



**LEADERSHIP &  
MANAGEMENT**  
**IN INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH**

ENHANCING PERSONAL AND  
PROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

**WILLIAM E. KNIGHT**



# **Leadership and Management in Institutional Research**



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William E. Knight  
Ball State University



**Association for  
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# PREFACE

## Why a Book on Leadership and Management for Institutional Research?

As I approach my 25-year mark as an institutional researcher, I am increasingly concerned about the unfulfilled potential of our field. Numerous studies (e.g., Gagliardi & Wellman, 2014; Jaschik & Lederman, 2014) have indicated that information is not being used as effectively as it could be by campus leaders. Scholarship about effectiveness within institutional research (IR) (e.g., Delaney, 2000, 2001; Knight 2010b; Knight, Volkwein, Voorhees, & Leimer, 2010; Leimer, 2011a; Leimer & Terkla, 2009; Lohmann, 1998; Swing, 2009) has also suggested that this unfulfilled potential is something we can influence if we change how we work. During decades of discussions with colleagues, I have heard time and time again about the need for professional development—not in what Terenzini (1993) calls technical-analytical skills, but rather in what he terms issues and, especially, contextual knowledge and skills. Readers who are unfamiliar with Terenzini's work may refer to the summary below and are invited to read the Eimers, Ko, and Gardner (2012) chapter in the *Handbook of Institutional Research* (Howard, McLaughlin, & Knight, 2012), or Terenzini's original (1993) article. Although I think (and I hope that you do, too) that our national, regional, and state IR professional organizations and other sources provide outstanding education and training in technical-analytical knowledge and skills, noticeably lacking has been a place to go to improve practitioners' understanding of issues such as campus politics, interpersonal relations, understanding the perspectives of others, and leadership development. Thus, the purpose of this book is to help improve the effectiveness of your office as well as to improve your effectiveness as a leader.

**Here is a summary of Terenzini's concept:**

- Tier 1: Technical and Analytical Intelligence
  - Factual knowledge
  - Methodology skills
  - Understanding of computing and computing software
  
- Tier 2: Issues Intelligence
  - Understanding of key management issues in higher education such as faculty workload, enrollment management, instructional cost, and productivity
  - Understanding of how your institution functions, including the formal and informal decision-making process
  - Ability to work with and through others to accomplish goals
  
- Tier 3: Contextual Intelligence
  - Understanding of the culture of higher education; including your own institution's culture and history (e.g., personalities, political affiliations)
  - Understanding of how business is done at your institution (e.g., who are key players and what are the key processes at your institution)
  - Respect for the perspectives of all constituencies
  - Knowledge of the environment in which your college operates

*Source: Adapted from Eimers et al. (2012).*

Like any good institutional researcher, I wanted to make sure I explored this project through information rather than through anecdote. After much thinking, reading, and discussion, I drafted an IR Leadership Development Needs Analysis Survey and asked the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) to facilitate a peer review and send it to a sample of practitioners. AIR also graciously provided me with space at the 2012 Forum to facilitate focus groups to explore



these topics further. The results (Knight, 2012) indicated substantial interest in professional development within the areas of managing and developing staff, planning and resource management, understanding campus culture, and developing oneself as a leader. I was also gratified that Terenzini's 2012 AIR Forum keynote addresses (Terenzini, 2013), where he revisited his (1993) ideas, affirmed the need for this work. This quote from Terenzini sums up the purpose of this book very eloquently:

The danger in being preoccupied with technology is that institutional researchers will increasingly be seen as technicians, good at what they do, but having a limited perspective and understanding of important academic and administrative issues. If that happens, institutional researchers will become increasingly marginal to the making of decisions. The information institutional researchers provide will always be important, but they will be less and less likely to be present at the president's council meetings when alternative courses of action are evaluated, solutions negotiated, and decisions made. (Terenzini, 2013, pp. 139–140)

Let me share a little about my background and perspectives so that you can better understand me as I present this material. My entire career has been in institutions of higher education. I began my career in a group of university regional campuses that was very much like a community college system. I then worked at three public, residential, 15,000- to 25,000-student universities—two in the Midwest and one in the South. I have had the opportunity to branch out in my work from IR to assessment, accreditation, program review, and strategic planning. When I frame this book as being about leadership and management in IR, I really mean within the set of affiliated responsibilities that Leimer (2011b) and others have termed institutional effectiveness. I use the term “institutional research” in this book because it is being published by AIR and because I will always think of myself as an institutional researcher at the core. Along the way I have had the opportunity to serve as AIR's forum chair, president, and member of its board of directors. I edited the *Primer for Institutional Research* (Knight, 2003), and with Rich Howard and Gerry McLaughlin served as coeditor of the

*Handbook of Institutional Research* (Howard et al., 2012). I have had the opportunity to be a peer reviewer and team chair for the Higher Learning Commission. Currently, I direct Ball State University's IR Certificate Program. I hope these experiences have given me a sufficiently broad perspective to offer a book about leadership and management in IR. I have tried to be sensitive to differences in sectors and office responsibilities. Nevertheless, we are all a sum of our experiences, so any lack of applicability to certain circumstances is a limitation I acknowledge.

Permit me also to share my logic for the order of the presentation of the chapters. I share the opinion of Eimers et al. (2012) that IR tends to attract people who often exhibit introversion rather than extroversion, a sensing versus intuition approach to interpreting information, thinking rather than feeling for making decisions, and judging versus perceiving as personality traits. I believe this often limits our ability to fully take advantage of Terenzini's issues and contextual intelligences and ultimately limits our effectiveness in getting our information used in decision-making. The idea within the book is to progressively move the readers from what might be closer to their comfort zone to areas that are more of a stretch. With this in mind, we begin with a discussion of resource management topics such as budgeting, time management, meetings, and office effectiveness. We then have an extended discussion of emotional intelligence in the workplace. I placed this topic at this point in the book and make it the longest chapter because I believe it is the foundation of effective leadership, which is manifested by the remaining topics: managing and developing staff, understanding campus culture, and developing oneself as a leader.

The tone of this book is deliberately informal. It is designed to be a resource for institutional researchers rather than a work of scholarship, although references are cited and selected literature on topics such as emotional intelligence and leadership is dissected and applied to an IR perspective. While I hope it is useful to professionals who aspire to leadership roles in IR as well as graduate students (especially those in IR certificate programs), it is specifically designed to benefit those who are new to the role of director of IR (or similar title). This book is designed to be rooted in strong content without being overly theoretical and to

stress application without (hopefully) being a series of war stories. I have tried to obscure some of the details in many of the examples to preserve confidentiality. To friends and colleagues who may recognize themselves in any of the chapters, I hope you will find inclusion in a work such as this that is designed to improve our profession to be a high compliment. I have ended each chapter with a section titled Examples for Further Consideration in an attempt to encourage readers to apply these ideas to their current situations. I provide sample solutions to these examples in Appendix 1. It is my hope that these ideas can be shared in more succinct and intentional ways than a book, perhaps through methods such as workshops, Webinars, and blogs.

I sincerely hope that you find this book to be helpful as you progress through your career. I invite your comments, questions, and criticism; address any correspondence to me at [wknight@bsu.edu](mailto:wknight@bsu.edu). If it prompts you to join discussions on these topics with your colleagues, then I will consider this work to have been a success.



# **PART I**

## Resource Management



# YOUR OFFICE BUDGET

## Understanding It and Shaping It to Achieve Your Goals

*Objective: This chapter will provide a basic overview of major categories of expenditure and general principles of budget management.*

While institutional researchers are typically very comfortable with numbers, understanding the office budget and using it as a tool to accomplish your purposes may be a mystery to those who are new to or who aspire to an IR leadership role. Higher education has its own unique approach to managing money that often requires some explanation (Vandament, 1989). This brief overview of budgeting in IR offices covers major categories of expenditure and general principles of budget management. It does not address revenue budgets, since it assumes that IR is budgeted from general institutional educational and general funds and does not raise money on its own. It is important to acknowledge that institutional size and circumstances affect budget processes. IR offices of one person, for example, may be included as part of other offices involving additional functions for budgeting purposes, and the institutional researcher may have no responsibility for budget management (although the institutional researcher can provide recommendations). Also, it is important to recognize that department budgets are related to institutional and state budgets (especially for public institutions); priorities, funding methodologies, and cuts affect unit-level budgets, including those in IR.

The following good practices were adapted from Northern Illinois University's department chair handbook's tips for effective budget management (Northern Illinois University, 2009a):

- Familiarize yourself with campus budget-related Web sites.
- Learn your institution's financial vocabulary and the various financial statements. Attend any budget-related training necessary.
- Be aware of deadlines for budget reviews, for submission of budget plans for the following fiscal year, cut-off dates for purchases, course fee requests, and so on.
- Use the previous fiscal year's expenses for different categories as a guide to develop budget plans for the coming fiscal year.
- Develop a monthly routine for working closely with office staff to print and review budget reports to ensure charges have been recorded accurately, and identify any discrepancies.
- Check with your division's budget director on resolving any identified discrepancies in the budget reports.
- Monitor the budget transactions closely during the last quarter of the fiscal year and estimate expenses for the rest of the fiscal year so you can ensure the allocated budget is sufficient to cover all charges.
- Inform your supervisor and your division's budget director if you foresee any problems with the budget, and address the problems proactively before the close of the fiscal year.
- Establish departmental guidelines on the use of funds for intended purposes, and be transparent about the process with your faculty and staff. For example, clarify in a department meeting at the beginning of the academic year the amount budgeted for travel funds for that year and the guidelines for requesting the use of those travel funds for purposes such as conference presentation, work-related training, and so on.
- Network with fellow leaders and share tips on budget planning, handling discrepancies, and explaining budget-related information to faculty and staff.



In addition to a division (e.g., Academic Affairs) budget director, your administrative assistant, if you have one, is an important person who can help you understand and use your budget effectively. This person will usually understand what rules apply and who to contact when you have questions. Two concerns you may have immediately are whether you can shift money between categories, and if your budget carries forward or if money is scooped at the end of the year. When I moved between institutions I had to relearn some budget management practices. For example, funds were carried over to the next year at one of my previous universities, but do not at my current institution: the provost takes away whatever is not spent by June 30 each year. Therefore, there is an incentive to spend everything we can by that date. This can lead to the poor practice of funding unnecessary expenses just so that the office does not return money. When I arrived at my current university I also learned that while a substantial amount of the budget went unspent the year before I arrived, there was insufficient funding for travel. Whereas at my previous university it was very easy to move money from other budget lines to travel, I had to speak to several people at my current university to accomplish the same task.

Table 1.1 is a representation of the Ball State University Office of Institutional Effectiveness budget as of June 30, 2011. Notice that there are three primary categories: (1) salaries and benefits, (2) supplies and equipment, and (3) travel. At my previous university, the latter two categories were lumped together as operating budget. The rows contain the individual budget expenses (sometimes referred to as budget lines) while the columns show the amount budgeted at the beginning of the year, the amount actually spent, and any funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year.

So what does the table tell us? First, we need to understand some of the budget lines. Why does an IR office budget salaries for faculty members? Why is the balance for staff benefits in the negative? Why are all of the balances for supplies and equipment in the negative? It turns out that the office has a pool of about \$55,000 to award to faculty members for work on assessment projects in the summer. That explains the line “Faculty.” Second, like many universities, Ball State budgets staff

Table 1.1.

*Ball State University Office of Institutional Effectiveness Budget as of June 30, 2011*

<b>Description</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Remaining</b>
<b>Salaries and Benefits</b>			
Faculty	\$55,054	\$52,394	\$2,660
Professional staff	\$363,972	\$363,972	\$0
Staff personnel	\$43,592	\$43,592	\$0
Graduate assistants	\$0	\$0	\$0
Student employees	\$16,780	\$12,493	\$4,287
Staff benefits	\$0	\$2,758	-\$2,758
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$479,398</b>	<b>\$475,209</b>	<b>\$4,189</b>
<b>Supplies and Equipment</b>			
Supplies	\$72,904	\$22,422	\$50,482
Purchasing card	\$0	\$4,166	-\$4,166
Photocopier	\$0	\$4,992	-\$4,992
Printing	\$0	\$324	-\$324
Postage	\$0	\$3,350	-\$3,350
Long distance telephone	\$0	\$352	-\$352
Telephone rental	\$0	\$4,684	-\$4,684
Equipment	\$0	\$1,669	-\$1,669
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$72,904</b>	<b>\$41,959</b>	<b>\$30,945</b>
<b>Travel</b>			
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$8,000</b>	<b>\$6,797</b>	<b>\$1,203</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$560,302</b>	<b>\$523,965</b>	<b>\$36,337</b>

benefits centrally; they show at the end of the year, but the individual offices do not budget for them. Finally, the office put all of its supplies and equipment money into the supplies category and did not allocate money into other expense lines in this category for two reasons: it was not clear how the funds would be spent at the beginning of the year, and it is acceptable to do this as long as the entire category is in the positive at the end of the year.

Now that we understand a few things, we can make some observations. First, there is not much you can do to affect most of your budget, since the bulk is in salaries and benefits. Other than recommending raises for the next year, you cannot move this money around. You cannot, for example, assume that you will not spend all of your faculty summer assessment grant money or your student employee money and allocate it to travel; at Ball State, for example, I do not have that authority. The \$4,200 or so in the salary and budget category that was not spent was scooped up by the provost. The photocopier, postage, and telephone rental charges may seem rather large. They did to me when I joined the office. I learned from our administrative assistant that, given our university's policies, we were not going to be able to spend less on telephone rental and the photocopier. The postage charge is a one-time event that would not be in our subsequent budgets.

Given an excess of funds, my steps to make our 2011–2012 budget work more effectively for us were pretty easy. The most important thing I did was to recognize the need to move substantially more into travel to support professional development. As noted earlier, after speaking with several people we accomplished this. Our travel budget is now up to more than \$20,000; for the first time ever, anyone in the office who has an interest in attending national and state conferences is able to do so. This change was also made easier because I had a supervisor who valued professional development; I did not need to convince anyone of the value of moving around a large amount of money for this purpose. We also fully loaded our 2011–2012 supplies and equipment lines so that our budget more closely matched how we actually spent the money. Since we are now being tougher on our review of faculty summer assessment grant proposals and not spending all of this budget line,

I am hoping to be able to move money in the future to a transfer-out line to support assessment awards for those units doing really well with assessment or making the most progress. I do not know if our budget policies will allow us to do this, however. As of June 30, 2012, we had spent within \$5,000 of our budget before it was scooped up.

The far more difficult task, which most offices face and that I faced previously, is making the case for increasing a budget. This is particularly difficult when higher education budgets are generally highly strained, and IR is competing with both academic programs and other administrative offices for resources. Two pieces of tangible advice I can offer are these: benchmark your budget against those of other IR offices at peer universities (both for positions and operating expenses), and do your best to tie your budget increase request to your institution's strategic plan. If you are approaching an accreditation visit, this second tactic might be particularly good. The only way I know of collecting budget information from other offices is simply to contact them and request it since budget details are often not made public. Having your need for increased resources affirmed by external peers as part of an administrative program review process, if your institution has one, or in a consultation visit can also carry weight with decision-makers.

Breaking expenditures into phases when purchases cannot be made in one fiscal year is another way to stretch resources. Another idea I have as a strategy for stretching a budget is resource sharing. For example, you might be able to persuade your president or chief academic officer to use their office funds for the occasional administration of commercially available surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement or the Educational Testing Service Major Field Tests. At a previous university, we were able to get the Department of Computer Science to spend some of its graduate assistant funding in our office in order to give students practical experience. I have seen faculty research associates or faculty assessment associates used effectively (often with a faculty member contributing service as the equivalent of one class taught), but it is important to negotiate and monitor this situation carefully to ensure that it is win-win and not overly burdensome to either the IR office or the academic department. Another strategy is to advocate for

increasing the IR budget during the institutional accreditation process in order to demonstrate the college's or university's commitment to being data-driven or evidence-based.

It is important to acknowledge that the availability of resources and budget management strategies vary substantially by size of type of office and size and type of institution. While I have tried to provide examples in this chapter based on my own experience (at public universities) that apply to some extent to all IR offices, they may be more or less applicable given the reader's circumstances.

### **Examples for Further Consideration**

1. It is halfway through the year, and you are worried that travel will be frozen before the AIR conference in May. What can you do now before a freeze is announced? What can you do after a freeze is announced?
2. You would like to move a portion of the summer assessment grant funding your office has for faculty member assessment activities to a fund that recognizes exemplary assessment activities through one-time \$1,000 operating budget enhancements, but your division budget director points out that your existing funding is in a summer faculty salary line. What you have in mind is to move funding to operating budgets, and university policy does not permit such a move. Who can you enlist to help you request an exception to this policy, and how would you argue that this is an appropriate use for these funds?
3. Your already limited operating budget is scooped at the end of each fiscal year. You must fund hardware and software purchases from your operating budget; there is no centralized funding for this purpose. You would like to save up funds across years to make a major purchase in this area so that all staff members have the same versions of hardware and software. What steps can you take to try to accomplish this?

*See Appendix 1 for sample solutions.*



# GOALS AND PRIORITIES, TIME MANAGEMENT, AND EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

*Objective: This chapter will provide advice about establishing and achieving goals and priorities; about time management, including e-mail management; and about effective meetings.*

## Goals and Priorities

In addition to staff, budget, equipment, and space, time is also an important resource that must be managed to achieve effectiveness. In fact, I would argue that it is probably the most important resource after staff. Being able to rise above the moment-to-moment press of work and focus on what matters most to campus leaders is something that separates IR offices that are just another administrative function that consumes scarce resources from IR offices that make a real difference. While adequate staff size and leadership support are crucial for IR effectiveness, we can and must also be strategic about our goals and priorities and how we manage our time.

I find it useful to think about how to maintain a balance between institutional, department, project, and personal goals. If you are a staff member in an IR office (or if you are a one-person office), you might be tempted to think that you should simply focus on your current project, letting someone else worry about the institution and office, and relegate work toward personal goals to time outside the office. While this approach seems reasonable, especially when you are very busy, it will ultimately not serve you, your office, or your institution well. Actively

working to maintain a balance between the projects at hand, the goals of the office, the goals of the institution, and your personal goals (and, while we are at it, your supervisor's goals and to some extent the goals of other departments) helps you to ensure that you are doing work that matters, that is interesting, and about which you are passionate. The most important reason for periodic meetings with your supervisor and for staff meetings with those you supervise is this: goal alignment. The question that I ask my supervisor during our monthly meetings is, What else is going on at the university that I need to know about? At staff meetings I always try to understand what my colleagues are doing so that I can make sure their work is aligned to our larger goals and to let them know what I am aware of in the larger picture that may affect our work.

In March 2012 I attended a professional development session on supporting the goals of the next level of management presented by Michelle Sybesma of Professional Skills Consulting ([www.skillsconsulting.com](http://www.skillsconsulting.com)). Figure 1.1 reproduces a graphic from that session that I found helpful. The Balanced Goal Axis is a tool to help us develop diversified goals that effectively balance the strategic and the tactical, the organizational and the personal. Effective goals should incorporate elements of all of these; those goals that are too far in any direction or too far toward the corners of the graphic, however, are less effective. Looking back at my career to date I can see, with the help of this tool, that there have been times where I have been dangerously close to burnout and difficulty at home as a result of too much focus on organizational goals and too little focus on personal goals. I can also see the reverse—times where I was so wrapped up in things such as leadership in professional organizations and other commitments that I was not devoting enough attention to priorities at my institution. The Balanced Goal Axis allows me to realize that I have worked at institutions where colleagues were so far into the personal-strategic quadrant that they were more interested in impressing leadership and gaining prestige than they were in solving problems.

Other suggestions for achieving balanced goals are to periodically write out project and personal goals and review these along with



Figure 1.1.  
*The Balanced Goal Axis*



Source: Reprinted from Sybesma (2012), with permission from Michelle Sybesma.

institutional and department goals. Effective goals statements should be specific, measurable, attainable/achievable, relevant, and time-bound (sometimes abbreviated SMART). Having a departmental goal ambassador (ideally not the supervisor) who keeps everybody in the office focused on the office goals is another idea—assuming, of course, that the office has more than one person in it. Here are ways that will ensure you do *not* achieve your goals (based on Sybesma, 2012):

- Stay only at the 60,000-foot, 6,000-foot, or 6-foot views.
- Keep your goals to yourself.
- Bump meetings with supervisors and staff meetings because something else is more important.

- Wait until 75% of the time has passed before measuring progress toward goals.
- Fail to assign ownership to specific goals.
- Make sure that some of the people involved don't understand the meaning behind the goals.
- Pretend that you will have 20–25 days per month, that nothing else will come up, and you can work on the goals without disruption.

