1992). *If it Ain't Broke...Break It*. New York: Warner Books (ISBN: 0-446-39359-2). Covey, S. (1991). *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*; New York: Summit Books (ISBN: 0-671-74910-2); O'Toole, J. (1995). *Leading Change*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass (ISBN: 1-55542-608-5); Baber, A. & Waymon, L. (1991). *Great Connections: Small Talk and Networking for Business People*. Manassas Park, VA: Impact Publications (ISBN: 0-942710-48-7).

## **SCALE 2: INTERPERSONAL SENSITIVITY**

Interpersonal sensitivity is defined as the ability to take actions that indicate consideration for the feelings and needs of others. Some demonstrations of sensitive and empathetic behaviors include: actively listening to others, asking questions about work and non-work activities, maintaining eye contact during meetings, expressing concern about problems, taking an interest in others, and making decisions that take into account the feelings of others.

Individuals who scored high on this in-basket competency tended to respond directly to others in writing in a manner that expressed caring and empathy in the handling of specific interpersonal situations and problems. High scores suggest more frequent demonstration of written praise, compliments, positive feedback, and recognition than towards others than those with low scores. For example, individuals with high scores might have written a note of congratulations to an employee for exceptional performance or expressed sensitivity in disapproving a vacation request at an inappropriate time. Individuals with low scores on this competency should seek additional feedback from his/her peers, manager, and/or direct reports to determine how he/she is being perceived at work. Those with low scores may wish to evaluate the extent to which he/she actively listen to others, provide positive encouragement, express a personal interest in others, and give feedback that is behaviorally based on a regular basis.

### **INSIGHTS AND LEARNINGS**

This exercise involved many opportunities to respond to both internal and external clients in a direct, prompt, courteous, and customer service oriented manner. Although interpersonal sensitivity was expressed in this exercise through written correspondence, it provides a measure of general sensitivity under time pressure and ambiguity. A low score does not suggest you are necessarily insensitive in your dealings with others on the job, but does suggest a strong task orientation under pressure that may be perceived as less caring, empathetic and customer service oriented.

The following questions will help you to further develop your interpersonal sensitivity on the job:

- 1) What does this exercise tell you about how sensitive you typically are under time pressure (i.e., focused on both task and people under stress and pressure)?
- 2) What insights and learning about your sensitivity skills did you get from this exercise?
- 3) Under which circumstances could you express greater warmth, empathy and interpersonal sensitivity towards others in your current position?
- 4) What developmental activities and action steps can you take to continue to enhance your interpersonal sensitivity on the job?

**YOUR RESULTS:** You expressed a moderately low level of interpersonal sensitivity compared to others who have taken the In-Basket Simulation. Few of your written responses to the in-basket items contained direct praise, recognition, or empathy for the concerns and problems of others. You frequently handled the in-basket items without, in some way, acknowledging the emotions and feelings of others. As a result, this high task-orientation may possibly interfere with developing interpersonal relationships, rapport, taking an interest in the job and personal life of others, and listening to the suggestions, problems, and concerns of others.

Some developmental suggestions to increase your understanding and sensitivity towards the needs of others might include: 1) Obtain ongoing

