MAINTAINING EXEMPLARY SERVICE STANDARDS IN A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

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Program Objectives

At the completion of the program, you will understand:

- The challenges of working virtually and how to maintain productivity
- The importance of communication as a contributor to enhanced productivity
- Why Approachability and Availability are both critical to maintain established service levels
- The importance of balancing empathy while maintaining performance standards

Polling Question #1:

I feel as productive working remotely as when I'm in the office?

- Yes
- No

The Virtual Workplace

Challenges around working virtually:

- Feeling isolated from your team members and clients
- The perceived lack in ease of approaching someone for something
- The uneasiness around communicating and meeting performance expectations

Polling Question #2:

I am able to maintain the same level of (client) service when working remotely as when I'm in the office?

- Yes
- No

Service Levels

What is client service?

- Assistance and advice provided by those within an organization to those within or outside the organization who buy or use its products or services

Why is it important?

- Without great client service whether internally or externally a company cannot succeed or survive

Why is it even more important right now?

- Amidst the pandemic and our virtual work environment, our clients both internally and externally need us more now than ever to succeed

Productivity Tools

Ways to remain connected and productive include:

- Check-ins with your manager, team, and clients
  - Can be scheduled routinely or ad hoc as necessary
- Jabber
  - Instant messaging is a quick and simple way to connect
- Outlook Email
- Phone Call
- WebEx
  - Virtual meetings and conference calls
- Virtual Desktop / Microsoft Remote Access
  - Work like you do in the office on your home computer or mobile device
- Mobile Device Access
  - Access your email, instant messaging, and desktop using your own technology

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Communication is key!

High Communication & High Action

Best Practices

- Know your Audience
  - Identify Key Stakeholders
- Keep it simple
  - Determine key takeaway from communication
  - Simplify communication in one or two sentences
- Be timely, but not hasty
  - Deliver information promptly and accurately
  - Tell people:
    - What you know
    - What you don't know
    - When you will know more
  - Always follow through

High Communication & High Action

Best Practices

- Eliminate variation
  - Consistency is key
    - Varying information can be confusing and result in loss of trust
    - Repeat and reinforce key messages and takeaways
    - Align your actions with your message
- Open and honest communication
  - Be visible and available
  - Builds credibility and commitment
  - Celebrate successes
  - Be open about challenges

The Importance of Empathy Currently

Extraordinary Times = Extraordinary Circumstances

- Majority working virtually

- Distractions at home:

  - Children out of school

  - Lack of daycare

  - Multiple people working virtually in the same house

  - Taking care of family members

- COVID-19 Fears

- What will a "new normal" look like?

Everyone Has Unique Personal Circumstances

Balancing Performance and Empathy

Manager Point of View

- Business must continue even if it is business as unusual
- Establish/maintain check-ins with employees to assess performance and provide feedback
- Maintain empathy and understanding of personal circumstances and provide flexibility when possible while maintaining satisfactory performance

Employee Point of View

- Goals still have to be met
- Be cognizant of personal flexibility needs while still meeting performance expectations
- Be transparent with your manager on personal circumstances requiring more flexibility and reach a common understanding/agreement on how to proceed
- Maintain availability as much as possible even when away from your work station

Approachability

and

Availability

Approachability?

Approachability

- Consciously breaking down perceived barriers, having appropriate body language, and using the right verbal communication and listening skills.
- A willingness to help or assist with a problem or issue

Make Yourself More Approachable

- Exercise self-awareness
- Be respectful
- Update your Jabber status/utilize Jabber mobile app
- Set expectations
- Be mindful of what you say and how that may be perceived
- Balance WebEx video usage
- Be mindful of body language
- Listen/be attentive
- Ask questions
- Provide feedback/encouragement/platform for ideas

Availability?

Availability

- Being accessible to your clients during normal working hours through a variety of media, i.e. email, phone, jabber, etc.
- Observe established service standards, if applicable
- Does not mean 24/7 availability

Virtual Communication Challenges

- Unable to "pop" into someone's office
- Loss of organic relationship building
- Awkward silences in meetings
- Body language
- Technical connections
- External distractions

Navigating the Approach

Build a relationship
- Use the new reality to break the ice
- Have empathy

Know your audience
- Busy season (Reg BI)
- Remove the fluff

Anticipate a delayed response
- No longer pop into an office
- Competing with external factors
- While someone may appear available, may have competing priorities

Choose your medium wisely
- Email
- Phone
- Jabber
- WebEx video

Navigating the Approach

Create an email strategy

- Email is competing with everything for attention
- Lengthy emails are overlooked
- Be clear, concise, actionable to gain attention
- Lead with the ask and provide a deadline
- Propose a solution if asking a question
- Make it scannable – bullets, numbers, bolding

Timing is key

- Late in day/Friday vs. early in day/early in week
- Firm communications

Navigating the Approach

Process, Process, Process

- Make sure your process/processes are documented
- Make sure Key Stakeholders are aware of key process steps
- If all else fails have a back–up plan, a work–around
- Remember, the client's needs come first

Time management

- Reduce fire drills and emergencies by planning ahead!

Remember...

"Treat others (internally and externally) how you would like to be treated"

Questions?

THANK YOU