## **Time Management**

Crandell (2005) provides time management tips for department chairs that can work well for institutional researchers. First is organizing the workplace. Eliminating clutter, managing workflow, gathering essential tools, and setting up an effective filing system, while representing more work at the beginning, can greatly improve efficiency over the long term. Removing clutter and setting up an effective filing system matters as least as much (maybe more) for your desktop computer, laptop, flash drive, file server, and so on, as for your physical office. I find it helpful to take the last hour of the day on Fridays to maintain project folders (both physical and electronic) and to clean up my desk and bring closure to e-mail discussions. We will revisit these ideas in the section on office effectiveness, but I will also say here that having a formal office priorities statement, a project tracking system such as a spreadsheet, and a master project calendar are lifesavers. Research (Knight, 2010b) and experience have convinced me that having IR hold on to “stuff” can save the institution in a pinch; the trick is not what you have, however, but what you can find when you need it. Some of the things I have learned to do over the years to help me find materials include making extensive use of folders and subfolders on my computer, saving lots of e-mails into folders by topic, copying some critical e-mails into documents on the computer that are named by topic, and keeping a “just in case” file folder in my desk. I generally save working documents for major projects for a semester after they are completed.

Crandell's (2005) second tip is managing workflow. The idea here is to try to act on each item as soon as it comes in and do one of four things

with it: do it, delegate it, defer it, or delete it. Deferring can be very tempting, and it is sometimes the only answer if you are in the middle of something time-critical or if the response involves other people, but I have found “just do it” to be the best approach wherever possible. People often tell me that they are pleasantly surprised that I have given them a response so quickly. While part of this is simply giving good customer service, it is also about getting the small stuff off the plate as quickly as possible. Our electronic tools can help us immensely with managing workflow. I usually put all of my projects into my online calendar to help keep me on track and give me a portable list. (It may also have the side benefit of making me look so busy that I am not scheduled into still more meetings.)

The last section of Crandell’s (2005) time management document involves planning. I will not discuss anything that overlaps with the ideas from Sybesma noted above; instead, I will focus on the idea of the priority-setting table (Table 1.2), which sorts tasks into quadrants based on urgency and importance. The toughest part of addressing

Table 1.2.  
*Setting Priorities*

		Low <----- Urgency -----> High	
High ----->	“Urgent and Important”	“Important and Not Urgent”	
	DO NOW.	DO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.	
Low <----- Importance	“Urgent and Not Important”	“Not Urgent and Not Important”	
	DELEGATE IF POSSIBLE OR DO AND GET IT OUT OF THE WAY QUICKLY.	DELEGATE IF YOU CAN, DEFER IF NECESSARY.	

Source: Based on Crandell (2005).

these priority quadrants is the “Important but Not Urgent” quadrant because these are the tasks that can make a difference but are difficult to get to. Crandell notes that Covey (1990, p. 154) refers to these as “the heart of effective management,” and “all those things we know we need to do, but seldom get around to doing because they aren’t urgent.”

It is imperative that a discussion of time management include a section on dealing with e-mail. I know that many of us find ourselves saying that we could easily work at least 40 hours per week doing nothing but writing and (especially) answering e-mails. Crandell (2005) makes a point of suggesting that you check e-mail only once or twice per day at defined times and ignore it or turn it off otherwise. This might be one difference between being a department chair and being an institutional researcher, as I just do not think we have that freedom. Jones (2012) provides additional ideas about dealing with e-mail in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article. Here is my paraphrasing of his suggestions:

### **“You’ve Got Mail and Better Things to Do”**

- Have an e-mail strategy that is acceptable to your supervisor and that works for your colleagues; explain it and stick to it. Ask your supervisor and your principal clients what they consider to be an acceptable response time to e-mails: same week, same day, same hour? If you are the director of the office, explain your strategy to your colleagues and work out a mechanism for urgent communications. A reviewer of a draft of this book made an excellent point that I want to include here: Faculty members often have a much longer time horizon than do administrators, especially those at the senior level. I have occasionally received e-mail messages from faculty members about something that happened several years ago. I have also received responses from faculty members to e-mail messages that I sent that came in long after the deadline I requested.
- Turn off the “new message” notifications on your computer, smartphone, and so on, as long as the response from your supervisor about acceptable response times to e-mail is not

“Immediately!” This takes discipline. I admit that I cannot bring myself to do this.

- Use rules and filters to process your e-mail. For example, filter messages that you care about but that are not urgent from Listservs, vendors, and so on, to automatically go to folders that you can review when you have time. A related strategy is to use topical folders within your e-mail system and the reminder and priority features in your online calendar. Very few of us (myself included) use integrated e-mail/calendar/task management tools such as Outlook to their full potential. Your IT department might be able to provide some workshops or online tutorials that can help you to get more out of these tools.
- Realize that few e-mails need a handcrafted response. Jones talks about using text-expansion software for generating duplicate responses. I have not used such software myself, but I will say that in situations where I have found myself giving the same message to several people, I write it out the first time, save it to a Word document, then copy and paste, personalizing as necessary.

Kafka (2012) wrote a related article titled “Academics Unplugged” in the same edition of the *Chronicle*. He discusses the tactic of having planned timeout periods for escaping e-mail. If timeouts are not certain parts of the workday, they might be during evening time with the family, all or part of the weekend, or during times when you are participating in certain activities about which you are passionate—perhaps certain hobbies or spiritual activities. The article cites a college president who went so far as to ask that his e-mail password be changed to something he did not know when he was on vacation. Whatever your strategy is for unplugging, it should be a planned strategy that fits with your expectations at work, your personality, and your understanding with your family.

Smith (2012a, 2012b) provides two lists of things to do at the start and end of every workday in order to increase productivity that I summarize as follows:

## **14 Things You Should Do at the Start of Every Work Day**

- “Arrive on time.”
- “Take a deep breath.” Slow down. Be in the moment. Leave home at home.
- “Take five.” Establish your agenda for the day and do not let it get hijacked by others.
- “Start each day with a clean slate.”
- “Don’t be moody.” Practice emotional intelligence.
- “Organize your day.” Make or review your to-do list.
- “Be present.” Connect and communicate with those around you.
- “Check in with your colleagues.”
- “Ensure that your workspace is organized.”
- “Don’t be distracted by your inbox.”
- “Listen to your voice mail.”
- “Place important calls and send urgent e-mails.”
- “Take advantage of your cleared head.” If morning is your most productive time, then use it for tasks requiring creativity and attention to detail.
- “Plan a mid-morning break.” Assess where you are for the day and reestablish momentum. (Smith, 2012a)

## **14 Things You Should Do at the End of Every Work Day**

- “Evaluate your to-do list.”
- “Review your schedule for the next day.”
- “Check in with your boss and colleagues.”
- “Tidy up.”
- “Complete nonpeak hour work.” Follow up on tasks that do not require person-to-person, phone, or e-mail contact.
- “Get closure.” Tie up loose ends.
- “Make a new to-do list.”

- “Reflect on the day.”
- “Say good bye.” It is important to acknowledge your coworkers as they leave for the day.
- “Leave on a positive note.” Find something positive as a way to end the day.
- “Be green.” Turn off lights, computer, and so on.
- “Disconnect” from phone and e-mail.
- “Leave your stress at the door.” Prepare to be present for your family.
- “Go home.” You do not always have to be the last one in the office. (Smith, 2012b)

While most of these suggestions are very straightforward, I would like to acknowledge that many of them reinforce ideas stated earlier in this chapter or in other chapters (e.g., the concept of emotional intelligence). I would also like to note here that it is important to know your own biological clock and work patterns. If you are not a morning person, do not schedule time for heavy-duty thinking and attention to detail first thing in the day.

I would like to focus the last part of this section on the IR director specifically. While everything above applies to the IR director as well, there are also some additional considerations for the person in this position. Several of these ideas are borrowed from Chu’s (2006) primer for department chairs. First, the director’s time is less predictable than that of other staff members. That is why it is important to always try to build some slack time into your calendar for the unexpected. Be aware that your agenda for the day may get completely taken over despite your good intentions.

Second, decide what you can delegate. It may be easier to “just do it” yourself if the task is one time and complex; but if it is going to turn into an ongoing task it may be best to have one or more staff members work on it with you the first time and then turn it over to them.

Third, try to protect your staff's time as zealously as you do your own; they will appreciate it and pay you back in increased productivity.

Fourth, know your institution's policies and your supervisor's expectations about working from home and flex time. These options might apply to your colleagues as well, but may be particularly important if you as the director sometimes need to work within nontraditional time periods for priority projects.

Fifth, you, your family, your supervisor, and your colleagues need to decide the extent to which you are going to work evenings and weekends. There is no one right answer, but make your answer one that you consciously decide on and not simply get pushed into.

Finally, get out of the office. Temper the need to complete projects and interact with colleagues with the need to be visible and engaged on campus (Voorhees & Hinds, 2012). We revisit this last concept in Chapter 4.

## **Effective Meetings**

A source of frustration for many institutional researchers and employees in organizations of all types (and a frequent topic of *Dilbert* cartoons) are ineffective meetings. I've sometimes found myself in poorly run meetings that run on and on with seemingly no point, and thought about the salaries of everyone in the room and what an inefficient use of resources that meeting represented. Even when the point of a meeting is to give all staff members a chance to share their perspectives or to clear the air, the time can be used well through effective meeting management techniques. People can have very different opinions about the need for meetings, but everyone can recognize the difference between meetings that are well or poorly run.

Chan (2003, p. 2) identifies the following reasons for meetings:

1. To share information
2. To share ideas, perspectives, and experiences



3. To identify and solve problems
4. To do planning
5. To discuss issues and make decisions
6. To build community
7. To clear the air

Chan (2003, pp. 6–7) also identifies the following situations when a meeting is not needed:

1. Information can be relayed through other means.
2. Key people cannot be present.
3. You only want the group to rubber-stamp a decision.
4. People are distracted by other priorities.

This suggests that meetings are necessary when there is the need for active information exchange, decision-making, problem-solving, or interpersonal interaction, and not when communication is passive or one-sided, and when people are unavailable or not at their best. In IR, meetings are important for actively discussing priorities among information requests, sharing new developments at your institution that are complex and/or that require active listening, and building relationships among colleagues. The director or other person convening the meeting should keep in mind that IR staff members will likely have different opinions about meetings. Members of the Boomer generation, for example, may be more likely to enjoy face-to-face meetings simply for the purpose of interaction, while members of Generation X may want to cut through the discussion to learn just what the implications are for them. Millennial generation members may be more comfortable communicating through technology, and members of some cultural groups may expect to listen passively and contribute to the conversation only when asked to do so (Knight, 2010a).

Chan (2003, pp. 8–9) provides the following criteria for an effective meeting:

1. The meeting is necessary, has a clear purpose and objective, and addresses relevant, important topics.
2. The agenda can be covered in the time available.
3. Roles and responsibilities [of everyone present] are clear.
4. Key people are present, and everyone comes prepared.
5. The meeting starts and ends on time.
6. The meeting is held at an appropriate time and in a comfortable, private place.
7. Everyone participates, and people respect and are considerate of one another.
8. The meeting stays on track.
9. People are clear about the disposition of agenda items [and] action plans are developed. [Action plans are followed up after the meeting.]

This suggests to me the importance of agendas, time management, and the understanding of interpersonal dynamics. Given the similarity of the criteria for effective meetings and effective focus groups (see, for example, Billups, 2012), perhaps meetings would be more successful if they were run by institutional researchers! Chan's (2003) monograph also provides excellent practical advice about the roles and responsibilities of meeting participants (e.g., convener, facilitator, recorder, participants, support staff), the meeting planning process (e.g., developing the agenda and defining the roles or responsibilities of each person in the meeting), meeting facilitation, and following up (e.g., decision-making, consensus building). It also includes details about agenda building, seating arrangements, logistics, and meeting evaluation.

I would like to add some recommendations based on my own experience. First, make certain that you are using meetings to build community as well as to share information and make decisions. In our jobs, which often consist of sitting in front of a computer working with

data and information all day, we need to take advantage of all opportunities to get people interacting. Second, it is hard for any department head to not fall into the trap of assuming that staff members have the same information about what is going on in the institution. A way to avoid this trap is to make notes at the meetings you go to about implications for your office and then to quickly communicate those notes with your staff. Third, if it's a multiple-office meeting and there is a chance that people may not all know each other, it's worth taking a few moments to make introductions since some people may be hesitant to admit that they do not know everyone. Finally, I have participated in meetings that include time for people to check in concerning how they are feeling. This can be an effective strategy or something that is perceived as artificial and a waste of time, depending on the institutional culture. The person running the meeting needs to be sufficiently attuned to that culture and the meeting participants to know if this would be useful.

## **Examples for Further Consideration**

1. As the IR director you have determined that the IR analyst in your office has project goals only. You need to move her toward focusing more on making office, organizational, and personal goals, but it is clear that she does not understand why this is important for her to do. How can you help her?
2. You realize that since becoming the IR director you have been focusing exclusively on office and organizational goals. You know that in order to remain motivated and engaged, and to help with the office workload, you need to move your balance more toward personal and project goals, but you cannot seem to find the time to do this. What time management strategies can you use to help you to move your balance?
3. It seems that over the past few months your workday has become almost totally consumed by out-of-the-office meetings and e-mail. What can you do to trim back the number of meetings you are asked to attend, and what e-mail management techniques (either from this chapter or other resources) can you use to spend more time unplugged?

4. As the IR director you have been particularly busy over the past few months with several high-profile, time-consuming projects. As a consequence, you have cancelled the last several standing IR staff meetings and have e-mailed updates and met one on one with your staff colleagues only when you found it to be absolutely necessary. No one has complained. Is this an acceptable strategy? What might be lost by continuing to cancel staff meetings? What can you do differently in this situation?

*See Appendix 1 for sample solutions.*

# IMPROVING YOUR OFFICE'S EFFECTIVENESS

*Objective: This chapter will define effectiveness in IR, share tools for measuring effectiveness, and provide advice for measuring and improving effectiveness.*

## **Defining Effectiveness**

It seems ironic that the function within higher education that is charged with measuring and improving institutional effectiveness has had some degree of difficulty in defining and measuring its own effectiveness. Terenzini's (1993) conception of the three tiers of organizational intelligence is probably the most widely recognized framework for IR effectiveness. Knight, Moore, and Coperthwaite (1997) attempted to empirically examine Terenzini's framework; and Knight (2010b) pursued a qualitative approach to defining effectiveness by interviewing practitioners who were recognized by their peers as particularly effective. Delaney (2001) examined relationships with self-reported effectiveness. Chambers and Gerek (2007) approached understanding IR effectiveness through collecting information from institution presidents. Chambers and Gerek (2007) examined effectiveness through the activities in which institutional researchers engage. Presley (1990) and Volkwein, Liu, and Woodel (2012) discussed effectiveness relative to the structures and functions of IR offices. In all cases, IR effectiveness relates to having a positive tangible impact on decision-making, planning, and policy formation (Knight, 2010b).

## **Tools for Measuring Effectiveness**

Ronco, Archer, and Ryan (2012) suggest that important tools to improve effectiveness include periodic IR self-study, feedback from clients, and external feedback. Their suggested elements of a self-study include office mission, human resources, other office resources, workflow, information access and retrieval, distribution of reports and other products, and IR office assessment. Some of their self-study elements concerning human resources include sufficiency of staffing to meet demand, adequate mix of competencies to perform necessary work, cross-training, opportunities for professional development, and time for reflection and proactive action. Resource issues addressed in the self-study include software and hardware support; adequate operating budget; and assistance in areas such as web design, statistical and research methodology consultation, and document preparation. The information access and retrieval element of the self-study includes access to live/transactional data, access to archived data, the availability of data dictionary and other documentation, and processes for ensuring data reliability. Distribution of reports and other products involves process for verifying accuracy before distribution, process for distribution of reports and other products, the availability of information on the IR website, and process for backup and security of data files and reports.

Ronco et al. (2012) also discuss an analysis of cost effectiveness in IR. They suggest examining the amount of time spent on various tasks and the cost of that time in terms of salaries and, if applicable, operating and equipment costs. Determining the cost of so-called fishing expeditions, especially if they involve senior IR staff members' time, may demonstrate that such activities are not good uses of institution resources.

The authors also suggest that after each major IR project is completed, a staff member should collect feedback from the customer(s) and from the IR staff member(s) who did the work. Information about problems encountered and suggested improvements for future efforts can be entered into a project database. They also suggest that the IR staff members who did the work periodically revisit routine reports or projects to ensure that they are still providing useful information.

It is important to note that effectiveness should also be based on the success to which the office achieved its stated goals. As long as the goals and expectations for the IR office and director are clearly defined and measured, it is easy to demonstrate effectiveness.

Ronco et al. (2012) tell us that IR offices can obtain systematic feedback by including a URL to a simple feedback survey each time they deliver information to customers via e-mail. One example of such a feedback survey is available from the Ball State University Office of Institutional Effectiveness at [https://dc-viawest.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_e9Bk17XXIth8iwI&Brand=bsuoir](https://dc-viawest.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_e9Bk17XXIth8iwI&Brand=bsuoir). Results can be summarized periodically, and clients can be contacted to gain more-detailed information, if necessary. Customer feedback surveys that are more generic and that elicit general information from clients about IR staff members and their products and services might be used every few years as part of a formal IR self-study. An example of such a survey from Bowling Green State University is shown in Figure 3.1 (Knight, 2001). We used this survey twice, and found that the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, so it served more as an affirmation of quality than the basis for change.

Ronco et al. (2012) state that external review brings objectivity, fresh perspective, and an independent assurance of quality to an IR self-study. External review can include visits by colleagues at peer institutions and audits of IR processes (e.g., enrollment projections) and products (e.g., fact books) by colleagues (see McLaughlin, Howard, & McLaughlin, 2009). Ronco et al. (2012) explain that the final step in an IR self-study is an analysis of the gap between the current level of performance and the desired level. The plan for filling the gap may include increasing or reallocating IR, human, and other resources; and developing timelines and assignment of responsibilities.

Knight (2001) discussed how an IR office can measure its effectiveness and gain information for improvement as part of an administrative program review. In addition to the data collection tools described above, Knight (2001) provided examples of interview questions for the IR director or other person conducting the review to use with institutional

Figure 3.1.  
*Institutional Research Customer Survey*

## Office of Institutional Research Customer Survey

The Office of Institutional Research is interested in your feedback concerning the quality of the services we provide. We would appreciate your responses to this survey, the results of which will be used in our program review process. If you can not answer any item, please leave it blank. Please send the completed survey via campus mail to the Office of Institutional Research, 301 McFall Center. Please do not fold this form and please use a pencil or heavy black pen to fill it out. Thank you.

Strongly Agree									
Agree									
Neutral									
Disagree									
Strongly Disagree									
Information received from Institutional Research meets my needs .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information received from Institutional Research is dependable and accurate .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information is provided from Institutional Research in a timely manner .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information is provided from Institutional Research in a useful format .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information provided from Institutional Research is clear and understandable .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I plan to use the services of the Office of Institutional Research again .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would recommend the services of the Office of Institutional Research to others .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Office of Institutional Research has had a definite positive influence upon BGSU .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional Research staff members are courteous and friendly .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional Research staff members are available and approachable .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional Research staff members demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional Research staff members demonstrate creativity and initiative .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional Research staff members have the appropriate knowledge .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
and skills to meet my needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional Research staff members listen and make an effort to understand their .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
customers' needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional Research staff members show interest in receiving feedback and .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
improving performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I have used this product/service...

I am \_\_\_ with this product/service.

Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Seldom	Never		Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	... Information on IR web site .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	... Assisting with strategic planning activities .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	... Presentations by Institutional Research staff members at meetings .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	... Assisting with the design and administration of questionnaires .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	... Receiving information during telephone calls or walk in office visits. ....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	... Information support for committees when requested .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	... Information support for program review .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	... Summer Friday Factoid .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



leaders and an analysis of IR suppliers, inputs, processes, outputs, and customers (in this case for providing enrollment management support information) as shown in the following list and in Table 3.1.

- How satisfied are you with the technical competence of the IR staff?
- How satisfied are you with the professional integrity and ethics of the IR staff?
- How satisfied are you with the policy relevance of the work done by IR?
- How satisfied are you with how effectively the work done by IR is communicated?
- How satisfied are you with the productivity of IR?
- How satisfied are you with the initiative and creativity demonstrated by the IR staff?
- How satisfied are you with the impact IR has had on decision-making, planning, and operations at the institution?
- How satisfied are you with the willingness of IR to seek feedback and to continuously improve its activities?
- How satisfied are you with the interpersonal relations skills demonstrated by the IR staff?
- What do you believe are the strengths of the IR office?
- What are areas for improvement of the IR office?
- What could or should the IR office do differently?
- Is there any other feedback you would like to provide about the IR office?

## **Tools for Improving Effectiveness**

In addition to tools to help us measure our effectiveness, many institutional researchers have developed tools to directly improve our operational effectiveness. The first of these that I will share is a formal office priority statement that helps us make decisions about how to

Table 3.1.