feedback on your interpersonal style from a respected colleague, peer, or team member. Ask for the person's impressions of your style and impact in a variety of situations; 2) Accept people as they are, not as you would like them to be. Try to understand what other people are like on their own terms; 3) It is easier to work with people if they feel that you are comfortable with them. If you create an initial impression of extreme seriousness, intensity or come across as somewhat sarcastic or critical, people may be hesitant to open up and work with you. Identify occasions in which you use sarcasm or humor in a way that may offend others, monitor your non-verbal behavior, and learn more about your team member's interests; 4) Apologize to people when you have hurt or ignored them; 5) Be less judgmental and evaluative in your day-to-day dealings with people; 6) Learn to be less abrasive and tactless in your interpersonal relations by confronting the issue instead of the person 7) Obtain feedback from others (e.g., boss, direct reports, peers) on your interpersonal and leadership style using a 360-degree multi-rater feedback instrument (<http://www.viewsuite360.com>); 8) Arrange an individual, informal meeting with each employee to discuss your working relationship. Provide as nonthreatening an environment as possible for this meeting; 9) Ask the employee for comments on things you do that help the working relationship and for suggestions on how you might improve it; 10) If others see you as lacking in warmth and sensitivity and unapproachable, determine what you do to give this impression. Is it that you appear uninterested in their problems? Is it that they rarely see you or when you do you hardly ever interact with them? Try to look at yourself as others see you. Consider making changes based upon your analysis; 11) Listen for feelings more than talk and give advice; and 12) Use feeling words to convey understanding (e.g., words such as hurt, frustrated, excited, etc.).

**Suggested Readings/Resources:**

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books (ISBN: 055309503X); *The One-Minute Manager*. K. Blanchard and J. Spencer (1987), Berkley Publishing (ISBN: 0-425-09847-8); *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*. W. Bennis and B. Nanus (1985), Harper and Row; *Influence Without Authority*. A. Cohen and D. Bradford (1990), Wiley and Sons; Rozakis, L. & Rozakis B. (1998). *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Office Politics*. New York: Alpha Books (ISBN: 0028623975); Bolton, R. (1986). *People Skills*. New York: Simon and Shuster (ISBN: 067162248X); Kratz, D. & Kratz, A. (1995). *Effective Listening Skills*. Chicago: Irwin Professional Publishers (ISBN: 0786301228); Ury, W. (1998). *Getting to Peace: Transforming Conflict at Home, at Work and in the World*. New York: Viking Press (ISBN: 0670887587); Carlson, R. (1998). *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff at Work: Simple Ways to Minimize Stress While Bringing Out the Best in Yourself and Others*. New York: Hyperion (ISBN: 0786883367).

## **SCALE 3: ORGANIZING, PLANNING, & SCHEDULING**

Organizing, Planning, and Scheduling are defined as the ability to effectively schedule time and activities and establish a course of action to accomplish specific goals for self or others. In general, organizing refers to longer-range plans and activities, whereas, planning and scheduling refers to the management of daily tasks and time.

Individuals who scored high in this In-basket competency demonstrated the ability to effectively manage their time, organize their schedule, and plan for future activities. These individuals approached the in-basket simulation by prioritizing each item rather than attempting to tackle them in the order they were placed. Individuals with high scores tended to demonstrate the effective use of planning tools by utilizing the monthly calendar or preparing an action item list of meeting dates and phone calls to be made. Individuals with low scores on this competency may find that they tend to manage day-to-day activities instead of planning more effectively for the future. If you scored low on this in-basket competency, you may need additional development on specific time management and planning skills to enhance your overall effectiveness on the job.

### **INSIGHTS AND LEARNINGS**

The In-Basket simulation presented an opportunity to integrate a great deal of information under time pressure. How you approached the exercise (e.g., working the items in order or prioritizing them) tells you something important about your planning, organizing and scheduling skills under time pressure. You were challenged to identify numerous scheduling and meeting conflicts throughout the exercise. A low score does not suggest that you possess poor planning and scheduling skills on the job, but does imply that under time pressure and ambiguity you did not express and display a highly organized approach to handling the In-basket items.

The following questions will help you to further develop your organizing, planning and scheduling skills on the job:

- 1) What does this exercise tell you about your planning and scheduling skills under time pressure?
- 2) How do you typically approach planning, organizing and scheduling tasks, assignments, and projects in your current position?
- 3) What insights and learning about your planning skills did you get from this exercise?
- 4) Under which circumstances could you improve your planning and organizing skills in your current position?
- 5) What developmental activities and action steps can you take to continue to enhance your effectiveness in planning, organizing and scheduling skills on the job?

**YOUR RESULTS:** You expressed a moderate level of planning and organizing compared to others who have taken the In-Basket Simulation. You made some limited use of the in-basket calendar, missed some scheduling problems, set up some meetings and appointments with others, and tended to organize and prioritize the most critical in-basket items ones to be addressed, rather than worked the items in sequence. As a result, you may tend to respond to the most important aspects of your job, rather than the urgent. It would appear that you could benefit even more by effectively managing your time and further developing your longer-range and strategic planning skills.

Some developmental suggestions for improving your organizing, planning, and scheduling skills include: 1) Spend at least 10 minutes at the end of



each work day planning the activities of the next day; 2) Prepare milestone charts to clarify projects steps, responsibilities, and deadlines; 3) Prioritize your work and concentrate on the higher priorities; 4) Delegate tasks when appropriate; 5) Focus on results, rather than, activities; 6) Plan meetings that you conduct to be run as efficiently as possible; 7) Use previous plans for similar projects as a model; 8) Develop individual and departmental performance plans with others; 9) Use planning tools such as calendars, a 'to do' list, milestone charts, computer programs phone logs, etc, to effectively manage your time; 10) Set aside time each day for completion of paper work and phone calls; and 11) Attend a workshop on effective time management.

Suggested Readings/Resources: Winston, S. (1983). *The Organizational Executive: New Ways to Manage Time, Paper, and People*. New York: Warner Books; Biffel, L. (1991). *Right on Time! The Complete Guide for Time Pressured Managers*. L. New York: McGraw-Hill; Shanklin, W. and Ryans, J. (1995). *Thinking Strategically: Planning for Your Company's Future*. New York: Random House; Koch, R. (1998). *The 80/20 Principle: The Secret of Achieving More with Less*. New York: Currency (ISBN: 0385491700); McKenzie, A. (1997). *The Time Trap*. New York: AMACOM (ISBN: 081447926X); Smith, D. (1997). *Taking Charge of Change: 10 Principles for Managing People and Performance*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley (ISBN: 0201916045).

## SCALE 4: DELEGATION

Delegation is defined as the ability to allocate necessary authority and resources to others in order to accomplish a task, assignment, or project in a timely and effective manner. Delegation involves the proper matching of an individual to a task with clearly established performance expectations and standards.

Individuals who scored high on this in-basket competency demonstrated the ability to select the appropriate individual to delegate tasks, projects, and assignments. Individuals who scored high also demonstrated good Judgment in determining what was to be delegated in specific situations (e.g., making specific decisions, researching pertinent information, etc.). For example, individuals with high scores tended to select the right subordinate to carry out appropriate assignments in their absence and specified clear actions to be taken in writing (i.e., were not vague or general in what you wanted to be handled and how). Those with low scores tended to take action or make decisions themselves rather than delegate these to others on many in-basket items. Individuals with low scores should attempt to more frequently divide projects into discrete parts and provide their subordinate's with enough authority and responsibility to effectively accomplish these projects.

### INSIGHTS AND LEARNINGS

This exercise challenged you to figure out how to effectively respond and handle a wide variety of demands and situations that had obviously preceded you. Under time pressure and ambiguity all of us choose to rely on our own experience and skills as well as those we have confidence in. Many opportunities existed in this exercise to delegate specific tasks and assignments such as attending important meetings, investigating situations or responding to others in a prompt and responsive manner.

The following questions will help you to further develop your delegation skills on the job:

- 1) What does this exercise tell you about your tendency to typically delegate under time pressure and ambiguity?
- 2) How effectively do you use your internal resources in your current position?
- 3) What insights and learning about your delegation skills did you get from this exercise?
- 4) Under which circumstances could you delegate more effectively in your current position?
- 5) What developmental activities and action steps can you take to continue to enhance your effectiveness in delegation skills on the job?