*Analysis of Suppliers, Inputs, Processes, Outputs, and Customers for Providing Enrollment Management Support Information*

<b>Suppliers</b>	<b>Input</b>	<b>Processes</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Customers</b>
Registration and Records Info. Tech. Services	Institutional data concerning enrollment, graduation, GPAs, etc.	Production of the 15th day headcount enrollment and SCH reports	15th day enrollment and SCH reports	Enrollment management team, university leaders, general BGSU community
Registration and Records Info. Tech. Services	Institutional data concerning enrollment, graduation, GPAs, etc.	Production each semester of the Student Flow Model and related tools (e.g., College Migration Report)	Student Flow Model and related tools (Web-based)	Enrollment management team, university leaders, general BGSU community
Managers of special programs Registration and Records Info. Tech. Services	Lists of program participants, institutional data concerning enrollment, graduation, GPAs, etc.	Tracking of special program students (e.g., learning communities)	Retention, graduation, etc. tracking	Managers of these programs, university leaders, general BGSU community
IR Office in consultation with other university offices	Questionnaire	Developing, administering, analyzing, and communicating the results of the First-Year Student Questionnaire	Report of the results of the questionnaire (Web-based)	Enrollment management team, university leaders, general BGSU community
Other university offices	Need for enrollment management support information, concerns about use of these tools	Consulting with customers concerning the use of these tools	Tools used and used appropriately	BGSU community IR Office

<b>Key Quality Characteristics</b>	<b>Key Quality Characteristics</b>	<b>Key Quality Characteristics</b>
Timeliness, accuracy, relevancy of data	Accuracy and efficiency	Relevant, accurate, timely
<b>Conditions for Success</b>	<b>Conditions for Success</b>	<b>Conditions for Success</b>
Human and technological resources, time, sense of priority from other offices	Human and technological resources, time, sense of priority from other offices	Customers must want to use information to support improvement, customers must have access to and choose to use the Web

*Source: Reprinted from Knight (2001, p. 4), with permission from the Association for Institutional Research.*

*Note: BGSU = Bowling Green State University; SCH = student credit hours.*

respond when we have multiple competing information requests (Box 3.2). In my last two jobs I proposed these to my supervisors (who shared them with others), changed them as indicated, then stuck to them.

Many offices also use online data or project request forms. The form for my current office is available at [https://bsuoir.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_0ceSXYofTfTTLbCI](https://bsuoir.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0ceSXYofTfTTLbCI). Typical information requested includes the name and e-mail address of the requestor, a description of the request, and the deadline. This form is set up as a Web survey that comes to me as an e-mail message, so I can assign the project to the appropriate staff member and ask clients follow-up questions if necessary. Since Ball State also has a data management policy that assigns data access levels (critical restricted, limited access, university internal, public) to all enterprise resource planning (ERP) data elements, the form also allows me to document the request to the appropriate university data steward (e.g., Registrar, director of Financial Aid, director of Human Resources).

### Box 3.1

#### *Ball State University Office of Institutional Effectiveness Priority Statement*

While it is our goal to meet all information requests effectively and in a timely manner, the realities of workload and staffing necessitate that the Office of Institutional Effectiveness must prioritize its activities. While we endeavor to match our priorities among ongoing projects and ad hoc requests to the university's mission, goals, and strategies, the following framework provides a more specific articulation of priorities:

1. High-value, ad hoc, immediate requests, such as a media request relayed through Marketing and Communications, a legislative request through Governmental Relations, or a request relayed through University Advancement related to possible donor contributions
2. Requests from the president's or provost's office or from members of the president's cabinet
3. Time-sensitive projects pertaining to the university at large, such as enrollment, information for annual unit strategic plan updates, university-wide student surveys, information to support disciplinary accreditation, persistence rates, first-year programs, etc.
4. Mandated external reporting that may affect university funding (e.g., Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System [IPEDS], Indiana Commission on Higher Education [ICHE])
5. Projects that are relevant to individual colleges, divisions, or departments
6. Mandated external reporting that may affect enrollment and/or the university's image (e.g., college guidebook publications)
7. Lower-value ad hoc requests, service, and advice to faculty and staff members and students on projects that pertain to individual endeavors (e.g., a sample of e-mail addresses for a survey)

A third tool the Ball State Office of Institutional Effectiveness uses is a master project calendar that tracks deadlines and milestones on projects such as the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and other external surveys. An office e-mail account allows staff members to access the calendar from our file server.

A fourth tool is a project tracking spreadsheet that lists names of the project clients and IR staff member(s) involved; due dates (deadlines), dates of first contact, dates of actual completion; notes about data sources, analyses; and so on. This is on our file server so that all staff members can access it. This spreadsheet makes the task of composing an office annual report much easier. It can also be used for tracking time to completion for certain tasks, helping colleagues to justify a salary increase or promotion, or helping to make the case for additional staffing.

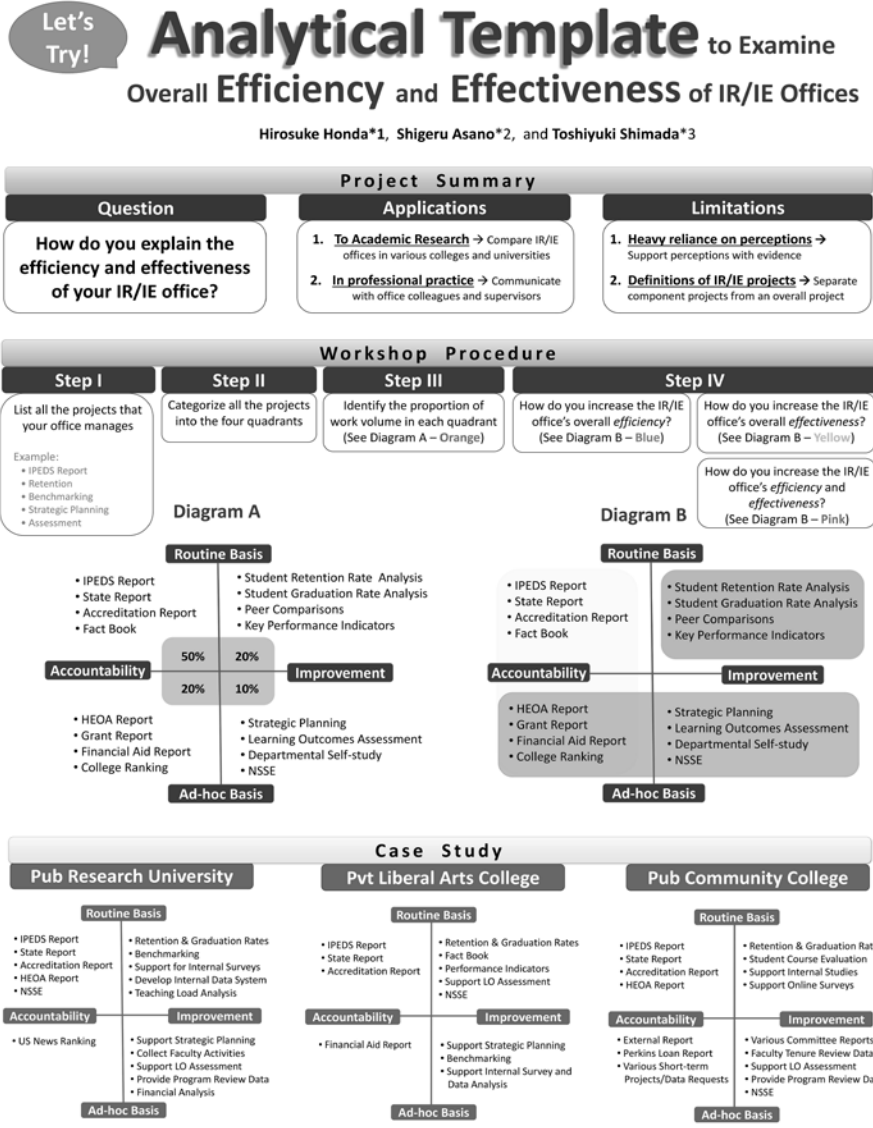
A fifth tool for improving office efficiency and effectiveness comes from Honda, Asano, and Shimada (2014). As shown below in Figure 3.2, the idea of the tool is to list all office tasks and categorize them along the dimensions of routine vs. ad hoc, and accountability vs. improvement, identifying the proportion of work done in each resulting quadrant. Following this analysis, the idea is to minimize or devote as little time and energy as possible to ad hoc accountability projects and to emphasize routine, improvement-based projects.

Another idea borrowed from colleagues is developing an IR strategic plan. The IR office at Indiana State University (McClintock & Ferguson, 2014) has done an excellent job of articulating mission and vision statements; carrying out an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as a scan of the external environment; and developing a roadmap to reach desired future directions that includes measurable benchmarks. The Indiana State University strategic planning materials are available at <http://irt2.indstate.edu/ir/index.cfm/main/about/stratplan>.

The final tool, perhaps more for communication and visibility than for effectiveness, is an office newsletter. Several issues of the

Figure 3.2.

*Analytical Template to Examine the Overall Effectiveness and Efficiency of Institutional Research / Institutional Effectiveness Offices*



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one our office produces each fall and spring semester are available at <http://cms.bsu.edu/About/AdministrativeOffices/Effectiveness/IEINsightsNewsletter.aspx>. This newsletter includes results of major surveys and studies as headlines, in addition to brief information about projects under way and new information available online. Each issue also includes the e-mail addresses and phone numbers of office staff members. Expect that if you produce a newsletter it will likely lead to more requests.

Finally, I would like to share some ideas rather than tools. At my last two offices we had coffee mugs created with the university logo and our office name. In addition to our staff members and interns, we give the mugs, filled with chocolates, to people on campus who fulfill special requests for us, such as helping us get access to data or serving on the university's Institutional Effectiveness Committee. In my last job we tried to increase office visibility by sending e-mail messages with brief bits of information generated by our office to all faculty and staff members on Fridays in the summer semester (the Friday Factoids). After a few years we developed a Friday Factoids trivia contest, with the answers posted on our Web page. The winner received the coffee cup and chocolates. Participation was surprisingly high, and participants included both faculty and staff members. The Friday Factoids contests actually generated more positive feedback from clients across campus than anything else we did.

As one of the reviewers of a draft of this book pointed out, it is important to remember the intangible human factor within a consideration of effectiveness that implicitly assumes that if tools for increasing effectiveness are used, then productivity will increase. IR staff members have a variety of factors affecting their lives that also affect office and personal effectiveness. Effectiveness is ultimately about people and relationships as well as it is about structures and processes.

## Examples for Further Consideration

1. You have just taken a new job as an IR director and have indicated that you would like to bring in consultants to do a review of the office. Your staff colleagues have expressed concerns that the findings might result in needing to do things differently, and that they might lose their jobs as a result. Your supervisor has indicated that the review visit is a good idea but that you should not expect a major infusion of new resources into the office as a result. How should you respond to your staff colleagues both before and after the visit? How should you respond to your supervisor if the major recommendations of the review are for additional staff and/or operating budget?
2. As a senior IR professional, you have been asked to serve on a review team for an IR office at another institution. You are asked what background information you would like to see in advance of the visit and with whom you would like to interact during the visit. What is your response?
3. What would an office priorities statement like the one in Box 3.1 look like for your office? Who should be involved in establishing it? Who should be involved in enforcing it?

*See Appendix 1 for sample solutions.*



# **PART II**

Emotional Intelligence



# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

## The Foundation of Effective Leadership

*Objective: This chapter will provide a conceptual overview of emotional intelligence in the workplace, and will apply concepts of personal competence and social competence to IR.*

As noted in this book's introduction, there is a deliberate order in the presentation of the chapters. We move from a very practical discussion of resource management topics, which might be familiar and comfortable to readers, to topics with which readers may be less familiar and comfortable: managing and developing staff, understanding campus culture, and developing oneself as a leader. (These latter topics were noted as critically important in the IR Leadership Development Needs Analysis Survey.) The linking element between these two portions of the book, perhaps conceived of as management and leadership, is the consideration of emotional intelligence in the IR workplace. This chapter precedes the final set of chapters because it provides the conceptual basis for them. In it I intersperse review of literature on emotional intelligence with practical examples from IR. It is the longest chapter and central within the book; I believe it is the most important chapter. Upon approaching a quarter century in IR within my career, I believe that improving emotional intelligence among institutional researchers—and thus improving management and development of staff, understanding campus culture, and leadership development—is the most important issue facing institutions of higher education that will allow them to fully embrace a culture of evidence-based decision-making.

Eimers et al. (2012, pp. 47–50) provide a background for the importance of emotional intelligence to institutional researchers that

is grounded in Terenzini's three tiers of organizational intelligence: technical/analytical, issues, and contextual. Readers who are unfamiliar with this work are invited to read the Eimers et al. (2012) chapter in the *Handbook of Institutional Research* or Terenzini's original (1993) article. The authors suggest that many institutional researchers find aspects of contextual intelligence such as working with and appreciating the perspectives of a wide set of colleagues across campus, understanding who key decision makers are in the institution, and grasping the intricacies of the decision making process, to be challenging. Eimers et al. (2012) suggest that institutional researchers may tend to exhibit or value introversion over extroversion, sensing over intuition, thinking over feeling, and judgment over perception. While these tendencies often help us to be effective at the technical-analytical level, they inhibit the achievement of our full potential.

Eimers et al. (2012) highlight relationships between these characteristics of institutional researchers and many of the precepts of the concept of emotional intelligence, particularly learning how to work with and through others and having respect for the perspectives of different constituencies. The authors point out that skills connected to emotional intelligence are not typically taught in graduate school and have not been overly stressed in conference sessions or other typical IR professional development opportunities, but that specialized training in emotional intelligence and similar areas might be provided at the campus level. They note, "[T]hose institutional research professionals who hone these skills are more likely to advance to leadership positions in institutional research or hold these leadership positions, in part, because of their talent in these higher-order, emotional intelligent aspects of their work" (Eimers et al., 2012, p. 50).

Goleman (2005) traces the initial concept of emotional intelligence to Gardner's research and writing about multiple intelligences, including interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence involves understanding how to work with other people and what motivates them. Intrapersonal intelligence concerns understanding and effectively acting on one's own feelings. Goleman (2005) provides an expanded definition of five components of emotional intelligence:

1. “Knowing one’s emotions. Self-awareness—recognizing a feeling as it happens—is the keystone of emotional intelligence.” The ability to monitor feelings from moment to moment is crucial to psychological insight and self-understanding. An inability to notice our true feelings leaves us at their mercy. People with greater certainty about their feelings are better pilots of their lives, having a surer sense of how they really feel about personal decisions from whom to marry to what jobs to take.
2. “Managing emotions. Handling feelings so they are appropriate is an ability that builds on self-awareness.” People who are poor in this ability are constantly battling feelings of distress, while those who excel in it can bounce back far more quickly from life’s setbacks and upsets.
3. “Motivating oneself. . . . [M]arshaling emotions in the service of a goal is essential for paying attention, for self-motivation and mastery, and for creativity.” Emotional self-control—delaying gratification and stifling impulsiveness—underlies accomplishment of every sort. And being able to get into the “flow” state enables outstanding performance of all kinds. People who have this skill tend to become more highly productive and effective in whatever they undertake.
4. “Recognizing emotions in others. Empathy, another ability that builds on self-awareness, is the fundamental ‘people skill.’” People who are more empathetic are attuned to the subtle social signals that indicate what others need or want. This makes them better at callings such as the caring professions, teaching, sales, and management.
5. “Handling relationships. The art of relationships is, in large part, skill in managing emotions in others.” These are the abilities that undergird popularity, leadership, and interpersonal effectiveness. People who excel in these skills do well on anything that relies on interacting smoothly with others; they are social stars. (Goleman, 2005, pp. 43–44)

Goleman (1998) explains that decades of research in the fields of psychology, psychobiology, neuroscience, management, and other disciplines has established emotional intelligence as a trait that is at least as important for success, and perhaps more important, than intelligence as measured by IQ. Unlike IQ, which is fixed after the teen years, emotional intelligence can be improved throughout people's lifetimes.

Employees are increasingly being evaluated according to how well they handle themselves and interact with each other, such as when they are being evaluated in an interview, when they work as a member of a group, when they supervise people, and when they are considered for reward and advancement. These personal and social competence skills, previously called character, personality, or soft skills, are increasingly being looked on as emotional intelligence. Unlike IQ, emotional intelligence can be improved. Most organizations' attempts to promote emotional intelligence have failed because they have been one-shot and one-size-fits-all activities. Goleman (1998) cites employer survey results that indicate that many employees lack motivation to keep learning and improving in their jobs, are unable to work cooperatively, lack sufficient self-discipline, and are unable to benefit from criticism. Most of the desirable traits listed for employees—speaking and listening effectively, adaptability, self-management, group effectiveness, and leadership potential—are aspects of emotional intelligence. Increasingly, expertise in a specific skill set gets people hired, but emotional intelligence determines performance.

Goleman (1998, p. 24) states, "An emotional competence is a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work." He suggests that emotional competence is built on a framework of personal and social competencies. He explains that the emotional intelligence capabilities are as follows:

- Independent. Each makes a unique contribution to job performance.
- Interdependent. Each draws to some extent on certain others, with many strong interactions.

- Hierarchical. The emotional intelligence capabilities build on one another. For example, self-awareness is crucial for self-regulation and empathy; self-regulation and self-awareness contribute to motivation; and those four capabilities are at work in social skills.
- Necessary, but not sufficient. Having an underlying emotional intelligence ability does not guarantee people will develop or display the associated competencies, such as collaboration or leadership. Factors such as the climate of an organization or a staff members' interest in their jobs will also determine whether the competence manifests itself.
- Generic. The general list is to some extent applicable to all jobs. However, different jobs make different competence demands.

Goleman (1998) cites research he has done indicating 67% of the abilities that distinguished the best performers in a wide variety of organizations were emotional competencies. IQ and expertise mattered only half as much as emotional competence.

Emotional competence is particularly central to leadership, a role whose essence is getting others to do their jobs more effectively. . . . A leader's strength or weakness in emotional competence can be measured in the gain or loss to the organization of the fullest talents of those they manage. (Goleman, 1998, p. 32)

Emotional competency also matters more the higher people go in their organizations. The clear deficit in lack of emotional competency is employee turnover, which results in the cost not just from finding replacements, but also from lower customer satisfaction and lower employee group efficiency. Goleman (1998) cites estimates that suggest the real cost in employee turnover is the equivalent of one full year of pay for that employee. There is strong evidence of the linkage between emotional competence and turnover. Although Goleman doesn't specifically discuss his research by examining careers in higher education or in IR, in my years in IR I have definitely seen numerous examples of the need for emotional intelligence among institutional

researchers and how emotional intelligence matters more than IQ for success, particularly as we progress in our careers into IR and campus leadership positions. Numerous specific examples follow in this chapter.

## **Goleman's Emotional Competence Framework**

Goleman's (1998, pp. 26–27) Emotional Competence Framework is divided into the dimensions of personal competence, which determines how we manage ourselves, and social competence, which determines how we handle relationships. Each dimension, in turn, comprises several components. Next I summarize each of the components of personal competence, interspersing them with ideas of how they apply to IR.

### **Personal Competence: Self-Awareness**

Personal competence includes self-awareness (knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions), which is made up of the following:

#### *Emotional Awareness: Recognizing One's Emotions and Their Effects*

- People with this competence
  - Know which emotions they are feeling and why;
  - Realize the links between their feelings and what they think, do, and say;
  - Recognize how their feelings affect their performance; and
  - Have a guiding awareness of their values and goals.

#### *Accurate Self-Assessment: Knowing One's Strengths and Limits*

- People with this competence are
  - Aware of their strengths and weaknesses;
  - Reflective, learning from experience;
  - Open to candid feedback, new perspectives, continuous learning, and self-development; and
  - Able to show a sense of humor and perspective about themselves.



## *Self-Confidence: A Strong Sense of One's Self-Worth and Capabilities*

- People with this competence
  - Present themselves with self-assurance, and have “presence”;
  - Can voice views that are unpopular and go out on a limb for what they believe is right; and
  - Are decisive, able to make sound decisions despite uncertainties and pressures.

Several years ago I was asked to present to the president's cabinet and deans the results of a study I had undertaken with data from the National Survey of Student Engagement. I had used a path analysis approach to demonstrate the effects of students' background characteristics and various kinds of involvement on self-reported gains. I was pretty proud of myself. I had a good sample size, was sure about my analyses, and had numerous data tables. As I was presenting this work, however, it became increasingly clear that something was wrong. I was getting blank looks from several members of the group and head-shaking from others. Finally, one of the deans, who had a psychology background, said that he was quite familiar with path analysis and that I was stretching my conclusions. The president then spoke up and said that he did not understand the methods, but was concerned mostly that the study did not seem to lead to an obvious course of action. What were they supposed to do as a result of this study? At this point I started thinking about all the work I had put into this, and that it was exactly the kind of work that colleagues I respect were doing, so I replied to the president that I would think he would be interested in knowing what factors affect our students' learning and development and use this information for both improving how the university does its work, and demonstrating accountability. Emotions were beginning to run high in the room. They thanked me for what I had done, but it was clear that I was not supposed to continue, and that nothing would be done with this study. I went back to my office fuming that our leaders were so stupid. I suspect that others walked away from the meeting concerned that their IR director was not producing useful information.

I learned several lessons from this experience. First, I learned that when making presentations to leaders at this level not to concentrate at all on methods unless asked about them, and instead to focus on what the implications are for the audience. I also learned to enlist some contacts inside the group with whom I can preview what I plan to present to test how it will be received. Furthermore, I learned to tie my work to the issues at hand for the audience. How can this, for example, help our institution with our state performance funding or upcoming accreditation? More importantly, however, I think I learned that if audience reaction is not what I expected, to try to understand where they are coming from, to not lash out and make the situation worse, and to try to do some damage control on the fly. Goleman (2005) talks about what he calls an “amygdala hijacking” (p. 14). (The amygdala is a region deep in the brain that controls emotions and the flight-or-fight response to the environment. It is much older than the neocortex that controls rational thought and is inherited from our reptilian ancestors.) In situations such as the one described above, the amygdala can trigger strong emotional responses that are counterproductive to our goals and very difficult to control. The good news is that with a lot of practice and conscious thought, it is possible to recognize when our emotions grip us and to mediate their effects.

Goleman (1998, 2005) tells us that we are often so busy that we are preoccupied by our stream of thought and not attuned to the stream of emotion that is coursing through us at the same time. We have the time to reflect on our emotions and become aware of them only when they boil over or when our bodies send us signals such as headaches, lower back pain, ulcers, or, even more seriously, heart trouble or stroke.

Building some time into your schedule daily or at least weekly to have a time out, a time for reflection and introspection, is an important strategy for improving self-awareness and self-regulation. Some people have the self-discipline to compartmentalize everything out of their thoughts and simply sit and reflect. Others use meditation; a hobby; conversations with family, friends, and people in their professional networks; and something as simple as a long walk. Goleman (1998) discusses a formal onsite program called Odyssey that is designed to

help professionals think about where their lives are going and what they want to achieve (see [www.theodysseyprogram.org](http://www.theodysseyprogram.org)).

A few years ago I had the opportunity to complete the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI) from the Hay Group. ESCI is a written or Web-based 360-degree inventory developed by Boyatzis and Goleman that provides feedback about 12 emotional competencies (see <http://www.haygroup.com/leadershipandtalentondemand/ourproducts/> for details). I completed the inventory about myself and also asked my supervisor, people who report to me, clients at work, and colleagues at other universities to complete it. The ESCI is expensive, and its results must be interpreted by someone who is trained and certified. This was well beyond the normal personnel evaluation process at my university at the time, although I understand that such tools are regularly used at some institutions today. Although I believe the results were definitely worth the effort and expense, it is also possible to get such feedback from the same people without using the tool if they are able to be extremely honest and objective. I continue to use these results to help me be more aware of my strengths and weaknesses and to chart a path for improvement.

I once had a supervisor who I got along with tremendously well, but who was ultimately unsuccessful in her job. Although many of us believed that most of her decisions and ideas about how our area of the university needed to change were correct, she was absolutely unwilling or unable to acknowledge that she was pushing for too much too fast, that she was being perceived more and more negatively by many people on campus, that she needed to admit that she had made mistakes, and that she needed to change her ways. After an increasingly rocky first year in the job, we were informed that she had canceled all of her appointments and was off campus participating in executive coaching. I do not know if this was her decision or our president's, but I suspect it was the latter. I do not know if she perceived that the coaching helped her (which I suspect included the kind of feedback I discussed above), but unfortunately it was too late. About a month later she announced her resignation. The moral of this story is not only that our supervisors can suffer from lack of self-awareness just as we can, but also that

sometimes it comes too late, at least for their current jobs. A strong dose of self-awareness provided earlier probably could have saved her job. It has definitely helped me, and can help others.

Goleman (1998) tells us that self-confidence is essential for taking on tough challenges. Those without it can project helplessness and powerlessness to others and can develop crippling self-doubt. While extreme self-confidence can be presented as arrogance, the appropriate level of self-confidence, when informed by awareness of who we are and of the world around us, sets apart high performers and leaders. Those with informed self-confidence are better able to justify their actions and stay unfazed by opponents, and are not easily intimidated.

As with any job, the issue with self-confidence in IR is projecting it at the appropriate level. Too much can make you appear uncaring and unhelpful to clients, unapproachable and difficult to work with to colleagues, and insubordinate to supervisors. The reverse of overconfidence, of course, is perceived incompetence, appearing so unsure of yourself that people think you do not know what you are doing. I have had colleagues in IR who know people they work with who suffer from a lack of confidence. We have discussed creating “short stretch” situations where these people are asked to take on a new activity but are given a great deal of support, ensuring the likelihood that they will be successful. The next situation requires a slightly greater stretch but is again accompanied by lots of support. The idea is that people reflect back on their successes and gain confidence. I have seen situations where this strategy definitely worked, but also, sadly, others where employees could not get beyond whatever it was in their past or their personalities that would not allow them to gain confidence. As far as I know, these individuals are still employed, but are in lower-level IR jobs, and both they and their supervisors have a sense of their unrealized potential.

I had a situation in a previous IR job several years ago when I was forced to exhibit strong self-confidence as a survival mechanism. I had a direct supervisor who, for reasons I never understood, occasionally bullied those around him. In meetings I would see him fire off a rapid series of questions, comments, and accusations that would reduce

people to silence or tears. In the middle of a meeting with several deans where I was laying out plans for assessing student learning, he suddenly stood up, stopped me in mid-sentence, and asked, “Isn’t it true that assessment is just a fad, that methods are imprecise, that all important learning outcomes cannot be manifested until years after students graduate?” and so on. Having seen this behavior several times, I knew what I had to do. I responded that the state legislature, accreditors, media, students, and students’ parents are no longer simply taking our word for it that the investment of ever-increasing tuition dollars resulted in the knowledge and skills needed for the workforce and for society, that our university had no greater resource than the perceived value of our degrees, and that ensuring the quality of student learning was our responsibility as educators. He paused for a second, sat down, and said we should get on with our work.

### **Personal Competence: Self-Regulation**

Personal competence includes self-regulation (managing one’s internal states, impulses, and resources), which is made up of the following:

#### *Self-Control: Keeping Disruptive Emotions and Impulses in Check*

- People with this competence
  - Manage their impulsive feelings and distressing emotions well;
  - Stay composed, positive, and unflappable even in trying moments; and
  - Think clearly and stay focused under pressure.

#### *Trustworthiness: Maintaining Standards of Honesty and Integrity*

- People with this competence
  - Act ethically and are above reproach;
  - Build trust through their reliability and authenticity;
  - Admit their own mistakes and confront unethical actions in others; and
  - Take tough, principled stands, even if those stands are unpopular.

### *Conscientiousness: Taking Responsibility for Personal Performance*

- People with this competence
  - Meet commitments and keep promises;
  - Hold themselves accountable for meeting their objectives; and
  - Are organized and careful in their work.

### *Adaptability: Flexibility in Handling Change*

- People with this competence
  - Seek out fresh ideas from a wide variety of sources;
  - Entertain original solutions to problems;
  - Generate new ideas; and
  - Take fresh perspectives and risks in their thinking.

### *Innovation: Being Comfortable with Novel Ideas, Approaches, and New Information*

- People with this competence
  - Smoothly handle multiple demands, shifting priorities, and constant change;
  - Adapt their responses and tactics to fit fluid circumstances; and
  - Are flexible in how they see events.

Goleman (1998, 2005) explains that the amygdala region of the brain excretes a set of stress hormones, chiefly cortisol, that affect blood flow, heart rate, and blood sugar; these hormones heighten the senses and dull the mind to prepare us for basic survival, the flight-or-fight scenario. He cites research showing that some people disperse the level of cortisol in their bodies more quickly after stressful incidents, allowing them to calm down and think more clearly, while others need much longer to recover. Even more interesting, there are self-regulatory biofeedback techniques that seem to allow people to train themselves to control impulses and react to stressful situations more effectively. Self-reflection, meditation, and guided imagery are all techniques that

can be learned and that enable us to take positive control over situations and our emotional reactions to them.

I am convinced that trustworthiness and reliability, also known as integrity and character, are absolutely essential for success in IR. Many years ago when I first participated in a program review of our office, I interviewed the president, provost, and vice president for finance and administration of the university about how well our office was meeting their needs. What stands out to me from that time was the response of the provost, who is now a prominent university president, about what was most important to him about IR. He told me it was trustworthiness and reliability. Years later when I interviewed several institutional researchers who were nominated by their colleagues as being particularly effective (Knight, 2010b), I constructed a model of IR effectiveness that included engagement, visibility, relationships, and trust. One participant noted, “Building good relationships is absolutely essential for people to take to heart what the data say” (quoted in Knight, 2010b, p. 6), while another explained that institutional researchers should understand that people get defensive when IR is viewed as an interloper. Clients are less likely to react negatively when they have been able to build trust and get people to realize that IR’s only agenda is to promote evidence-based decision-making. Another study participant commented on the fragility and precariousness of relationships across campus, noting that trust is easily lost and the work of building relationships is never finished.

Voorhees and Hinds (2012) write articulately on trust:

As trust grows across campus and institutional research professionals become established as unbiased providers of information, interpretation, and guidance, institutional researchers can capitalize on that trust to introduce new topics in campus conversations. The trust that produced these opportunities can be extended further by continuing to understand when and where, and to whom, such overtures will be most effective and where additional pressure will (or won’t) yield results. Reading the social and political mood of a campus is always more art than

science, but fortunately it's a trainable skill that develops over time through active participation in the life of an institution and the institutional researcher's commitment to be out of the office and out of the box. (Voorhees & Hinds, 2012, pp. 84–85)

Another component of Goleman's (1998) self-regulation concept is adaptability. Adaptability is related to trustworthiness and reliability because people need to be able to adapt to their circumstances to be able to remain effective and deliver the work that is needed. It seems to me that no one can survive in IR for very long without being adaptable. When I look back at my nearly 25 years in the field so far, I realize I have witnessed the implementation and maturation of assessment; drastic changes in state funding; the introduction of ERP computer systems; growth of business intelligence; introduction of new federal and state reporting requirements; substantial changes to regional and disciplinary accreditation; the widespread adoption of academic and administrative program review; enormous growth in college guidebooks, ratings, and rankings; an increased interest in measuring and acting on the results of student engagement; growing demands for demonstrating accountability; great interest in using information for managing enrollment; an increased desire to measure, compare, and improve instructional productivity; and growing concerns over employment being gainful and institutions being adrift.

At the institutional level, though, the need for adaptability in IR, while important, may not always be readily apparent. My own experience offers a cautionary tale. After more than a decade of relative consistency, an office where I worked experienced a turnover of most of the university's senior leadership, a drastic enrollment drop, an ERP implementation, a substantial decrease in state support, and important changes in the expectations of our office, all in a period of two to three years. While we in the office could claim that expectations of new leaders were not made clear, that we did not have adequate support during the ERP implementation, and that we were vastly understaffed, the reality is we were not quick enough to adapt to the changes around us, and this called our usefulness into question. I left the institution, and today the office continues to struggle to find its place.



Adaptability is crucial for a successful IR office or staff member, but it is not sufficient. I would argue that innovation is crucial for an IR office to meet its full potential, particularly when IR is bundled into an office of institutional effectiveness. Although innovation is critically important for academic research, and perhaps for teaching and service, most of us who have worked in colleges and universities know that innovation in academic research is seldom matched by innovation in the way that institutions are managed. Someone once told me that innovation is least likely within institutions in our country in which their principal members wear robes—or are academics, clergy, or the judiciary. Leveraging innovation is why it is absolutely vital for institutional researchers to go to conferences, to read widely within and beyond literature in higher education, and to get out of their offices and forge relationships on campus with whoever seems to be thinking outside the box. Voorhees and Hinds (2012) contend that, by virtue of the information that the IR office provides, “no other unit has the perspective that institutional research can bring to the table” (p. 79) in bridging campus culture boundaries to foster innovation.

### **Personal Competence: Motivation**

Finally, personal competence includes motivation (a set of emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals), which is made up of the following:

#### *Achievement Drive: Striving to Improve or Meet a Standard of Excellence*

- People with this competence
  - Are results-oriented, with a high drive to meet their objectives and standards;
  - Set challenging goals and take calculated risks;
  - Pursue information to reduce uncertainty and find ways to do better; and
  - Learn to improve their performance.

*Commitment: Aligning with the Goals of the Group or Organization*

- People with this competence
  - Readily make sacrifices to meet a larger organizational goal;
  - Find sense of purpose in the larger mission;
  - Use the group's core values in making decisions and clarifying choices; and
  - Actively seek out opportunities to fulfill the group's mission.

*Initiative: Readiness to Act on Opportunities*

- People with this competence
  - Are ready to seize opportunities;
  - Pursue goals beyond what's required or expected of them;
  - Cut through red tape and bend the rules when necessary to get the job done; and
  - Mobilize others through unusual, enterprising efforts.

*Optimism: Persistence in Pursuing Goals despite Obstacles and Setbacks*

- People with this competence
  - Persist in seeking goals despite obstacles and setbacks;
  - Operate from hope of success rather than fear of failure; and
  - See setbacks as due to manageable circumstances rather than a personal flaw.

Davenport, Harris, and Morison (2010) provide some ideas for motivating professionals that fall into the category of analysts. These include providing interesting and challenging work, maintaining variety in work assignments and a sense of personal progress, facilitating opportunities for meaningful work that makes meaningful contributions, optimizing autonomy, and surrounding analysts with smart and capable colleagues. In a general sense these ideas apply to IR staff members.

Millikin (2014, pp. 1–2) provides some ideas that are summarized in Table 4.1 about motivating IR staff in difficult financial times when financial incentives are difficult or impossible to provide. These ideas—

making staff feel needed and appreciated; asking them to help in specific, actionable ways; inspiring with the cause, not the organization; showing concern and communication; developing community; and showing staff how they make a difference—resonate well with the precepts of emotional intelligence.

When I think about motivation for a group of IR employees—or any employees, for that matter—I am nevertheless struck by the fact that different people are motivated differently. While external motivation is more effective for some people, internal motivation is more effective for others; the best type of motivation a given person can change over time. As leaders, we all want a group of colleagues with achievement drive, commitment, initiative, and optimism, but how do we get them there? The answer depends on where they are. I do not have IR-specific literature to reference concerning motivation, so I draw on my personal experience here.

When I started my current position, I took my new staff colleagues to lunch in my first two weeks on the job and asked them about their jobs—what they liked, what they disliked, what they wanted to keep doing, and what they wanted to stop doing. I also listened to what others, both inside and outside the office, said about my colleagues. Using this information I made plans about how to get my colleagues where I hoped they could go. For the people who were already highly motivated by their jobs, this was easy: they were already “in the zone” or “in the flow.” All I needed to do is to make sure I kept obstacles out of their way and let them do what they do without interference. Other employees, often but not necessarily new in their IR careers, were already motivated by the desire to learn as much about IR as possible and to see that their work is making a difference. I introduced these colleagues to as wide a variety of activities as I could, tried to help them see how everything fits into the big picture of the institution, and made sure they saw the results of their labor. I asked one of my colleagues, for instance, to work on a study of factors affecting why some students take longer to graduate than others. His work was very well received and led to a “Think 15” task force that brainstormed ways to follow up on his principal recommendation that as many students who are

Table 4.1.

*Methods of Motivating Institutional Research Staff in Difficult Financial Times*

<p><b>6 Ways to Motivate Employees (Without Money)</b></p> <p>1. Make your employees feel needed and appreciated</p>	<p><b>How to motivate staff when money is tight</b></p> <p>1. Respect your staff</p>	<p><b>5 Ways to Keep Your Employees Motivated Without Breaking the Bank</b></p> <p>1. Communicate with them</p>	<p><b>5 Easy Ways To Motivate - Employees</b></p> <p>1. Align individual economic interests with company performance</p>	<p><b>5 Easy Ways To Motivate - And Demotivate</b></p> <p>1. Use your positional power as a manager in a way that shows you don't fully respect your employees as individuals - Be chronically late for employee meetings. Don't return their messages. Ignore their suggestions for how to improve operations</p>	<p><b>7 Surprising Ways To Motivate Millennial Workers</b></p> <p>1. Explain the company vision</p>	<p><b>How Can I Motivate My Employees On a Budget?</b></p> <p>1. Ask them to sit in on a manager's meeting or important panel</p>
<p>2. Ask employees to help in specific, actionable ways</p>	<p>2. Involve your staff</p>	<p>2. Institute a casual dress day</p>	<p>2. Take a GENUINE interest in an employee's career</p>	<p>2. Take credit for a project one of your employees actually did most of the work</p>	<p>2. Prioritize community service</p>	<p>2. Provide a mentoring or training opportunity</p>

<p><b>6 Ways to Motivate Employees (Without Money)</b></p> <p>3. Inspire your employees with the cause, not the organization</p> <p>4. Stay connected, and make sure your communication channels go both ways</p> <p>5. Develop a community in your workplace</p> <p>6. Show your employees how they made a difference</p>	<p><b>How to motivate staff when money is tight</b></p> <p>3. Develop your staff</p> <p>4. Appreciate your staff</p> <p>5. Reward your staff</p>	<p><b>5 Ways to Keep Your Employees Motivated Without Breaking the Bank</b></p> <p>3. Have a “Boss does your work” campaign/promotion</p> <p>4. Offer telecommuting options</p> <p>5. Take part in team building activities</p>	<p><b>5 Easy Ways To Motivate - And Demotivate - Employees</b></p> <p>3. Take a GENUINE interest in their work-life balance</p> <p>4. Listen: authentically</p> <p>5. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you</p>	<p><b>7 Surprising Ways To Motivate Millennial Workers</b></p> <p>3. Develop in-between steps and titles</p> <p>4. Give encouragement and regular feedback</p> <p>5. Offer more flexibility</p> <p>6. Provide education and professional development</p> <p>7. Give them time for personal projects</p>	<p><b>How Can I Motivate My Employees On a Budget?</b></p> <p>3. Allow them to attend a national or regional conference</p> <p>4. Provide an Employee of The Month parking space</p> <p>5. Create a Wall of Fame: Recognize their accomplishments publically</p> <p>6. Take them out to lunch one on one or award a gift card.</p> <p>7. Provide genuine feedback and praise</p> <p>8. Allow flexibility in schedules</p>
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Source: Millikin (2014, pp. 1–2). Adapted with permission from Mary Millikin.

academically able complete 15 credit hours per semester to ensure that they graduate in four years. After the first meeting of the task force, he was asked to do follow-up analyses. Although he is incredibly busy with a large variety of projects, he does not need any further motivation from me; he is motivated by seeing how his work is having an impact. Other employees were performing excellently, but were discouraged by multiple obstacles to greater success that they were not empowered to tackle. For example, I had an outstanding colleague who felt hampered by various constraints placed on her work. A previous supervisor had not allowed her to provide recommendations in research reports and had not allowed her to prepare presentations for conferences. Also, she felt that her junior-level job title prevented others from listening to her in meetings with staff members in other offices. The first two roadblocks were easily removed. We then worked to get her a higher (and well-deserved) job title that allows her to feel more empowered in her interactions with campus colleagues. Her motivation increased remarkably in a short period. Finally, I had mid- to late-career colleagues who, for various reasons, felt undervalued. Advancing technology may have made their skill sets less relevant, or they may have felt overwhelmed with workload, been stuck in a rut, been bored with their typical projects, or felt cut off from others in the office and/or on campus. Working with these colleagues to increase their satisfaction, motivation, and productivity has been the most difficult, but has the potential to be the most rewarding if they are able to make positive changes. Possible solutions in these situations might include retraining, switching assignments within the office, sharing work with others in the office, involving them with important and high-profile projects on campus, or working closely with the director in order to better understand (or even better positively influence) the direction of the office.

### **Social Competence: Empathy**

Social competence determines how we handle relationships. It includes empathy, which is the awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns, and is made up of the following:

- Understanding others: Sensing others' feelings and perspectives and taking an active interest in their concerns
- Developing others: Sensing others' development needs and bolstering their capabilities
- Service orientation: Anticipating, recognizing, and meeting customers' needs
- Leveraging diversity: Cultivating opportunities through different kinds of people
- Political awareness: Reading a group's emotional currents and power relationships

Goleman (1998, p. 137) says, "Empathy represents the foundation skill for all the social competencies at work." I would extend that idea here to say that empathy is the foundation for truly effective IR. While Terenzini's (1993) contextual knowledge and skills have a declarative knowledge component (e.g., what is our institution's mission, who are its competitors, what is the president's disciplinary background), it is mostly about understanding perspectives, personalities, and politics. The skill needed to develop these understandings is empathy. Empathy comes from first understanding what emotions like anxiety, jealousy, and indecision are and how they affect us, and then learning to understand telltale signs of these emotions in others. While there are a small number of people who truly do seem to be emotionally tone deaf (as Goleman describes it), most of us could benefit from learning how to develop these skills more effectively. Empathy is essential for dealing with clients, dealing with our supervisor, and dealing with those who report to us.