**YOUR RESULTS:** You expressed a moderate level of delegating tasks, projects, and assignments compared to others who have taken the In-Basket Simulation. You tended to utilize available staff members to complete assignments and initiate specific tasks on particular in-basket items. As a result, you may sometimes assign work to others that you presently supervise or manage. It would appear that you could benefit by increasing your level of delegation (quantity and quality) and specific related skills including the teaching of a job task, coaching, and establishing and communicating performance standards (e.g., appropriate authority, schedule, follow-up mechanisms, etc.).

Some developmental suggestions for improving your delegation skills might include: 1) Determine what tasks, projects, and assignments could be distributed to appropriate staff members; 2) Spend time with appropriate staff members to establish and communicate project expectations and

standards; 3) Develop control and follow-up mechanisms (e.g., weekly briefings, project status notes, etc.) to monitor progress of delegated assignments; 4) Develop the skills of current staff members to enable them to take over existing work requirements; 5) Analyze the risks associated with delegating more tasks with others and develop an action plan to minimize such risks; 6) Attend classes or workshops on coaching employees and effective delegation; and 7) Obtain feedback from others (e.g., boss, direct reports, peers) on your effectiveness in delegating using a 360-degree multi-rater feedback instrument available through Organizational Performance Dimensions.

Suggested Readings/Resources: *The Leadership Challenge: How to Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations*. J. Kouzes & B. Posner (1987), Jossey-Bass; *The One-Minute Manager Meets the Donkey*. K. Blanchard, W. Oncken, & H. Burrows (1989), William Morrow; *No-Nonsense Delegation*. D. McConkey (1989), AMACOM; Heller, R. (1998). *How to Delegate*. New York: DK Publishing (ISBN: 0789428903); Baker, S. & Baker, K. (1998). *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Project Management*. New York: Alpha Books (ISBN: 0028617452); Ryan, K. & Oestreich, D. (1998). *Driving the Fear Out of the Workplace: Creating the High Trust, High Performance Organization*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass (ISBN: 0787939684); Buckingham, M. & Coffman, C. (1999). *First Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*. New York: Simon & Shuster (ISBN: 0684852861); McCall, M. (1997). *High Flyers: Developing the Next Generation of Leaders*. Boston: Harvard Business School (ISBN: 0875843360).

## **SCALE 5: FOLLOW-UP/ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL**

Administrative control or follow up is defined as the ability to develop procedures to monitor and evaluate job activities, tasks, responsibilities, and delegated assignments on a timely and on-going basis.

Individuals who scored high on this in-basket competency demonstrated the ability to monitor and follow-up on tasks, projects, and delegated assignments to others. For example, these individuals wrote notes on their calendars to check on the progress of an assignment or delegated a task to their subordinate with specific outcomes and progress to be reported on. Individuals with low scores tended to delegate a great deal of authority and responsibility but did not attempt to implement formal or informal feedback mechanisms (e.g., written memos, feedback meetings, etc.) to check the progress of the task or assignment very often. Those with low scores may need to evaluate how effectively they are tracking and monitoring each step of his/her own or delegated tasks, projects and assignments in order to insure successful completion.

### **INSIGHTS AND LEARNINGS**

A number of situations in the In-Basket simulation required follow-up with others. Under time pressure and ambiguity it is easy to be very task focused and think only about reacting to the situation or problem at hand. It is also possible to fall into the trap of not following up because you trust people too much (this may be appropriate when you know your direct reports well, but not in a new situation like the one experienced in the In-Basket simulation). Explicitly scheduling time to follow-up with specific individuals, direct reports, and others was expected during this exercise. Memos, notes, or notations on the Planning Calendar suggesting future meetings with others demonstrated administrative control during the In-Basket simulation. A low score suggests a tendency to delegate, plan, and take actions without much thought to follow-up during time pressure.

Whether you fully utilized the employees or team members that were available to you, despite some indications that not all of your staff was equally competent will tell you something about your willingness to delegate under new and ambiguous circumstances. Did you trust your direct reports and were confident in them or did you take the approach that you had to do everything yourself when you got back from the business trip? A low score may not mean you are poor at delegating, but it does suggest that under time pressure and faced with ambiguity you may take too much on yourself, particularly when you lack confidence in your team or direct reports.