An important technique to establish empathy is active listening, which involves demonstrating attentiveness through eye contact and posture, paraphrasing what has been said, asking clarifying questions, checking perceptions, and summarizing. Many institutional researchers understand the need to not always give clients just what they request in an e-mail, phone call, or in-person conversation, but to draw them out about the background that has led to the request. Often we end up giving

the clients more than they requested and sometimes we do not even give them what they first requested. Active listening is an important method for IR practitioners to truly understand what clients need.

Goleman (1998, p. 144) describes a “politics of empathy” that is important for us to understand in IR. He writes,

Those with little power are typically expected to sense the feelings of those who hold power, while those in power feel less obligation to feel sensitive in return. In other words, the studied lack of empathy is a way power holders can tacitly assert their authority. (Goleman, 1998, p. 144)

Since much of our work in IR involves trying to determine how to meet the information needs of our campus leaders, what Goleman (1998, 2005) describes certainly seems to be the case for institutional researchers. I have had several supervisors over my IR career, and I think that the issue of the politics of empathy has separated what I perceive to be the good supervisors from the bad. The good ones take the time to help us understand where they and others on campus are coming from as well as what we are feeling, while the bad ones simply leave us on our own to figure this out. I hope that the politics of empathy will become less of an issue as understanding how the need for empathy improves management. Since most of our supervisors come from the ranks of faculty and are not exposed to contemporary management training, however, the problem of supervisors not being as effective as they could be due to their inability to understand the feelings of those who report to them may persist for a long time.

Empathy is also the most important ingredient for successfully developing those who report to us. Empathy does not mean practicing amateur psychology or always agreeing with the person, but it does mean actively working to both understand what the person is feeling and to help that person understand what you and others in the organization are feeling. Goleman (1998) cites research about performance feedback indicating that both negative feedback with no advice in how to improve and no feedback at all have long-term negative effects on employee performance, whereas negative feedback coupled with advice



on how to improve can be as powerful or even more powerful than positive feedback. It is important for the IR supervisor to offer praise as well as criticism; this is discussed further in Chapter 7 concerning mentoring. Goleman (2005) provides the following guidelines for what he terms “the artful critique” (p. 153):

*Be specific.* Pick a significant incident, an event that illustrates a key problem that needs changing or a pattern of deficiency, such as the inability to do certain parts of a job well. It demoralizes people just to hear that they are doing “something” wrong without knowing what the specifics are so that they can change. Focus on the specifics, saying what the person did well, what was done poorly, and how it could be changed.

*Offer a solution.* The critique, like all useful feedback, should point to a way to fix the problem. Otherwise it leaves the recipient frustrated, demoralized, or demotivated. The critique may open the door to possibilities and alternatives the person did not realize were there, or simply sensitize her to deficiencies that need attention—but should include suggestions about how to take care of these problems.

*Be present.* Critiques, like praise, are most efficient face-to-face and in private. People who are uncomfortable giving a criticism—or offering praise—are likely to ease the burden on themselves by doing it at a distance, such as in a memo. But this makes the communication too impersonal, and robs the person receiving it of an opportunity for response or clarification.

*Be sensitive.* This is a call for empathy, for being attuned to the impact of what you say and how you say it on the person at the receiving end. Managers who have little empathy . . . are most prone to giving feedback in a hurtful fashion, such as the withering put-down. The net effect of such criticism is destructive: instead of opening the way for a corrective, it creates an emotional backlash of bitterness, defensiveness, and distance. (Goleman, 2005, pp. 153–154)

Customer service is another natural outcome of empathy. Outstanding service is about building relationships and understanding the needs of your client-customers. The highest level of service is about being able to identify a client's real, underlying, and often understated needs, then matching them to your products and services. It is about building an enduring level of trust. Goleman (1998) states that at the ultimate level of service one acts as the customer's adviser and advocate. I would suggest that in IR, however, this level of service should be tempered by objective information. Staying very close to one's supervisor or other client may draw you, perhaps very subtly, so much into those persons' perspectives that you may find yourself selectively filtering information in a way that does not ultimately serve the long-term good of the campus as a whole. The truly successful institutional researcher is able to maintain a balance between the values of service and objectivity.

Demonstrating outstanding customer service is absolutely essential to IR as a discretionary function of the institution that can (and sometimes is) cut back or even eliminated altogether in times of budget cuts if it is not demonstrating its value. This idea was noted by one of the participants in my interviews with institutional researchers who were cited as particularly effective by their colleagues:

The other thing that I always tell new staff is that we exist only because someone finds our work valuable. We are not paying people. We are not registering students. We are not paying the bills. We are not cleaning the offices. Our analytical work must be of a measure that people find valuable, or we don't exist. (Quoted in Knight, 2010b, p. 7)

I would also suggest that providing exemplary customer service requires us to have sufficient contact with institutional leaders to be able to understand what the priorities are and what the leaders are feeling about them. As another participant in my 2010 study noted,

Being part of the Cabinet makes me extremely effective because you know what is needed at the highest level and you understand what is expected. If you are at a lower level you may

never know exactly what is needed. Reporting to the president is key and being part of Cabinet is tremendously helpful. It is also important to use this opportunity to contribute to show your value. (Quoted in Knight, 2010b, p. 6)

Empathy is important for fully realizing the benefits of diversity in two ways. First, being attuned to the feelings of others allows us to understand and get along with people who are different from ourselves along any number of dimensions, to appreciate the unique ways in which they might operate, and to take advantage of whatever special opportunities these approaches may offer. Second, empathy helps us to be aware of the threat of stereotyping that unfortunately sometimes occurs when people are interacting with others who are different. Since employment trends in IR over recent decades have resulted in the majority of institutional researchers now being female, IR might perhaps be a profession that shows greater emotional intelligence in the workplace than other professions, since research shows that women typically demonstrate emotional intelligence to a higher degree than men do (Goleman, 1998, 2005). Unfortunately it has been the case that domestic minorities are less well represented in IR than in our nation's population in general. I hope that greater use of empathy and emotional intelligence will help us to see the benefits of diversity and inclusion in the IR workplace. A bright spot in the IR workplace, in my opinion, has been a trend toward greater representation of practitioners with international backgrounds because it broadens our perspectives and allows us to be aware of and less likely to exhibit ethnocentricity. I hope we can demonstrate empathy that will allow us to fully realize all the advantages of this trend.

Goleman's (1998) last dimension of empathy is political awareness. In IR this has to do with realizing who has the power to get our information to the table when decisions are made, to make the case for decisions that are consistent with our findings, and to support our ability to do our work effectively. One application of political awareness in my own experience has been figuring out who has the president's ear, and by whom that person is most likely to be persuaded. While many faculty members and perhaps the higher education organiza-

tional literature assumes that this is the chief academic officer, my own experience is that this is often the chief business officer or the chief enrollment management or information technology officer. Emotional intelligence helps us to understand which vice presidents often have the most influence on the president. While it is not as likely to be the case as it was in the past, most presidents come from the ranks of faculty and have been deans and provosts (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2013). They understand academe and are comfortable with that perspective. They are often less likely, however, to understand finance, enrollment management, or information technology, particularly problems in these areas. If you recognize that this pattern of influence is the case, then it is important to cultivate good relationships with the nonacademic divisions of the campus and those who lead them, even if you report in academic affairs and your work is mostly in this area.

### **Social Competence: Social Skills**

Social competence includes social skills (providing adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others), which are made up of the following (Goleman, 1998):

- Influence: Wielding effective tactics for persuasion
- Communication: Listening openly and sending convincing messages
- Conflict management: Negotiating and resolving disagreements
- Leadership: Inspiring and guiding individuals and groups
- Change catalyst: Initiating or managing change
- Building bonds: Nurturing instrumental relationships
- Collaboration and cooperation: Working with others toward shared goals
- Team capabilities: Creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals

Goleman (1998) states, “The art of influence entails handling emotions effectively in other people. . . . Star performers are artful at

sending emotional signals, which makes them powerful communicators, able to sway an audience—in short, leaders” (p. 164). “At the most basic level, influence and persuasion hinge on arousing specific emotions in the other person—whether that be respect for our power, passion for a project, enthusiasm for outdoing a competitor, or appropriate outrage over some unfairness” (p. 69). An important prerequisite for influence is establishing rapport, or making an emotional connection. Influence in IR can be about something as simple as tailoring approaches to making a presentation successful, or something as complex as establishing rapport with those who control resources so you can add funding to your office.

Goleman says that being an adept communicator is the keystone of all social skills (1998, p. 176). Communication is necessary for both expressing our feelings and ensuring that we understand others’ feelings. Being able to communicate effectively, or keeping cool despite being in a highly emotionally charged environment or in spite of our own emotional state, is the sign of being emotionally skilled. Staying calm and collected is not easy when a client, boss, or someone who reports to you is not, or when someone wants to use you and your work as a scapegoat for what is really bothering them, but it is a skill that you can develop with experience and deliberate effort.

Conflict management is a competency that several respondents to the IR Leadership Development Needs Analysis Survey mentioned in the open-ended section as an additional topic of interest. Obviously there is a need for developing conflict management skills. One way that emotional intelligence can help fill this need is to create an environment where people understand each other well enough that misunderstandings do not rise to the level of conflict. Another way is to tactfully handle situations when they do result in conflict. Goleman (1998, p. 182) suggests the following steps for cooling down conflict:

- Calm down; tune in to your feelings and express them.
- Show a willingness to work things out by talking over the issue rather than escalating it with aggression.

- State your own point of view in neutral language rather than in an argumentative tone.
- Try to find some equitable ways to resolve the dispute, working together to find a solution that both sides can embrace.

Implementing these strategies successfully requires self-awareness, self-confidence, self-control, and empathy.

Goleman (1998) says that the art of leadership lies in how a person implements change, and not just in the change itself. Anyone in a position of power can force others to do what they want through fear and intimidation, but a true leader uses all of the components of emotional intelligence to positively connect personal and campus goals. Great leaders feel strong emotions, are able to express them forcefully, and are emotional senders as well as receivers. They excite people's imaginations and inspire them to move in the desired direction. Anyone at any level of any organization can be a great leader by effectively using emotional intelligence. Using all of the aspects of emotional intelligence is absolutely necessary for leaders to take their organization to its full potential.

I had the wonderful opportunity at my last institution to work for several years with the greatest university president I have known. During the best years of his administration it was difficult to find a faculty member who had anything but great things to say about him. I believe the secret to his success was exactly what is discussed above: positively being able to connect personal and campus goals, exciting people's imaginations, and inspiring them to move in desired directions. Whether in speeches, publications, group meetings, or one-on-one conversations, he had an ability to make people believe that he was truly listening to them and that he valued their perspectives, yet he still was able to get people to see how they could accomplish their personal goals at the same time that they could help the institution realize its goals. While not all presidents and certainly not all IR leaders have this capability, we have more ability than we often realize to use emotional intelligence to demonstrate effective leadership. Something as simple

as showing your excitement about a new institutional initiative or being vocal about connecting the work of a staff colleague to a campus priority can have a major influence on motivating people and moving them toward where you need them to be.

Goleman (1998) sees transformational leaders and change catalysts not necessarily as great innovators, but rather as people who can motivate others through the power of their enthusiasm. They mobilize people for change by arousing their emotions about the work they do. They appeal to people's sense of meaning and value by harnessing their emotions and directing them toward shared goals, thus creating a powerful force for change. Swing (2009) has identified this capability as important for the future of IR:

The future of the field is already apparent in places where the institutional researcher is a full member of the president's cabinet as a senior campus leader or a senior staff member in a system office. In the future, institutional researchers will not only develop information to support decisions; they will also actively engage in the process of managing and leading institutional change. Many already are.

Contrary to the popular literature that separates leadership, management, and decision support into unique skill sets, the field of institutional research is evolving toward a unique blend of data skills, strategic planning, outcomes assessment, and advocacy for improvement. (Swing, 2009, p. 5)

Leimer (2012) discusses leadership for developing and sustaining a culture of evidence-based decision-making and improvement. She notes that when enthusiasm for sustaining this culture is not sustained, it is not due to lack of expertise, but that

instead, two major elements are often missing that are necessary to spark and sustain evidence-based decision making and improvement. One is leadership in making sense of, strategically applying, and communicating data and findings to diverse audiences in ways that prompt organizational learning and

stimulate people's desire to know more and then to act on the information. The other is a highly visible institutional research (IR) function that is integrated with complementary functions such as assessment and planning and that is widely recognized as integral to shaping institutional policy and practice. (Leimer, 2012, p. 45)

She also discusses the characteristics of effective leaders of what she terms integrated model offices.

Since the range of responsibilities in integrated offices is broader than those of a typical IR office, so are the skills, abilities, and personal traits that lead managers in IM [integrated model] offices need. To varying degrees, experience with and skills in research methods, statistical techniques, data analysis, statistical software, and database management are fundamental. But organizational, project-management, group-facilitation, and written and oral communication skills are important too, as are strong interpersonal skills that enable these managers to work effectively with a range of institutional constituents, from line staff and faculty to middle managers and executives. The abilities to build consensus, negotiate, communicate in non-technical language, coordinate people and projects, and lead are key. Personal characteristics needed include sensitivity, open-mindedness, flexibility, a capacity to listen, enthusiasm, a commitment to learning, a sense of humor, the ability to build others' self-confidence and motivate them, creativity, team-building and problem-solving capacities, a thick skin, a tolerance for ambiguity, and patience. So too are the abilities to educate, build trust, and use data to tell a compelling story. (Leimer, 2012, pp. 49–50)

Leimer's ideas are congruent with Goleman's idea of leveraging change through the power of enthusiasm, in my opinion.

Another dimension of social skills discussed by Goleman (1998) is building networks, groups of colleagues with whom you can develop mutually beneficial relationships. This is definitely a strategy that has



helped me to be successful. In addition to AIR's eAIR newsletter, Listservs maintained by the AIR regional and state affiliates, the Reshaping IR Listserv, the Assess-L Listserv, LinkedIn and Facebook, I have made it a point to develop a network among my colleagues at my university's peer institutions. Using this last resource has been extremely helpful to be able to quickly and effectively benchmark all types of information. I have also maintained a support network through various people I have met over the years through AIR, various accreditation visits, and other means. Although I do not see or speak to some of the members for a long time (some are outside the country, some are retired, and some have changed jobs or even careers from the time I first met them), I have a collection of colleagues and friends that I can rely on for information and support.

Putting together well-performing teams is the last aspect of social skills discussed by Goleman (1998) and something else that is important in IR. Whether it is teams within the office, outside the office, or a combination of the two, team-building involves understanding people's capabilities, how they will or are likely to interact with each other, getting them motivated and committed to the task, and ensuring they see it through to completion. The success of teams, though, is not just dependent on the leader—it is also dependent on each member. The team can be no stronger than its least emotionally intelligent member allows. Participation in a well-performing team can be its own reward; people are motivated because they enjoy being part of the team. Participation in a poorly performing team can be a very demotivating experience. Goleman (1998, p. 220) lists the following emotional competencies of teams that perform very well:

- Empathy or interpersonal understanding
- Cooperation and a unified effort
- Open communication; setting explicit norms and expectations and confronting underperforming team members
- A drive to improve, with attention given to feedback
- Self-awareness, and the ability to evaluate strengths and weaknesses as a team

- Initiative and taking a proactive stance toward solving problems
- Self-confidence as a team
- Flexibility in how tasks are accomplished
- Greater awareness of their organization
- Building bonds to other teams

Unless you are a one-person office, you are part of an IR team. If you are the director, you are responsible for the success of that team. As the leader, it is important for you to recognize that not all members come to the team from the same place; they will have various level of emotional intelligence. As discussed in Chapter 2, team members may also have generational and cultural differences that will affect their participation in teams. As explained in Chapter 5, you need to figure out how to provide the appropriate level of challenge and support to promote the development of each of your staff colleagues; this also applies to their performance as members of a team. One of the most useful team-building strategies I have used in IR when we have a new project is to get everyone involved together, lay out the details, then ask them to think about how we should proceed, who should do what, and so on. Experience as members of committees or task forces outside the IR office can also help IR staff members build team skills they can then apply back in the office.

## **Immunity to Change**

A theory and technique for identifying and overcoming hidden barriers to change that mesh very nicely with the ideas about emotional intelligence is the work on immunity to change by Kegan and Lahey (2009). While the authors' whole set of concepts are far too comprehensive to include here, the essential idea of creating what they term an immunity X-ray to diagnose why it can be so difficult to actually make changes that we know we should make is summarized in Table 4.2. Let's say that an IR director identifies having better work-life balance as a goal for improvement. When asked to identify some behaviors that she

is engaging in that keep her from reaching this goal, she might identify always volunteering for new projects, never saying no to requests, always working to respond to request as quickly as possible, not taking vacation time, and not asking for help. While these behaviors might seem to be signs of being service-oriented, being a good employee, and being helpful to others, they are inhibiting her from reaching her goal of greater work-life balance. If she really pushes herself (or others push her) to identify what it is that she is really afraid of that causes here to keep doing these blocking behaviors, she might identify not being viewed as essential, having people be unhappy with her, and not being looked on favorably for opportunities for advancement. Finally, if pushed to identify big assumptions behind her hidden competing commitments, she might list assuming that she must always be viewed as essential to be viewed positively, assuming that there will be severe consequences if she ever makes anyone unhappy, and assuming that she continues to have to constantly prove herself in order to be considered for advancement.

Kegan and Lahey (2009) then proceed to outline a method for overcoming immunity to change that involves designing tests of the big assumptions. This does not mean immediately trying to change behavior, but rather gaining information that begins to challenge the assumptions and overcome the hidden competing commitments in ways that are safe, modest, and actionable (easy to test). This approach provides a research stance (rather than a self-improvement stance) for testing the assumptions. In our example, our IR director might choose to try not volunteering for additional projects as they come up and to see what happens. More details are available from Kegan and Lahey (2009) and their associated MOOC site, <https://www.edx.org/course/harvardx/harvardx-gse1x-unlocking-immunity-change-2726#.U9bpCMJ0zcs>

I hope that the relationship between the immunity to change concept and process and emotional intelligence is clear. Emotional awareness and accurate self-assessment are the keys to identifying the contents of what Kegan and Lahey (2009) call the worry box (deeply held fears that inhibit improvement), the related hidden competing commitments,

and the underlying big assumptions. Kegan and Lahey's approach may be particularly attractive to institutional researchers since they appeal to a logical systems approach to understanding behavior and facilitating change.

## **Examples for Further Consideration**

1. You are the associate director of a fairly large IR office. You have read about emotional intelligence and discussed the concept with colleagues outside your institution. You are convinced that increasing emotional intelligence is the key to improving the effectiveness of your office. You mention this idea to the IR analysts in your office, and they do not understand it or see its value; the only professional development they believe they need is more computer skills. Your boss seems to understand the potential of this idea but is concerned that there just is not enough time to invest in this area. What can you do to convince your colleagues about the importance of investing time in developing their emotional intelligence?
2. Suppose that following the case study above that you have successfully convinced your colleagues to invest time in improving their emotional intelligence. Everyone in the office completes an emotional intelligence inventory and the results indicate that your IR analysts need to focus on developing their self-awareness and self-regulation, while the other assistant and associate directors (and your supervisor) need to develop their empathy and social skills. Your supervisor asks you to develop specific professional development plans for all staff members to increase their strengths in each area. How do you proceed?
3. A conflict has developed between your office and an assistant director in the Registrar's office. This person is not cooperating on data requests and what are supposed to be joint projects, and is telling others on campus that the information produced by your office is wrong and that the IR staff members do not know what they are doing. Focusing on the concepts of emotional intelligence presented in this chapter, how should you proceed in understanding the roots of this conflict and

how should you attempt to resolve it?

4. Your university has a new provost who is your direct supervisor. He has no previous experience working with an IR office and does not seem to understand or value what your office does. He has different priorities and a different personality from your previous provost. What can you do to understand each other better and build and improve the relationship?

*See Appendix 1 for sample solutions.*

Table 4.2.

*The Immunity to Change X-Ray*

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Activities that Inhibit Accomplishing the Improvement Goal</b>	<b>Hidden Competing Commitments</b>	<b>Implicit Assumptions</b>
Having better work-life balance	<p>Always volunteering for new projects</p> <p>Never saying no to requests</p> <p>Always working to respond to request as quickly as possible</p> <p>Not taking vacation time</p> <p>Not asking for help</p>	<p>“Worry Box” (Deeply Held Fears That Inhibit Improvement):</p> <p>Not being viewed as essential</p> <p>Having people be unhappy with her</p> <p>Not being looked on favorably for opportunities for advancement</p> <p>Not ever being viewed as nonessential</p> <p>Not having people unhappy with her</p> <p>Not being overlooked for advancement opportunities</p>	<p>Assuming that she must always be viewed as essential to be viewed positively</p> <p>Assuming that there will be severe consequences if she ever makes anyone unhappy</p> <p>Assuming that she continues to have to constantly prove herself in order to be considered for advancement</p>

Note: Based on Kegan & Lahey (2009)

# **PART III**

Managing and Developing Staff





## EFFECTIVE HIRING

*Objective: This chapter will provide an overview of the hiring process in IR, including developing a position profile, securing funding, negotiating recruitment and approval, and deciding who to hire.*

Hiring staff members is a process that involves four key steps: (1) deciding that you need to hire someone and thinking about the type of person this will be, (2) securing funding for the position, (3) navigating your institution's process for hiring staff members, and (4) considering who to hire. Hiring involves understanding and working your way through the bureaucratic process, and also interacting with the candidates and others on campus who are involved with making the hire. I have colleagues who point to the difficulty of filling positions in IR due to lack of qualified applicants. I have been fortunate in not encountering this situation. As discussed below, having effective job descriptions and advertising in the right places helps, but I think there's an element of luck to be searching at the time that good candidates are looking.