The following questions will help you to further develop your delegation skills on the job:

- 1) What does this exercise tell you about your tendency to track/monitor tasks and follow-up with others under time pressure and ambiguity?
- 2) How do you typically track/monitor work and follow-up with others in your current position?
- 3) What insights and learning about your follow-up skills did you get from this exercise?
- 4) Under which circumstances could you do more to follow-up with others in your current position?
- 5) What developmental activities and action steps can you take to continue to enhance your administrative control/follow-up skills on the job?

**YOUR RESULTS:** You expressed a moderately high level of monitoring, checking, or following up on delegated tasks, projects, and assignments compared to others who have taken the In-Basket Simulation. You frequently utilized meetings or requested memos from staff members to inform

you as to the status of delegated assignments on specific in-basket items. As a result, you may rarely find yourself “fighting fires” and managing crises on a daily basis. It would appear that you could benefit by continuing to develop specific follow-up and control skills to insure that projects, tasks, and assignments are completed according to important performance criteria (e.g., schedule, budget, quality).

Some developmental suggestions for improving your administrative follow-up and control skills might include: 1) Establish and communicate performance standards to staff with respect to both individual and departmental objectives; 2) Mutually develop appropriate project control mechanisms such as weekly status reports, performance review meetings, written reports, and personal observation of work to insure quality, cost, schedule; 3) Set follow-up appointments and dates whenever you delegate tasks; 4) Include follow-up reminders on your 'to do' lists and have your secretary include them in your calendar planning book; and 5) Develop an 'action item' list that summarizes current work in progress, significant milestones, and individuals responsible for the project.

Suggested Readings/Resources: Juran, J. (1989). *Journal on Leadership for Quality*. New York: McMillan; Albrecht, K. & Zemke, R. (1985), *Service America! Doing Business in the New Economy*. New York: Dow Jones-Irwin; Burrill, C, Burrill, C.W., & Ledolter, J. (1998). *Achieving Quality through Continual Improvement*. New York: John Wiley & Sons (ISBN: 0471092207); Jacobs, R. & Jones, M. (1994). *Structured On-the-Job Training*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler (ISBN: 0887306853).

## **SCALE 6: PROBLEM ANALYSIS**

Problem Analysis is defined as the ability to accurately define a problem, gather and analyze information relevant to the problem, and determine possible causes and solutions to the problem.

Individuals who scored high on this in-basket competency demonstrated the ability to see relationships between in-basket items, and correctly identify incongruence between dates, times, and meetings. For example, individuals with high scores might have written a note to someone pointing out a potential meeting conflict and asking to change the date and/or time in order to accommodate their schedule. Individuals who scored high might also have linked several in-basket items together that were logically connected to each other by the people involved or the specific problem mentioned. Individuals with low scores tended not to point out the various scheduling conflicts or relationships between various in-basket items. Individuals with low scores should attempt to gather additional data and information and carefully consider alternative choices and options before taking actions or making decisions.

### **INSIGHTS AND LEARNINGS**

Throughout the In-Basket simulation you were challenged to see and understand interrelationships among items. Items were purposely linked together and placed strategically in the In-Basket envelope. Many items required additional information or further investigation to fully understand the most prudent course of action. High scores on this scale indicate the ability to group and address linked items together and the insight to gather additional information when required. A low score does not suggest your problem analysis skills are poor but it does imply a strong "action orientation" under time pressure and ambiguity.

The following questions will help you to further develop your problem analysis skills on the job:

- 1) What does this exercise tell you about your problem analysis skills under time pressure and ambiguity?
- 2) How do you typically approach analyzing and solving problems in your current position?
- 3) What insights and learning about your problem analysis skills did you get from this exercise?
- 4) Under which circumstances could you take more time to gather more information and analyze things more thoroughly in your current position?
- 5) What developmental activities and action steps can you take to continue to enhance your effectiveness in problem solving on the job?