### **Deciding to Make a Hire and Developing the Profile of the Ideal Candidate**

The decision to hire new staff members can result from various circumstances. The most obvious is when a staff member leaves and a position becomes vacant. A second situation is realizing that you need additional staff members. A third circumstance is when staff members move into IR from another office on campus. Shortly after I started a previous job the university's longtime director of financial aid stepped down from that position into a newly created enrollment management research role. After several discussions it was agreed that this individual would become a member of the IR office. He benefitted from close

interaction with other staff members while the rest of us benefitted from his subject matter knowledge and knowledge of the university. This third circumstance is different from replacing or adding brand new staff members in that it does not involve securing funding, advertising for the position, or working through (most of) the employment process.

Deciding the responsibilities for the new staff member and the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary for the person to carry out those responsibilities is probably the single most important step in the hiring process. If you are replacing someone, you may need the new person to do exactly the same work or completely different work, or to assume responsibilities somewhere in the middle. It may be that some of the work of the former person moves to other staff members and some of what the new person does represents new work in the office. Alternatively, you may realize that a critical need for new work to be done in the office has become apparent, none of the current staff members has the time or capability to carry out this work, and you need to try to make the case for adding an additional staff member (what budget people may call “a new line”). Feedback from clients and benchmarking staffing and responsibilities with other IR offices are both good ways to gain information about the appropriateness of current staffing and the possible need for additional staff members.

Your institution may have a form that you must complete before the hiring process begins, specifying the job responsibilities and qualifications of the new hire. This form requires offices to think through the duties and responsibilities, involvement in decision-making, typical types of communication and contacts, supervision and reporting relationships, and other aspects of the new position. Although completing such a form involves a great deal of work, it forces you to think through the profile of the ideal candidate. If your institution does not require completion of such a form, there will still be some sort of required job description, at minimum for advertising the job.

## **Securing Funding for the Hire**

Even if your new hire is a replacement position, it is important to have a conversation with your supervisor as soon as possible when you

are beginning to think about hiring to ensure there is funding for the position. Unfortunately, it is increasingly the case that it is not a given that previous staff members will be replaced due to institutional budget pressures. If your institution is in the midst of a hiring freeze, you may need to develop a rationale for an exception to the freeze, or you simply may not be able to make the hire for a period of time. An even worse situation, of course, is being told that the funding for your open position is being taken away permanently and you will have to do the best that you can to do the work of the departing person with the remaining staff members. If you are hiring for a totally new position, then you will be competing with other administrative offices and academic departments across the college or university to make the case for why scarce funding should come to your position. It is very likely that decisions about funding positions happen only once a year as part of the budget process; you should keep this in mind as you consider the timeline for filling your position. As with seeking approval to increase your operating budget, you will probably be more successful if you can demonstrate how this new position will help the institution or the division make progress toward its priorities. If there is an enrollment initiative that has resources attached, such as a plan to increase online or international student enrollment, you might be able to argue that a new staff member in the IR office can help to accomplish that goal. Another strategy is tying the need for the position to upcoming institutional reaccreditation.

## **Navigating the Hiring Process**

Once you know the type of person you would like to hire and you have funding in place, you are ready to start the hiring process. This is when it is very important to know your college's or university's procedures for hiring new staff. Hiring new administrative (salaried professional) and classified (hourly support) staff typically begins with completing and receiving approval for the job description form. Also note that the hiring processes for the two categories of staff have some differences between them. The steps required in hiring a salaried administrative or professional staff member, such as an assistant director or an IR analyst, are somewhat different from hiring an hourly classified or support staff position, such as an administrative assistant.

The recruitment phase of hiring involves posting the job ad in various places such as the college's or university's Human Resources Web site, the AIR jobs posting, state or regional Listservs, and perhaps the local newspaper. There may be policies that require ads for higher-level jobs, such as the IR director, to be posted in national sources; ads for lower-level jobs can be posted only locally. It might also be the policy for hourly support staff positions to be made available to internal candidates who may be interested in changing jobs before they are posted outside the institution. It is an increasing trend that jobs are posted to free online job lists, such as AIR's jobs posting, rather than with print publications such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, which can be quite expensive. You should check requirements about posting online versus in print publications, and also which office is responsible for paying for postings—your office (more likely) or a division or central advertising fund (less likely).

Ensuring affirmative and diverse hiring practices is an important consideration at all levels. You need to check with the office at your institution that has the responsibility (Affirmative Action, Equity and Diversity, Compliance, etc.) to make sure that you meet all requirements. There are likely going to be policies about where the job ad must be posted to ensure that the employment opportunity is made available to a wide audience. There also may be requirements that the search committee and/or the person making the hire participate in training concerning the hiring of a diverse workforce.

Your college or university may require that you recruit a search committee to review applications. There may be a requirement that the search committee includes personnel from other offices on campus beside the IR office. This may be a good opportunity to maintain and improve relationships. When I had the opportunity to fill two positions soon after I began my current job, I asked associate deans in some of our colleges to serve on the search committee for our associate director position in order to build relationships and improve understanding in both directions. For a more technical position, I asked a key colleague from IT to serve on the search committee. Serving on search committees

(within IR or for other offices) may also be an excellent professional development opportunity for IR staff members.

After deciding who to hire, the IR director then needs to follow several steps involving approval from the supervisor and from Affirmative Action, Equity and Diversity, Compliance, and so on, requesting and receiving references and transcripts, negotiating salary, negotiating any additional conditions of employment, negotiating a hire date, communicating with candidates who were not selected, and performing any other steps required for completing the hiring process. The institution may require additional forms of checking beyond references and transcripts such as a credit or criminal background check; you need to be clear about whether your office is expected to bear such costs. The IR director will likely have some flexibility to offer a salary that reflects the candidate's credentials and negotiate this with the candidate. Requests to pay a salary that is higher than originally offered will likely need to be approved by the IR director's supervisor. There may also be negotiations about other conditions of employment such as moving expenses, spouse and dependent fee waivers, the possibility of the new employee having faculty status, and so on. The IR director should learn as much as possible about the institutional policies and practices in these areas before the hiring offer is made. It is imperative also to learn in advance about policies concerning contact with candidates during the hiring process.

## **Deciding Who to Hire**

Despite the formal, bureaucratic nature of the hiring process, there is also an interpersonal aspect of deciding who to hire that requires good emotional intelligence. The more the person you want to hire must interact effectively with others, whether inside the IR office or with other offices, the more important this is. When you have several candidates who all meet the formal requirements, then the question is one of "fit," which I suggest is another way of saying it is a question of emotional intelligence. This is why it is important to ask pointed questions of the candidates and their references; and for members of the search committee, the IR staff, and colleagues from other offices to

provide their perspectives about the strengths and weaknesses of various candidates. It is also a good idea to ask candidates who come to campus for interviews to make a presentation; in this situation you are looking as much at what they know about your institution and the quality of their interpersonal skills as you are at their analytical knowledge and skills. Depending on the circumstances, it might be useful to ask the finalists to perform some sort of analytical task in order to evaluate their skills. Critical characteristics to evaluate in the hiring process include

- Knowing and managing one's own emotions, strengths, and limits;
- Demonstrating trustworthiness, personal responsibility, adaptability, and innovation;
- Striving for improvement, working collaboratively to meet goals, being able to act on opportunities, and persisting despite setbacks;
- Recognizing and responding to others' needs and concerns; and
- Guiding others in desirable directions.

Especially for higher-level positions, I am more likely to hire someone who has good organizational and interpersonal skills but needs some training on specific software, projects, and so on, than someone who is technically outstanding but is flustered by questions and comments and who cannot translate research findings into implications for clients.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate any literature resources specific to IR. A good resource that is specific to higher education is the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources ([www.cupahr.org](http://www.cupahr.org)). While many institutional researchers are familiar with it, from the perspective of supplying data for its annual salary surveys this organization also provides resources that are designed to assist with the hiring process within higher education institutions. Human Resources colleagues on campus can provide access to this organization's resources, including conferences, publications, and

Webinars. The Society for Human Resource Management ([www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org)) also provides excellent resources concerning human resources management, although they are not specific to IR or higher education. Faculty colleagues in management and perhaps other disciplines may be familiar with the Society for Human Resource Management and can help gain access to its resources.

## Examples for Further Consideration

1. Suppose that it has become apparent that your institution would benefit from hiring a new IR staff member who will work with the Division of Student Affairs on projects such as evaluating learning communities and service learning, and assessing student learning within the Division of Student Affairs. Your supervisor, the provost, indicates that she can fund only about half the cost of the position. Where could you seek additional funding?
2. What does the case study above suggest for who might be a useful addition to the search committee?
3. Suppose that the Office of Equity and Diversity has pointed out that there has never been a staff member in IR from a racial/ethnic minority and that you need to extend your efforts to generate more interest from underrepresented groups when you advertise to fill a new position. Beyond the institution's typical practices, such as listing the position in *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* and in local newspapers, what can you do to search more affirmatively?
4. Suppose that you have interviewed applicants for a new position and have identified someone who seems very promising. The person has not listed his current supervisor as a reference and indicates that there is a conflict between them. You contact the supervisor directly but learn that he absolutely will not speak to you about the applicant's performance. How do you proceed?

See Appendix 1 for sample solutions.





# PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

*Objective: This chapter will provide advice about effective performance appraisal through the framework of emotional intelligence and suggestions for navigating the campus performance appraisal process.*

As with hiring, an effective performance appraisal involves both understanding and working through your institution's process while also understanding employees' perspectives and moving them in desired directions.

An effective performance appraisal begins with understanding expectations. The detailed job description and analysis discussed in the previous chapter provides the basis for expectations and should be updated regularly, even if the document is not shared outside the office. Colleges' and universities' needs change, and our responsibilities must continue to reflect these changing needs. Individual performance needs to ultimately support institutional goals, especially the changing goals that result from the strategic planning process. The performance appraisal is used in order to determine how well each staff member is carrying out current responsibilities and as a vehicle for discussing how responsibilities need to change. The results of performance appraisals, typically done annually, should never be a surprise. They should be a formal affirmation of ongoing discussions between staff members and supervisors. The supervisor who merely goes through the motions and does not use the performance appraisal as an opportunity for serious discussion about successes or concerns is not doing the staff member, the office, or the institution any good.

Just as with hiring, you must understand your institution's performance appraisal process. There are likely to be one or more

performance appraisal forms, which will likely be different for administrative (salaried professional) and classified (hourly support) staff members. Such forms often collect information about progress in the past year toward previously developed goals as well as information about new goals for the coming year. One form is more of a checklist, while the other is more open-ended. It may be the case that not all categories on the forms are applicable to all staff members; if so, this should be clear to everyone involved in advance.

Suggestions for effective performance appraisal from Chu (2006) include the following:

- Link performance appraisal to specific examples of good and problem past behaviors and desired future behaviors.
- Focus on performance, not personality.
- Link performance goals with the resources necessary to achieve them.
- The results of a performance appraisal should never be a surprise.

An issue related to performance appraisal is annual salary raises. In some situations the two happen at the same time and are essentially one process, while in others they can be distinct. Both of my previous universities had policies where raises were established in two or three levels. There was a pool of money for a raise for everyone who met basic job expectations; everyone who met expectations got the same percentage raise, but the percentage could change every year. Second, there was a pool of funding for raises for people whose performance was above and beyond expectations; not everyone received the same percentage, and the percentage received depended on the salary policy and performance appraisal. In my current job there is also a small pool of money for additional raises for people who were extraordinary performers; I can recommend my colleagues for these raises to my supervisor, who may or may not pass along the recommendation to the president.

Figure 6.1 shows the expectations criteria for professional staff members for annual salary increases. It is important for me as the supervisor to keep in constant contact with those I supervise so that I can share my feedback about the extent to which they are accomplishing their goals throughout the year. It is important to recognize that as the supervisor I have different expectations for colleagues at different levels, such as analysts and assistant or associate directors. For example, the same level of performance that represents meeting basic expectations in “anticipates and adjusts for problems and roadblocks” might represent substantially exceeding expectations for someone in an analyst role. I try to be very clear about this at the time of hiring, as situations arise, and during formal performance appraisals. Employees who receive a rating of zero anywhere in their evaluation do not meet basic expectations for a salary increase. Employees who don’t receive a zero rating meet basic expectations for a salary increase. The distribution of above-and-beyond salary increases are based on ratings I make following discussion of performance with each staff member. As with all human resources issues discussed in this book, the most important thing to remember is to become familiar with your institution’s policies and understand how they affect staff in your department and your ability to guide them in desirable directions.

Sometimes a situation develops where a staff member’s responsibilities have substantially exceeded what is in their job description, and it is appropriate to seek a reclassification and/or title change. A similar but separate issue may be when staff members request an equity or market adjustment to their salary—that is, when they have evidence of being paid substantially less for doing basically the same work; this may be within the office (equity) or as compared to another institution (market). Again, the most important thing to do in this situation is to understand what your college’s or university’s policies are for employees in the relevant category. The policies may be different for administrative and classified staff members. At my previous institution administrative staff members were all in a certain employment grade, and there was an elaborate formal process for appealing to increase grades. If someone successfully increased in the grade structure, that person received

either the minimum salary in the new grade or a 5% raise, whichever was greater. A title change may or may not have been involved, and a title change alone did not guarantee a grade change. At my current institution there is no such grade structure and no pool of funding for reclassifications. The unit head can request a title change, but it is not accompanied with a salary increase. It was important for me to know what our policies are before I promised anything to a colleague who requested a change so that there was no misunderstanding and resulting disappointment.

Despite the attention in this chapter to understanding and following institutional policies, it is critically important for IR leaders to realize that performance appraisals, salary increases, and other adjustments in employee status all relate to the human dimension. These changes have substantial impact on people's lives and are among the most important decisions made. The staff members' ability to effectively explain their experiences, perspectives, and goals; and the IR director's understanding of this information, perceptions of the performance of employees reporting to the director, and ability to effectively make the case for change to the director's own supervisor, all require the characteristics of emotional intelligence that are described in chapter 4.

### **Examples for Further Consideration**

1. You have just taken a job as an IR director and are surprised to learn that your institution has no required professional staff performance appraisal form. The supervisor simply turns in a memo detailing his or her perceptions of each employee's performance and recommends a salary increase. This is particularly problematic in your new office because you have a staff member who believes that the previous director did not value his accomplishments and did not administer the performance appraisal process fairly. What can you do?
2. Suppose that there is a staff member reporting to you who has requested a title change so that she can feel more empowered in interacting with other staff members across campus. Her

performance is outstanding. You have been able to change her title, but there is no funding for additional salary; the university does not have a grade system for professional staff, so title changes are not accompanied by salary increases. She eventually comes to you with a complaint that there is salary inequity in the office; a person with the same title is making substantially more money. He was hired in at his current position and a higher salary. You are worried that the staff member who brought this concern to you may leave if you cannot adequately address this issue. The office of Human Resources tells you that there is no internal equity funding. What strategies can you pursue to address this situation?

3. When your office's IR director retired you were able to obtain the director's position. The new job is great except that you absolutely hate doing performance appraisals of people you have known for years as colleagues. What resources can you turn to for help? What aspects of your emotional intelligence do you need to improve?

*See Appendix 1 for sample solutions.*

Figure 6.1.

*Ball State University Office of Institutional Effectiveness: Professional Staff Expectations Criteria for Salary Increases*

**Employee:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

- (0) Unsatisfactory, does not meet expectations, needs substantial improvement
- (1) Minimally satisfactory, needs improvement
- (2) Satisfactory, meets basic expectations
- (3) Very satisfactory, exceeds expectations
- (4) Exemplary, substantially exceeds expectations

**Accountability**

- \_\_\_ Executes tasks, delivers results, takes initiative; is self-directed, dependable
- \_\_\_ Produces high-quality, accurate work that meets or exceeds customers' expectations
- \_\_\_ Documents all work appropriately
- \_\_\_ Actively works to continuously improve self

**Functional Expertise**

- \_\_\_ Possesses the functional and technical knowledge and skills to do the job at a high level of accomplishment
- \_\_\_ Knows job and the field of IR
- \_\_\_ Is familiar with IR trends and current topics
- \_\_\_ Learns new skills and knowledge quickly

**Analysis, Problem Solving, and Decision Making**

- \_\_\_ Effectively analyzes IR requests to understand information needed
- \_\_\_ Analyzes work to determine if it is aligned with customers' needs
- \_\_\_ Analyzes work for accuracy (e.g., Are the data correct?) and validity (e.g., Do the data answer the question posed?)
- \_\_\_ Makes good decisions based on a mixture of analysis, experience, and judgment

### **Priority Setting and Time Management**

- \_\_\_ Orchestrates multiple activities at once to accomplish a goal or task
- \_\_\_ Accurately scopes out length and difficulty of tasks and projects
- \_\_\_ Anticipates and adjusts for problems and roadblocks
- \_\_\_ Uses time effectively and efficiently
- \_\_\_ Completes tasks on time or ahead of time

### **Customer Focus**

- \_\_\_ Provides information to others in an understandable and user-friendly format
- \_\_\_ Meets or exceeds the expectations and requirements of internal and external customers
- \_\_\_ Establishes and maintains effective relationships with customers

### **Leading Change**

- \_\_\_ Demonstrates flexibility in changes in assignments and work processes
- \_\_\_ Maintains a positive attitude with others
- \_\_\_ Comfortably handles risk and uncertainty
- \_\_\_ Demonstrates even temperament during stressful situations

### **Collaboration**

- \_\_\_ Communicates effectively with IR colleagues, supervisor(s), and customers about issues, projects, and progress toward deadlines
- \_\_\_ Builds effective relationships with others across the organization
- \_\_\_ Uses diplomacy and tact
- \_\_\_ Is easy to approach and talk to





# MENTORING, PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PERSONNEL SITUATIONS

*Objective: This chapter will suggest strategies for mentoring, providing professional development, and dealing with personnel difficulties in the IR office.*

Collins, in his bestselling book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't* (2001), discusses a unique personnel management strategy that he calls “first who . . . then what” (p. 41). The idea is that great organizations first assemble an outstanding group of people then decide on their vision, strategies, and operations. We will return to a discussion of Collins’s book in Chapter 10, the leadership chapter in this book. The problem with applying Collins’s advice to an IR office is that most of us do not have the luxury of hiring all of our staff members. Rather, we inherit existing staff when we take the director’s job and work with them to meet our vision of the office. It is typically very difficult to remove staff members who are in positions that are a poor match with their abilities. Our strategies are to support and mentor staff members toward achieving success and dealing with problem situations effectively when they arise.

Goleman (1998) writes, “Strong coaching or mentoring helps employees perform better, enhances loyalty and job satisfaction, leads to promotions and pay increases, and lowers rates of turnover” (p. 147). The idea of the necessary combination of challenge and support

put forward about college students many years ago by Stanford (1967) also applies to the professional development of staff members, in my opinion. The supervisor should provide as much support and as many opportunities for learning as possible, but should also provide appropriate challenges that push staff members to grow. Some general advice for supporting staff members includes the following:

- Model the characteristics you want your staff to exhibit.
- Provide a clear sense of expectations.
- Practice good communication.
- Recognize and show appreciation on a regular basis.
- Provide all of the training and development that you possibly can.

## **Mentoring**

Although I have never participated in a formal mentoring program, either as a mentee or a mentor, I have benefitted enormously by learning from two former IR supervisors who have remained close colleagues and friends. I believe strongly in the importance of mentoring in any form and believe that providing ongoing opportunities for learning and development for staff members is one of the most important things that the IR director can do. AIR and affiliated organizations have had various mentoring programs over the years, and I encourage everyone who is able to do so to take advantage of them. For various reasons, institutional researchers may need to look beyond these formal mentoring programs and either take advantage of opportunities in their institutions or develop their own opportunities. Mentoring approaches involve various degrees of formality. They might include short-term or situational arrangements, they might include group mentoring, and they might involve primarily non-face-to-face interactions (e-mail, phone, etc.) with occasional in-person interactions (e.g., at the AIR Forum). Ideally, an employee's supervisor is not that employee's mentor, due to the power imbalance, but there may be situations where this is the case. Goleman (1998, p. 147) notes, "An open, trusting relationship is the foundation of success in on-the-job coaching."