**YOUR RESULTS:** You expressed a moderately high level of problem-analysis skills compared to others who have taken the In-Basket Simulation. You often noted the interrelationships between specific in-basket items, resolved potential scheduling conflicts, and linked logically related problems (e.g., potentially stolen software, inaccurate re-work performance data, customer service complaints, problem supervisors, etc.). As a result, you may sometimes approach the identification and solution of organizational problems in a very structured and systematic manner. It would appear that you could continue to develop specific problem identification, data gathering and analysis, and decision-making skills.

Some developmental suggestions for continuing to improve your problem-analysis skills might include: 1) Develop greater awareness of internal

and external issues peripheral to organizational problems; 2) Seek greater breadth of data by asking open-ended questions and developing key internal resources within the organization; 3) Look for relationships between problems--diagram problems to conceptualize contributing factors and viable solutions; 4) Seek alternative causes of problems and after reaching a tentative conclusion, consider a few other possible reasons for the problem; 5) Utilize cost-benefit analysis techniques to evaluate possible courses of action; 6) Write down ideas and conclusions for others to respond to; 7) Develop contingency plans for all courses of action; 8) Develop early warning measures that can indicate upcoming and potential problems; and 9) Utilize participative group problem-solving opportunities to more effectively analyze the causes of problems and maximize commitment to possible solutions.

Suggested Readings/Resources: Brown, N. & Keeley, S. (1997). *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall (ISBN: 0137581866); Newman, V. (1995). *Problem Solving for Results*. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company (ISBN: 0566075660); Mitroff, I. & Linstone, H. (1996). *The Unbounded Mind: Breaking the Chains of Traditional Business Thinking*. New York: Oxford University Press (ISBN: 0195102886); Chang, R. & Kelley, K. (1999). *Step-by-Step Problem Solving: A Practical Guide to Ensure Problems Get (and Stay) Solved*. Irvine, CA: Chang Associates. (ISBN: 0787950785); Browne, N. & Stuart, K. (1997). *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall (ISBN: 0137581866).

Suggested Workshops: Critical Thinking, Management Concepts, Inc. [www.mgmtconcepts.com](http://www.mgmtconcepts.com); Six Thinking Hats, Viability Group, [www.viabilitygroup.com](http://www.viabilitygroup.com); Critical Thinking, American Management Association, [www.amanet.org](http://www.amanet.org)

## **SCALE 7: Judgment**

Judgment is defined as the ability to make decisions of high quality and consider alternative courses of action based upon available information and logical assumptions.

Individuals who scored high on this in-basket competency demonstrated the ability to correctly identify the highest quality decisions and actions given the information available to them. These individuals tended to take actions considered to be most appropriate given the specific information available to them in the in-basket exercise. For example, those with high scores tended to disapprove the vacation request of their assistant, meet with the Senior executive as requested instead of going to a strategic planning meeting scheduled at the same time, investigate possible ethical problems with vendors, or request specific personnel actions from selected staff members upon their immediate return from the management conference.

Individuals with lower scores may not have considered the full impact of their decisions and actions relevant to the information available to them. These individuals may have made decisions and took actions that might not have been entirely justified or appropriate in a particular situation. Individuals who scored low on this competency may need to carefully analyze the impact of their decisions and actions with respect to organizational planning, problem-solving, and decision-making processes.

### **INSIGHTS AND LEARNINGS**

You were challenged in the In-Basket simulation under time pressure to take specific actions and make decisions with ambiguous information available to you. Given the facts presented to you, certain actions and decisions were more desirable than others. Many of these actions and decisions may have multiple solutions that are acceptable, but the most effective managers tend to follow the ones included in the scoring key. It is important to keep in mind that your approach to this exercise (e.g., whether you prioritized the items) may have affected your actions and decisions. A low score suggests that the some of your actions and decisions could be challenged under time pressure.