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM; 2008) has a useful guide to best practices in mentoring. It is not a formal mentoring program itself, but rather guidelines to teach people how to be good mentors and mentees. It notes that while mentoring relationships can produce positive developmental and organizational outcomes, both mentoring programs and relationships sometimes fail due to a variety of causes and problems (e.g., lack of participation, no leadership involvement, poor planning, unrealistic expectations, and vague or fuzzy goals). Successful mentoring programs require proper understanding, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The OPM guide suggests that mentoring can benefit the organization by

- Helping new staff members settle into the organization;
- Enhancing the skills of new staff members;
- Helping staff members plan, develop, and manage their careers;
- Encouraging the development of leaders;
- Helping new staff members bridge the gaps between their formal educational preparation and actual employment practice;
- Helping to communicate the values, vision, and mission of the organization;
- Encouraging the development of competencies in support of customer service;
- Providing an environment that facilitates staff retention; and
- Promoting the exchange of ideas between different levels and parts of the organization.

In addition, the OPM guide identifies four types of mentoring:

1. Career guide: Promotes development through career guidance, counseling, and visibility
2. Information source: Provides information about formal and informal expectations

3. Friend: Interacts with the protégé socially and provides information about people
4. Intellectual guide: Promotes an equal relationship, collaborates on research projects, and provides constructive feedback and criticism

The OPM mentoring best practices guide also discusses strategies for matching mentors and mentees. They might be matched by job responsibilities, personality types, and perhaps demographic characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, and educational background. It is probably a good idea to not have people with similar strengths/weaknesses (as determined by the supervisor) participate in a mentor-mentee relationship.

The mentor, the mentee, and their supervisor(s) need to be clear about time commitment (Will the mentor and mentee meet weekly? Monthly? How long will the mentoring relationship last? A year?), range of topics covered, what both employees hope to gain from the experience, and any topics that are “off the table.” Some topics for mentoring suggested by the mentoring best practices guides are

- Managing conflict within the office or unit,
- Career progression,
- Networking,
- Influencing others,
- Managing politics in the office and organization,
- Technology tools,
- Time management,
- Work-life balance, and
- Leadership development.

The OPM guide also has a good reference list for further information. Additional sources of information about mentoring are the Association

for Talent Development (see [www.td.org](http://www.td.org)) and the Society for Human Resource Management ([www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org)).

Goleman (1998) talks about letting mentees take the lead in setting their own goals with the relationship. He also suggests as a strategy pointing to problems without offering a solution, challenging the mentee to find the answer. He suggests,

At a higher level of development, the coach or mentor arranges an ongoing assignment that will give the person needed training, experience or challenges. ... The skill lies in arranging successful “stretch” experiences that increase capability and confidence. (Goleman, 1998, p. 150)

There are several potential pitfalls in mentoring. The mentor and mentee may not be well matched. They may be at a stage of their career that is so similar that one cannot effectively learn from the other. They may have differences in personalities, expectations for the experience, or time to devote to it. Misunderstanding of the scope of or topics to be included within the mentoring process may derail it. Both the mentor and the mentee should have the opportunity to periodically check in with an objective third party, ideally the organization or individual sponsoring the mentoring, to express concerns or affirm success.

Mentoring may be useful at various points in the careers of both the mentees and the mentors. Mentees may benefit as they begin their first professional positions, as they gain responsibilities, especially supervisory responsibility for others, and as they assume formal leadership positions. Mentors may have the most to offer and find mentoring most rewarding a few years after they have proven to be successful in their first professional jobs, again a few years after they have been successful in formal director or other leadership positions, and then toward the end of their careers when they have a wealth of experiences to share. While mentoring can certainly be successful among staff members in the same office, having the relation take place between individuals at different institutions often provides a level of objectivity that is beneficial to the process.

## Providing Professional Development

In addition to mentoring, there are many professional development opportunities that can benefit the learning and growth of institutional researchers. People require different types of professional development at different times in their careers. Staff members may not know what types of professional development could best benefit them. Some of these opportunities are available at no cost; some are moderately costly; and some, often involving travel, can be quite expensive. The IR director should recognize these opportunities, suggest them to staff members, formally include them in performance appraisal materials (in relation to future goals), and support these opportunities in the office budget to the extent possible.

I provided a discussion of IR professional development opportunities in *The Primer for Institutional Research* (Knight, 2003). Following is a summary and update of that discussion.

Perhaps AIR's best-known professional development opportunity for institutional researchers is the annual AIR Forum. This national conference provides an abundance of opportunities for presentations, panels, demonstrations, workshops, and professional networking. Additional details about the Forum, including presentation materials from past Forums, are available at AIR's Web page ([www.airweb.org](http://www.airweb.org)). Selected presentation materials from AIR Forums are available through the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education. *Research in Higher Education* also publishes an annual special Forum issue.

AIR has published a number of books over the past several years in its Resources in Institutional Research (RIR) series. These books together form a set of tools that contribute to institutional researchers' knowledge and skills concerning all three of Terenzini's tiers of organizational intelligence. The following volumes are currently available:

*Applications of Intermediate/Advanced Statistics in Institutional Research*, edited by Mary Ann Coughlin, 2005

*Effective Reporting* (2nd ed.), written by Liz Sanders with Joseph Filkins, 2009

*Institutional Research: Decision Support in Higher Education*, edited by Richard D. Howard, 2001

*People, Processes, and Managing Data*, written by Gerald W. McLaughlin and Richard D. Howard, 1998 (2nd ed. published 2004)

*The Primer for Institutional Research*, edited by William E. Knight, 2003

*Using Mixed Methods in Institutional Research*, edited by Richard D. Howard, 2007

AIR sponsors several other publications in addition to the RIR series. *Research in Higher Education* is an academically oriented journal containing carefully selected papers by experts, stressing quantitative studies of college and university procedures. Six issues are published each year; special subscription rates are available for AIR members. Each annual issue of the *Higher Education Handbook of Theory and Research* provides an integrative literature review on 10 to 12 topics, contributing to the long-term development of a solid foundation of cumulative knowledge about higher education theory and research; special subscription rates are available for AIR members. Each single issue of the *New Directions for Institutional Research* series is devoted to a specific IR, planning, or policy topic, with chapters written by various experts. Issues are published quarterly; special subscription rates are available for AIR members. The *AIR Professional File* is a presentation of papers that synthesize and interpret issues, operations, and research of interest in the field of IR; copies are provided, in print and online, to AIR members at no cost. The *Electronic AIR* is the AIR newsletter sent to subscribers every four weeks, via e-mail; contents include news items, comments about recent publications, job announcements, requests for help or suggestions from readers, announcements of professional meetings and conferences, abstracts of papers that authors are willing to share, persons relocating or promoted to new IR jobs or retiring, and so on. The *AIR Membership Directory*, provided at no charge to current AIR members, provides valuable contact information for IR colleagues throughout the nation and around the world.

Numerous AIR state, provincial, regional, and international affiliates and special interest groups exist to advance the professional development needs of members and the aims of the association within designated geographic areas or topical interests.

A number of organizations, in addition to AIR, provide information, resources, and professional development opportunities that are beneficial to institutional researchers. Among these organizations are the following:

Society for College and University Planning (<http://www.scup.org>)

National Association of College and University Business Officers  
(<http://www.nacubo.org>)

American Council on Education (<http://www.acenet.edu>)

Association for the Study of Higher Education  
(<http://www.ashe.ws>)

National Center for Education Statistics (<http://nces.ed.gov>)

ACT, Inc. (<http://www.act.org>)

Educational Testing Service (<http://www.ets.org>)

John Minter Associates (<http://www.jma-inc.net>)

National Center for Higher Education Management Systems  
(<http://www.nchems.org>)

Southern Regional Education Board (<http://www.sreb.org/>)

Western Interstate Consortium for Higher Education  
(<http://www.wiche.edu>)

Some of the non-AIR-sponsored publications that may prove invaluable to institutional researchers include *Assessment Update*, *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, *Change*, *the Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Higher Education and National Affairs*, *the Journal of Higher Education*, *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, *Research and Practice in Assessment*, and *Review of Higher Education*.



## Dealing with Difficult Personnel Situations

Despite the best efforts toward making good hiring decisions and despite good mentoring and professional development opportunities for staff members, it is sometimes unfortunately the case that challenging personnel situations arise. It is difficult to discuss these in the abstract, so some examples are provided below. General advice for dealing with such situations includes these points:

- Know your institution's human resources policies.
- Address problem situations before they escalate, and document actions taken.
- You do not have to and should not address difficult personnel situations by yourself. Consult with the Human Resources office, other offices as appropriate, and your supervisor as problems become more serious. If you do not know whether you are at the point where other offices need to be involved, consult your supervisor.
- Operate with strong emotional intelligence. Do your best to understand the perspective of the staff member and recognize and manage your own emotions. Proceed so that you would be comfortable if everything that you say and do were to appear in the newspaper.

As noted in the following examples, there are several courses of action available to address problem behaviors. Unless there is criminal behavior involved or the staff member has simply walked off the job, there are several steps that you should take (and that your institution will require you to take) before terminating employment. Some of these include conversation, modeling appropriate behaviors, mentoring, performance appraisal, salary recommendations, letters in the personnel file, and developing and using a formal performance management plan. If all appropriate steps have been tried and have failed, then it is time to consider termination of employment. Depending on your college or university policies, it may take several weeks to a year to actually terminate employment once a decision has been communicated to

not renew a contract. It is critically important to ensure this process is followed effectively and according to institutional policy and that the IR director does everything possible to mitigate the effect of this action on the rest of the office.

I would also like to note that I have no experience dealing with these issues in a collective bargaining environment. I can simply recommend knowing what the union contract(s) say(s) and learning from your supervisor as well as from colleagues at the director level in other offices what the implications of that contract are for personnel actions.

The first example is of a staff member with whom it is very difficult to work. He is abrasive in his interactions with clients and staff members, unwilling to understand others' needs and perspectives, and unwilling to change and take on additional responsibilities. He may have developed these traits gradually over time, or may have exhibited them suddenly.

As unpleasant as it may be, the supervisor simply must have an extended dialog with this employee. The first goal is to try to understand what led to his inappropriate behavior. It may be that he is feeling overwhelmed in his job and is afraid or unwilling to seek assistance. Perhaps his behavior is a result of a family situation or his physical or mental health. While the supervisor cannot force him to reveal personal issues or seek help, the supervisor can very strongly refer him to the institution's employee assistance program or other services. Perhaps leave, paid or unpaid, is part of the solution. While you cannot force an employee to be nice, you can and must reinforce your institution and office core values concerning collegiality and customer service. If you do not, the situation will get worse for everyone and it will be a reflection on your leadership. You as the IR director should seek advice from your supervisor and the Human Resources office and thoroughly understand available options and appropriate policies. If the situation does not improve or gets worse despite all possible interventions, you must decide how much can be tolerated and at what point termination of employment might be considered.

The second example is of a staff member who seems to have real problems prioritizing and accomplishing goals. The quality of her

work is very good but she seems to take a long time to get things done. Perhaps she has not shared her concerns with you before, but when you engage her in a conversation about these issues and try to put yourself in her place, you realize that she has not been informed in a detailed way about institutional and office priorities and that she is facing an overwhelming workload. Perhaps she is responding to requests that the director does not know about and is trying to do her best at the same time that the director is giving her even more work. If she is uncomfortable, afraid, or simply not accustomed to sharing concerns and questions with her supervisor, she may be working harder and harder and seemingly accomplishing less and less, which only leads to frustration for everyone.

What can be done in this situation? First, the staff member and her supervisor need to communicate thoroughly and often about workload, priorities, and expectations. If the supervisor knows exactly what is on this employee's plate, he can help her prioritize and perhaps feel empowered to say no to some requests. The supervisor may also be able to redirect some of the work to other staff members and/or suggest more efficient ways of accomplishing it. Maybe the staff member is a perfectionist and needs help figuring out when the point of "good enough" has been reached on projects. Perhaps she is unaware of newer or more efficient methods of doing some of the work or knows of them but does not believe she can ever get in front of the workload in order to spend time getting to know these methods. From an emotional intelligence perspective, the most important thing for the staff member in this situation is to be able to understand and manage her own feelings and to express them effectively to her supervisor, to achieve at a high standard without feeling overwhelmed, and to become more adaptable. The most important thing for the supervisor is to try to understand what the staff member is experiencing, to realize that she actually has the best interests of the office in mind but needs help in serving those interests, and to work on helping her leverage her strengths and mitigate challenges. Both people need to work to establish effective communication and trust.

The final example is of a staff member with a serious absenteeism issue stemming from a health condition. The quality of his work is high,

but his absenteeism makes it difficult for him to meet deadlines and for the IR director to assign work to him. Let us assume this person is many years away from retirement. This is another difficult situation for the IR director who wants to support the staff member but also needs to have work completed on time. This situation may also cause resentment among other staff members who most likely do not know details of the situation and resent what they perceive as the staff member “getting away” with doing much less work than they must complete.

It is important for the IR director to know federal law and institutional policy in this situation as well as to apply principles of emotional intelligence. You cannot oblige the person to reveal details of his health situation. In this situation, where a staff member has revealed that he has a medical condition that affects his ability to do his work, it is highly recommended that the IR director refer him to the Human Resources office to see if he may have a qualifying condition under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). If the staff member is qualified under FMLA, he may take up to 100 days of leave (paid or unpaid, according to what sick leave he has available) in a 12-month period without any adverse effects on his employment. He may also take intermittent FMLA leave, meaning that he may leave work or call in sick for part or all of 100 days in a 12-month period, again without any adverse effects on his employment. The supervisor may put him on a performance management plan and ultimately pursue terminating employment if he does not have an FMLA-qualifying condition or if he exceeds the 100 days in a 12-month period.

From an emotional intelligence perspective, the IR director should understand that the staff member is also likely feeling extremely anxious about this situation and that other staff members in the office may be resentful about what they perceive as unequal treatment and about their resulting increased workload. The IR director needs to understand and manage the emotional responses of the staff member, the other staff in the office, and himself/herself. It is important to remain professional in a situation such as this, to recognize that there are some circumstances over which we have limited control, and to work collaboratively to approach this as just one more obstacle to overcome.

## **Examples for Further Consideration**

1. After taking a new job as an IR director you learn that one of your staff members is a single parent who has a special needs child who requires a great deal of attention, which leads to the staff member frequently being absent from work. What can you do and what should you keep in mind from the perspective of both institutional policy and emotional intelligence?
2. You have a staff member who has excellent technical-analytical skills. She aspires to a director's position, but seems to have no organizational or political skills. She cannot, for example, seem to understand why some IR work is requested, why some questions are asked as IR work is presented, or why clients have different perspectives about the same issues. How can you work with her and what would you say to her about how this will likely affect her success as an IR director?

*See Appendix 1 for sample solutions.*



# **PART IV**

## Understanding Campus Culture





## NEGOTIATING CAMPUS POLITICS

*Objective: This chapter will provide advice on the need for institutional researchers to become politically adept, and to understand campus politics and functioning effectively within campus cultures.*

Dealing with campus politics is the single topic that has come up most often in conversations about the need for IR professional development. I have known people who just shake their heads or even get up and walk out of the room when campus politics is mentioned. It is obviously important, but also is the source of much concern.

Perhaps the first step to negotiating campus politics is understanding what we are talking about. Lasher and Firnberg (1983, p. 89) define politics as “the influence individuals, organizations, or other entities have upon policy setting and decision making.” Saunders (1983, p. 26) defines politics as “the study and analysis of power, influence, and authority as they are manifested within an institution, particularly with respect to establishing policy.”

Goleman (1998) talks about “every organization hav[ing] its own invisible nervous system of connection and influence” and “people maintain[ing] rich personal networks” and “understand[ing] the larger realities that affect the organization” (p. 160). He discusses the importance of having the “ability to read situations objectively, without the distorting lens of their own biases or assumptions, allow[ing] them to respond effectively,” noting, “[P]eople who do this well are able to distance themselves a bit, setting aside their own emotional involvement in events to see them more objectively” (p. 161). He explains, “[A] sensitivity to these political fault lines of alliance and rivalry makes a person more understanding of the underlying issues

and better able to address what matters to key decision makers. . . . [A]n accurate understanding of the formal structure of the organizational chart is not enough; what is needed is a keen sense of the informal structure and the unspoken power centers in the organization” (p. 162).

## **The Need for Institutional Researchers to Become Politically Adept**

So this is a perspective of what politics means. Why should we in IR care? Aren't we just here to objectively give out information and let others do with it what they will? This is what I thought when I began my career, but not now. In fact my thinking about this is now best summed up by the following: “In order to appear apolitical, the institutional researcher may need to be the most politically astute person on campus.” (Knight et al., 2010b, p. 4).

Lasher and Firnberg (1983), Saunders (1983), and Voorhees and Hinds (2012) discuss two alternative views of the role of IR. The traditional role is described by Saunders (1983) as focusing on independence, scholarly analysis, and advisory status as IR staff members focus on objective, detached analysis of major issues facing higher education. This contrasts with the more pragmatic role that views the IR staff member's role as institutional influence. All three sets of authors espouse what Voorhees and Hinds (2012) call for as an activist role for IR (p. 99).

Lasher and Firnberg (1983) listed a set of institutional challenges in the early 1980s that sound surprisingly relevant today: enrollment management, curricular relevance, and financial constraint. They relate the role of IR to this context:

In this environment, institutional research officers must assist institutional executives as they attempt to solve these critical problems. They must help their institutions prepare for the challenges of the future. An analysis of alternative policy changes will be very helpful, especially if accomplished by thoughtful, interpretative comments from an individual or office that has a reputation for thorough understanding of the characteristics and dynamics of the institution. Such involved, influential institutional research involves politics in its purest sense. . . .

These notions are of course a far cry from traditional institutional research values, which argue that institutional research should remain aloof from decision making.

Unfortunately, such institutional research remains tangential to the main processes of the institution. The products are received, seldom utilized, and relegated to the shelf to gather dust—or worse, to be discarded. In today’s environment there is little room for functions, offices, or individuals whose outputs are peripheral to the main processes of the institutions. On a campus where the financial prospects are grim, if the products of institutional research are not being utilized, if the institutional research process is not valued and productive, if the institutional researchers are not in the mainstream of the institution’s policy and planning process, a decision may very likely be made that the resources needed to produce those products, support that office, and pay for those staff can best be used in other ways. In sum, if institutional research is not perceived as being an essential function, it may cease to be a function at all (Lasher & Firnberg, 1983, p. 99). Lasher and Firnberg (1983) conclude, “If it is to remain a viable entity in higher education, institutional research must develop better techniques to anticipate problems and changes, and to communicate this information in the policy arena” (p. 97).

My research into the characteristics of institutional researchers who were viewed as highly effective by their colleagues (Knight, 2010b) suggests that the second (“activist”) role of IR is the necessary one at this time when institutions are carefully reviewing all of their efforts for effectiveness and efficiency. As one participant in that study indicated,

Gauging how effective you are is [related to] how many people know about you. And I can tell you that everybody on this campus knows who I am. Why is that? It’s because what we provide . . . is done in such a way that we end up serving everybody one way or another. . . . I am the type of person who is very outgoing. I know that some institutional research folks have the tendency to just sit in their offices and not interact too much, but the key is building relationships, and being out

there, and being very responsive with quality stuff quickly. . . . I think effectiveness is related to being able to build relationships and gain trust, having your product on high demand and being used, and being able to make suggestions and being proactive rather than reactive, getting to know the operation of the college so well, and making suggestions in areas that people didn't think about. (Quoted in Knight, 2010b, p. 6)

Another participant noted, "IR is in a tremendous position to influence, but has no real power" (quoted in Knight, 2010b, p. 7).

## **Understanding Campus Politics and Cultures**

If the case has been made for institutional researchers to develop political skills, the question that follows is how to do so. As my career has progressed, I have found that thinking about institutions as what Birnbaum (1988) calls complex, open, nonlinear, loosely coupled systems. By complex, open, and nonlinear, he means that they have lots of moving parts that interact with each other and with the external environment differently in each circumstance. For example, a new state or accreditor requirement for a much more comprehensive, top-down approach to assessment of student learning will be experienced differently by faculty members in different departments, chairs, the IR or assessment office, the provost, the president, and the campus Marketing and Communications office(s). Loose coupling refers to parts of a system that are frequently unconnected and that interact in unpredictable ways. For example, if the state commission on higher education decides to devote substantial funding to institutions that graduate more students in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines, some academic departments will indicate that they are ready to greatly help the institution if they were to receive greater resources; some may complain that they are being unfairly discriminated against; some will not react at all; the business affairs staff may push academic affairs to produce more STEM graduates in the short term without wanting to wait for years to realize the effect of additional investment of resources; the provost may worry about the consequences of substantial investment in tenure-track faculty

members, startup-funds, and laboratories; and IR may find itself needing to spend lots of time explaining how the state commission has operationalized the definition of STEM. If the state commission decides in two more years to change to a funding model that emphasizes four-year graduation rates among low-income students, the previous relationships may change substantially and new institutional players (such as Student Affairs and Financial Aid) may enter the discussion. Success in such systems involves understanding the relationships and adapting as they change.