The following questions will help you to further develop your Judgment and decision making skills on the job:

- 1) What does this exercise tell you about the quality of the decisions you make under time pressure?
- 2) What insights and learning about your Judgment skills did you get from this exercise? (For Example: Do you spend too much time analyzing information and not making decisions?)
- 3) Under which circumstances could you be more careful and analytical in your current position?
- 4) What developmental activities and action steps can you take to continue to enhance your effectiveness in making decisions and solving problems on the job?

**YOUR RESULTS:** You expressed a moderately high level of judgment in your planning, problem-solving, and decision making processes compared to others who have taken the In-Basket Simulation (if you were unable to complete the in-basket in the time allowed, or if you tackled the in-basket items in the order in which they appeared, this would contribute to a lower overall score on this particular competency). You frequently made decisions or took actions that were somewhat supported or justified given all the information available to you in the in-basket exercise. As a



result, you may often make decisions and take actions that are based on sufficient data, valid assumptions, and/or sound logic. It would appear that you would continue to benefit by consistently using a structured and systematic approach to your decision-making and problem-solving process.

Some developmental suggestions for improving your judgment/decision-making skills might include: 1) On large projects, establish pre-determined check points at which you can evaluate progress and consider whether a change in direction or approach is necessary; 2) Consider the impact of poor decisions and actions such as 'sunk costs' that can not be retrieved (e.g., money, resources, time) and act 'accordingly to minimize additional problems; 3) Ask yourself if you have all the relevant facts or information before making a decision; 4) Be alert as to whether assumptions and opinions are valid or if they should be checked; 5) Weigh the relative merits and risks of alternative solutions; 6) Strategically evaluate both short and long-term effects of plans and decisions; and 7) Whenever possible and appropriate, allow others to be involved in the planning, decision-making, and problem-solving process--they may be able to see things you can't and serve as a useful check of your own perceptions, assumptions and logic.

Suggested Readings/Resources: Mitroff, G. (1998). *Smart Thinking for Crazy Times: The Art of Solving the Right Problems*. San Francisco: Berrett-Kohler (ISBN: 1576750205); Hammond, J. (1998). Kepner, C. & Iikubo, H. (1996). *Managing Beyond the Ordinary: Using Collaboration to Solve Problems, Make Decisions, and Achieve Extraordinary Results*. New York: AMACOM; Mowen, J. (1993). *Judgment Calls: Making Good Decisions in a Risky World*. New York: Simon & Schuster; Dawson, R. (1992). *The Confident Decision Maker*. New York: William Morrow & Company; *Smart Choices: A Practical Guide to Make Better Decisions*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press (ISBN: 0875848575); Issacs, W. (1999). *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together: A Pioneering Approach to Communicating in Business and Life*. New York: Doubleday (ISBN: 0385479999).

Suggested Workshops: Problem Solving and Decision Making: Good Decisions, Good Solutions; American Management Association, [www.amanet.org](http://www.amanet.org); Problem Solving and Decision Making. Kepner Tregoe, <http://www.kepner-tregoe.com>; Critical Thinking, University of Pennsylvania, Wharton Executive Education, [www.wharton.upenn.edu/execed](http://www.wharton.upenn.edu/execed)

## **SCALE 8: DECISIVENESS**

Decisiveness is defined as the ability and willingness to make a decision, render Judgments, or take specific actions when required.

Individuals who scored high on this in-basket competency demonstrated the capacity to make rapid and numerous decisions when presented with the opportunity. These individuals actually made a greater number of decisions than those with lower scores on this competency. Individuals who scored lower tended to ask for more information before making a decision or taking action whether or not it was appropriate to do so.

A highly decisive individual generally is characterized as taking in a small to moderate amount of information and assimilating that data or information quickly. Such individuals tend to arrive at a single focused solution rather than multiple or prioritized solutions. Those with lower scores may consider a far greater range of information before coming up with multiple options or solutions. The actual requirements of your position will determine the overall effectiveness of your decision-making style.

### **INSIGHTS AND LEARNINGS**

Taking actions and making decisions were expected given the facts and requests of the In-Basket simulation. Although many situations and problems required additional information or further research, most In-Basket items had specific deadlines and responses that required numerous immediate actions and decisions. This competency did not evaluate the quality of the decisions (i.e., whether the decisions were the best ones for the given situation--this is measured in the Judgment competency). Low scores in this exercise are typically observed in respondents who wait to handle many situations upon their return from the scheduled business trip. Think about how rapidly you tend to make decisions, particularly under time pressure and in the face of ambiguity.

The following questions will help you to further develop your decision making skills on the job:

- 1) What does this exercise tell you about your decision-making skills under time pressure?
- 2) Do you typically spend too much time analyzing and not making decisions in your current job? Can you make the tough decisions when required?
- 3) What insights and learning about your decision-making skills did you get from this exercise?
- 4) Under which circumstances could you be more decisive in your current position?
- 5) What developmental activities and action steps can you take to continue to enhance your effectiveness in making decisions on the job?

**YOUR RESULTS:** You expressed a moderately low level of decisiveness in your planning, problem-solving, and decision making processes compared to others who have taken the In-Basket Simulation (if you were unable to complete the in-basket in the time allowed, this could have contributed to a lower overall score on this particular competency). On the in-basket, you frequently hesitated to make some important decisions or take specific actions until you returned from your management conference, rather than, handle some of the critical situations and problems immediately before you left. As a result, you may be hesitant to make quick decisions or take immediate actions when it is necessary to do so. It would appear that you could benefit by periodically evaluating the potentially excessive use of your somewhat cautious style with respect to taking actions,

solving problems, and making decisions (e.g., collecting additional information).

Some developmental suggestions for improving your decision-making skills might include: 1) On large projects, establish pre-determined check points at which you can evaluate progress and consider whether a change in direction or approach is necessary; 2) Consider the impact of poor decisions and actions such as 'sunk costs' that can not be retrieved (e.g., money, resources, time) and act 'accordingly to minimize additional problems; 3) Ask yourself if you have all the relevant facts or information before making a decision; 4) Be alert as to whether assumptions and opinions are valid or if they should be checked; 5) Weigh the relative merits and risks of alternative solutions; 6) Strategically evaluate both short and long-term effects of plans and decisions; 7) Whenever possible and appropriate, allow others to be involved in the planning, decision-making, and problem-solving process; and 8) Considering too much detail or information of lesser value can prevent you from making timely decisions. Focus on the essential information and separate what you need from what you want by identifying the information that will make a real difference in your analysis.

Suggested Readings/Resources: Kepner, Charles H. and Iikubo, Hirotsugu (1996). *Managing Beyond the Ordinary: Using Collaboration to Solve Problems, Make Decisions, and Achieve Extraordinary Results*, New York: AMACOM; Mowen, John C. (1993). *Judgment Calls: Making Good Decisions in a Risky World.*, New York: Simon & Schuster; Dawson, R. (1992). *The Confident Decision Maker.*, New York: William Morrow & Company; Helfert, Erich A. (1996). *Techniques of Financial Analysis*, 9th edition, Chicago: Irwin Professional Publishers; Hammond, J. (1998). *Smart Choices: A Practical Guide to Making Better Decisions*. Boston: Harvard Business School (ISBN: 0875848575).

Suggested Workshops: Problem Solving and Decision Making: Good Decisions, Good Solutions; American Management Association, 800/262-9699, <http://www.amanet.org>; Problem Solving and Decision Making. Kepner Tregoe, <http://www.kepner-tregoe.com>

# DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Chris Sample (March 30, 2004)

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<b>IN-BASKET COMPETENCY</b>	
<b>DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:</b>	<b>TARGET DATES:</b>
<b>SUPPORT / RESOURCES REQUIRED:</b>	
<b>MEASURES OF SUCCESS:</b>	
<b>RESULTS / OUTCOMES:</b>	