Although writing much more recently, using different language and a different conceptual framework, Tierney (2008) arrives at similar conclusions that can be of assistance for institutional researchers. He views colleges and universities as having organizational cultures that are enacted rather than objective. This means that rather than there being a single, knowable set of facts that is common for everyone in the institution, perception is socially constructed; people understand what is going on and react based on who and where they are in the organization at any one time. Successfully navigating the environment involves working to understand values, identity, and contradictions; recognizing that problems have multiple solutions and that solutions are temporary; thinking through consequences before enacting decisions; being aware of how decisions will relate to established values; and constantly striving to communicate effectively.

Birnbaum (1988) provides four models of colleges and universities that can be used to help understand campus politics and cultures and how institutional researchers can function effectively within them; these are the fictitious Heritage College, People's Community College, Regional State University, and Flagship University.

Heritage College is an example of a collegial institution. It is a 150-year-old, private institution in a rural setting. It has an enrollment of 1,150 mostly full-time, traditional-aged, baccalaureate-seeking students and 74 full-time faculty members. There is a strong liberal arts orientation, a faith tradition, and ties to the local community. Most faculty and staff members spend their entire careers at this campus.

Consensus and tradition are very strong values. Status differences are deemphasized and people act as equals, with decisions often taking a very long time. Faculty and administration emphasize that they are equals, but both groups acknowledge that staff and students have a lesser degree of influence. Institutional and academic leaders often come from the ranks of the faculty and return there within a few years. Faculty reward and recognition are based on teaching and service to the campus and local community. Given Heritage's small size and the longevity of its faculty and staff members, work is accomplished on the basis of personal relationships. Frequent interaction promotes consensus and decreases differences. Practices, expectations, and norms are typically communicated orally rather than in writing. Effective leaders are those who conform to established norms, who listen, and who operate through consensus.

People's Community College is an example of a bureaucratic institution. It is a public, associate degree-granting institution that is less than 50 years old. The campus is in a working-class suburb of a large metropolitan area. It enrolls about 6,000 degree-seeking students and many additional certificate-seeking and adult basic education students. The average student age is 28; most students enroll on a part-time basis and are employed at the same time as they are enrolled. Although Birnbaum does not specify the composition of People's Community College's faculty, it is probably safe to assume it numbers about 400, but with more than half of these being employed on a part-time basis. People's Community College has a collective bargaining agreement with its faculty members. Faculty recognition and compensation is based on teaching and is heavily prescribed by the union contract. Positional authority and a top-down management structure describe People's Community College. People are very much aware of where they are on the organizational chart and what their job descriptions say they are supposed to be doing. Decision-making is relatively efficient at People's Community College and the perspectives of different groups are not unanticipated. Rationality, structure, and standard operating procedures are important parts of the institutional culture. Effective leadership is based on formal authority and operating within established and clearly communicated structures.

Regional State University is an example of a political institution. It has transformed across several decades from a state normal school to a state teachers college to a state college to a comprehensive public university. Ninety percent of Regional State University's 13,500 students are enrolled on a full-time basis. Most enroll directly from high school and live on campus or near the campus within the surrounding mid-sized community. Most students are seeking bachelor's degrees, but there is a small and growing number of master's programs. Most faculty members have terminal degrees from nationally recognized institutions and tend to focus more attention on their discipline than on the university. Publication pressures on faculty members and standards for promotion and tenure have increased. The faculty senate is dominated by disassociated associate professors who are unlikely to be promoted; it spends its time opposing actions by the administration; such actions are often taken without formal consultation with the established shared governance process. Relationships between faculty and administration, among administrators in different divisions and at different levels, and among faculty members in different disciplines and levels are frequently contentious. "Individuals and groups at RSU [Regional State University] interact by forming coalitions, bargaining, compromising, and reaching agreements that they believe to be to their advantage" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 130). Groups form on the basis of job role, longevity, demographic traits, or ideology. Member groups are specialized, with divergent interests and preferences. Groups often think and interact on the basis of "us versus them." Special interest groups compete for influence and resources. Individuals can be allies in one situation and enemies in another. Most individuals, however, are indifferent to most issues most of the time. Decision-making is diffused and decentralized and accomplished through a combination of formal and informal structures. No one group is strong enough to dominate all of the others all of the time. Consensus rarely is reached, so decisions are made through the exercise of power. Effective leadership is based on effective negotiation, social exchange, and building of coalitions.

Flagship University is an example of an anarchical system. It is a major research university with 27,500 students, about two-thirds

of which are undergraduates and the rest of which are graduate or professional students. There are two undergraduate colleges, a graduate school, six professional schools, and many research centers and institutes on a sprawling campus near the state capital. Birnbaum does not specify the size of the faculty or the age of the university, but I estimate there are 2,000 or more full-time tenure-track, full-time non-tenure-track, part-time, clinical, and extension faculty members, and that the institution is about 150 years old. The university is among the top 25 in the country in terms of research funding, and many of its programs and faculty members enjoy national and international reputations. The mission statement emphasizes research and service to the state. Little attention is paid to general education and, in some cases, to undergraduate education in general. Faculty recognition is based almost exclusively on research and service to the profession. Teaching loads are low and undergraduate classes are taught in large lectures or by graduate assistants. The colleges and schools have a very high degree of autonomy, and most issues are discussed and decided at the college level. The president spends the majority of his time on fundraising. There are a tremendous number of special interest groups on campus. The institution seems chaotic to outsiders; individuals decide which of a large number of issues to which they will devote their attention at any one time, and decisions emerge in an often unplanned way from a highly complex environment. Perceptions of what is happening, what is important, and what should be done are highly dependent on who one is. Goals are vague, processes are unclear, and participation is fluid. Decisions are made when “specific problems, participants, and solutions coalesce with a particular choice point and they become attached . . . to each other” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 162), and effective leadership is based on an “ability to project a sense of competence, integrity, and dedication to many different audiences” (p. 167).

Now let us consider the role of IR within each of these types of institutions. Volkwein (1990, 2008) discusses an ecology of IR offices based on his analysis of their structure and function. The craft structure describes one- and two-person offices that primarily do reporting and are highly responsive to the backgrounds and needs of their



supervisors. Small adhocracies are two- or three-person offices that carry out some applied research projects and modest policy analysis, as well as routine reporting; they have a simple division of labor and only the beginnings of specialization. They frequently carry out analytical activities collaboratively with other administrative offices. Professional bureaucracies are centralized offices of four or more professionals with a modest bureaucratic structure and division of labor. They are the ones that carry out the most sophisticated research projects. Elaborate profusion describes a structure where multiple, decentralized, or loosely or completely coordinated offices carry out reporting and studies of particular interest in the colleges or divisions within which they report.

While I have no evidence that Volkwein had Birnbaum's models of colleges and universities in mind when he developed this ecology, the craft structure, small adhocrcy, professional bureaucracy, and elaborate profusions models of IR offices seem to me to correspond reasonably well to Heritage College, People's Community College, Regional State University, and Flagship University. I would guess that Heritage College likely has no formal IR office at all. It likely has various staff members completing IPEDS and perhaps the registrar's office doing some basic enrollment reporting; the activity level probably ramps up shortly before the accreditation self-study is due (and ramps back down shortly after). Birnbaum (1988) tells us that People's Community College has an IR office within its division of administrative affairs. It is safe to assume that the IR office does a substantial amount of routine reporting that has not changed for many years. The information in these reports is used to complete required forms, but no one is using it to change behavior. Deans and chairs are aware that there is an office on campus that provides numbers, but few if any faculty members are even aware that the office exists. Regional State University probably has a reasonably sized IR office that reports to the provost. That office probably does numerous surveys and analytical studies in addition to reporting. It may frequently serve in the role of in-house consultant to departments, colleges, and divisions on numerous issues such as assessment, accreditation, program review, accountability, emerging issues, and special projects. The degree to which the products and

services of Regional State University's IR office are used depends on the players and topics currently at hand, and the same information is often interpreted very differently by different parties involved. Flagship University likely has IR, assessment, and accreditation coordinators employed across its colleges and divisions, whose work may bear little resemblance to one another. If there is a central IR office it likely does external reporting and produces reports that are that are intended to be very important for planning, resource allocation, and quality assurance, but that in reality are seldom considered. Flagship's president and provost are not strong clients of IR.

Now let us suppose that each of these four institutions received a strong requirement from its regional accreditor to strengthen its IR effort in order to accomplish two objectives to substantially increase retention and graduation rates, and to improve assessment of student learning. Considering how this would play out differently in each of these colleges and universities is a useful exercise for understanding institutional politics and culture.

Strengthening (or establishing) IR at Heritage probably would be met with substantial suspicion and resistance, particularly by faculty members, even though they were likely centrally involved in the accreditation effort. Strengthening IR and assessment may be resented because it comes from an outside requirement rather than a decision that was arrived at through consensus internally. The new office might be viewed as taking necessary resources away from academics. Recruiting the new IR staff from among Heritage's existing faculty or staff members or perhaps graduates of the college or similar institutions would be a good strategy for increasing the likelihood of success, but even people with this background will likely have a difficult time legitimizing their positions and being seen as "one of us."

People's Community College might have a relatively easy time of achieving understanding of the need for these changes (it's a bureaucratic requirement), but it would likely struggle with getting faculty members, academic administrators, and student affairs staff to view IR as more than a group of disengaged number crunchers who operate

at the periphery of the college. Moving the strengthened IR operation under the president or academic affairs would help. Recruiting new staff with a level of experience and understanding of academic and student affairs than was likely the case in the past would be another strategy for ensuring the success of this strengthened office, as would modifying structures, recognition, and rewards to explicitly include understanding and improving student learning and success.

Increasing the number of staff members in IR at Regional State University would probably lead to more work being done and/or to work being done more efficiently or thoroughly, but it would not likely lead to real institutional change without the existence and sustained support of a visible champion who explicitly ties the work of IR with the ability of various individuals and groups to achieve their goals. Continuing to highlight IR as an important ally to various coalitions as they emerge can be an effective strategy to leverage change, but it needs to be an ongoing effort.

Strengthening IR would probably have the least effect at Flagship University. Many individuals and groups would likely not see a strengthened centralized IR operation as legitimate or necessary and would advocate for funding to add IR staff members to their local offices. What may be most useful in this situation at Flagship is not more technical-analytical expertise, but rather promotion of a leader who fosters communication and coordination across departments, colleges, and divisions, and who works to change perceptions about evidence-based management.

## **Strategies for Functioning Effectively within Campus Politics and Cultures**

While the models provided above are hopefully useful to promote thinking about patterns in institutional cultures and how politics work in academe, no two institutions are a perfect fit with any of these models; institutional cultures change over time. Politically adept IR professionals seek out people on campus who can help them understand values, norms, history, and relationships. They also realize that different

“ambassadors of organizational culture” that have different interpretations based on their experiences and information from a wide set of perspectives are most valuable.

Saunders (1983) suggests action research—which is tailored to individual decision-making situations, involves the researcher in the decision process, and is focused on results (Hansen & Borden, 2006)—and the principles of change management (Bender, 2012) as methods that IR offices can use to make their work more visible and influential. She describes the increasing involvement of IR offices in planning and budget support as examples of assisting decision-makers in dealing with day-to-day management problems and demonstrating IR’s centrality to institutional management. Similarly, Lasher and Firnberg (1983) make a case for IR becoming centrally involved in institutional strategic planning. More recently, Leimer (2011b) describes the evolution of IR offices into offices of institutional effectiveness, which includes responsibility for areas such as assessment, accreditation, program review, and strategic planning. Whether IR directors have volunteered to take on these activities in order to increase their influence, or separate and competing institutional effectiveness offices have been established due to the lack of influence of IR, or leaders have pushed IR offices, perhaps reluctantly, to assume these additional responsibilities, remains an open question (Leimer, 2011b).

Voorhees and Hinds (2012) explain that one way IR offices can become more politically involved on campus is to participate in environmental scanning: “Sharing analyses of why a given topic is important to your institution is a time-honored way of positioning the institutional office as a ‘player’ in institutional decisions and to creating dialog that can be very helpful to institutional strategy” (Voorhees & Hinds, 2012, p. 6). They also discuss the need to work to establish trust: “Frankness, the ability to see both sides of an argument, and forbearance in sometimes difficult and protracted discussions are, in our experience, the key elements of trust building” (Voorhees & Hinds, 2012, p. 8).

Other suggestions along these lines include becoming involved in key committees; cultivating relationships with key functional

offices (e.g., Registrar, Admissions, Financial Aid, Finance, Human Resources); learning institutional history, personalities, and unwritten rules from peers, your supervisor, and your office colleagues; and trying to understand formal and informal power structures as well as how resources get allocated.

Something that I have come to realize over the years is that being successful in IR often means ensuring the information that your office produces is part of the decision process (the right information in front of the right people at the right time), even if the ultimate decision runs counter to what your information suggests. This means you need to be able to figure out what the right information is, who needs to get it, and when; and, if necessary, you need to change your methods, contacts, and schedule to achieve this. A recent, relevant example of this for me is working very hard following an ERP implementation to develop college and department dashboards with student enrollment information in order to have them as a resource for an academic planning process that included consideration of new majors, elimination of current, low-enrolled majors, and reconfiguration of colleges. This intensely political process is made less so when all of the people involved in the discussion have easy access to relevant and accurate information.

The discussion in this chapter has been on the campus political environment. Several people, however, including Terenzini (2013), have observed that it is increasingly necessary for institutional researchers to also have a sophisticated understanding of the external political environment—of the national, state, and local political trends that affect our institutions and ultimately our work. Much of the information provided above applies to the external environment as well as to that on campus, but it often affects us as it is filtered through the lens of our campus leaders and influential others. Some sources of information about national political trends affecting academe include the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Education*, *Higher Education and National Affairs* (from the American Council on Education), *Trusteeship* (from the Association of Governing Boards), and, of course, AIR. Someone on campus who can be critical for improving your understanding of the external political environment is your college's

or university's governmental affairs representative. You are probably already helping that individual by providing critical information very quickly on demand. You can strengthen this relationship further and make the benefits flow in both directions by listening to the issues she deals with. See if you can get a copy of reports for institutional leaders that she might already be doing or check if you are allowed to attend briefing sessions. Excellent examples of such reports are those prepared by Indiana University (see <http://gov.iu.edu/index.shtml>).

So how can you improve your political knowledge and skills and hopefully not have the experiences I discussed above? I certainly hope that this book helps. In addition, this is an area where effective mentoring as discussed in chapter 7 can be valuable. Finally, I believe that cultivating emotional intelligence is the key. Being able to recognize emotions and perspectives in others, to manage our own emotions, to be adaptable, to project self-confidence, to persevere, and to successfully influence others are learnable skills.

## **Examples for Further Consideration**

1. Shortly after taking a new job as an IR director you learn that you are not permitted to offer lottery-type incentives for survey participation (e.g., one lucky respondent will win something) because the attorney who reports to the vice president for finance has determined that this would violate your state's gaming commission regulations. When you ask your colleagues in the same state about this, they say they have never heard of this interpretation and use such incentives regularly. Others on campus openly ignore this interpretation, but your supervisor, the provost, says that you must follow the interpretation. Survey response rates have been declining. What should you do?
2. In consultation with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, your office develops a diversity climate survey that asks employees about their experiences with harassment, intimidation, inappropriate hiring, reward, reappointment policies, and sexual assault. When you share a draft of the survey more widely, the chief human resources officer and the general

counsel express their concern that the institution will be legally liable to follow up if such experiences are reported and the identity of the survey respondents can be determined.

The associate provost for diversity insists that this response is because “certain people” do not want the questions to be asked. You have been called into a meeting with the president’s cabinet where this issue will be discussed and you will be asked to give your perspective. How will you prepare?

3. A member of the board of trustees at your institution is convinced that the quality of the program from which he graduated many years ago has deteriorated drastically and something needs to be done. He convinces his fellow trustees to pressure the president to have alumni and employer surveys administered concerning this program. The trustee has strong input into the survey content. When you present the results of the surveys at a board meeting, he disputes the results and issues a minority report in which he says your office should be responsible for substantial additional data collection that will take place, as he says, “until we get to the bottom of the problem.” Meanwhile, work is piling up in the office and everyone involved is extremely anxious. What advice do you have for the president about how to proceed?

*See Appendix 1 for sample solutions.*





# PROMOTING EFFECTIVE USE OF INFORMATION PRODUCED BY INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

*Objective: This chapter will provide an overview of how information is used in institutions and how to promote effective use of IR information from the framework of emotional intelligence and campus politics.*

We have noted several times in this book that one definition of effective IR is that it is actually used in decision-making. Sadly, however, IR work, even when it is outstanding from a technical perspective, is often not used. In this chapter we examine this topic, applying the perspectives of emotional intelligence and campus politics. First, however, we review some background on information use.

## **Information Use in Colleges and Universities**

Tetlow (1983) discusses the myths and realities of the use of information. He cites Feldman and March (1981), who state that the assumption of rational decision-making implies

Relevant information will be gathered and analyzed prior to decision making. Information gathered for use in a decision will be used in making that decision. Available information will be examined before more information is gathered or requested. Needs for information will be determined prior to asking for information. Information that is not relevant to a decision will not be gathered. (Feldman & March, 1981, p. 172)

Feldman and March (1981) contrast this myth of rational information use with the reality of phenomena affecting information use:

1. Much of the information that is gathered and communicated by individuals and organizations has little decision relevance.
2. Much of the information that is used to justify a decision is collected and interpreted after the decision has been made, or substantially made.
3. Much of the information gathered in response to requests for information is not considered in the making of decisions for which it was requested.
4. Regardless of the information available at the time a decision is first considered, more information is requested.
5. Complaints that an organization does not have enough information to make a decision occur while available information is ignored.
6. The relevance of the information provided in the decision-making process to the decision being made is less conspicuous than is the insistence on information.

In short, most organizations and individuals often collect more information than they can use or can reasonably expect to use in the making of decisions. At the same time, they appear to be constantly needing or requesting more information, or complaining about inadequacies in information. (Feldman & March, 1981, p. 171)

Tetlow (1983) states that most institutional researchers respond to this situation by acknowledging it and proceeding with the assumption that rationality will ultimately prevail. The problem is, “They fail to recognize that the core activity of information provision, and the core problem for information science, is to facilitate effective communication of desired information between the human generator and the human user” (p. 5).

Tetlow (1983) points out that the process of taking, organizing, and analyzing data in order to produce information is in itself a political act in that it involves judgments about what is important. Jones (1982) notes that people differ in what constitutes information for them, but those who provide the data often do not share the perspectives or benefit from the full context of those using the information. Special interest groups use and interpret information in order to support their viewpoints in an attempt to influence decision-making. IR is politicized in an environment where there is an abundance of data and information and where there is a value in using information to inform decisions or at least making it appear that information is being used in this way (Feldman & March, 1981).

Feldman and March (1981) describe four reasons why organizations request information yet frequently do not use it for decision-making. First, it is easy for information requests to proliferate because those individuals requesting the information are not the same as those who have to expend time and effort to provide it. Those requesting information may also believe that it is better to have information in case it is needed. Second, people gather information simply for monitoring the environment, without necessarily expecting to act on it. Third, most information that is shared is not looked at objectively but rather according to whether it aids or hinders one's political position. Information is subject to purposeful misrepresentation. Finally, information may be requested because people want to show that they are "acting rationally" rather because they are going to use it to affect decisions:

Using information, asking for information, and justifying decisions in terms of information have all come to be significant ways in which we symbolize that the process is legitimate, that we are good decision makers, and that our organizations are well managed. (Feldman & March, 1981, p. 178)

Lasher and Firnberg (1983) and Tetlow (1983) point out that information is always subject to multiple interpretations. While the IR director interprets the results of the office's work according to the director's own frame of reference, various audiences on campus do the

same, according to what may be widely divergent frames of reference. Leaders are often heavily influenced by their previous experiences. Leaders will view information and make decisions differently based on their previous administrative roles, experiences at various types of institutions, and disciplinary orientations (Knight, Folkins, Hakel, & Kennell, 2011). The approaches that are successful for dealing with one supervisor may need to be changed drastically when there is a new supervisor. The IR director can use information to temper a new leader's desire to make substantial changes. This takes good information, tact, and appropriate timing. With limited time and much information available, institutional leaders are looking for the IR director to supply meaning and directions, not to "let the facts speak for themselves." Providing informed recommendations can greatly improve an IR director's standing and influence with that director's supervisor. Purcell, Harrington, and King (2012) state, "Trust includes not only the reliability and viability of the data, but the ability of the IR staff to present the information in a useable context" (p. 4). I would add that trust also includes the ability to present information in a timely manner. The institutional leader is privy to political perspectives that may influence decisions in ways that would not be expected from information alone. Those of us in IR should consider that we have been successful when our information is part of the decision-making process, but we should realize that information alone may not determine every course of action.

Purcell et al. (2012) also discuss institutional support for the campus chief executive officer. I would argue that many of their conclusions also apply in situations where IR directors report to provosts, vice presidents, vice provosts, and deans who are all incredibly busy institutional leaders with multiple demands to balance in scarce timeframes. Purcell et al.'s (2012) "presidential realities" (pp. 135–138) are as follows:

1. More often than not, the campus president will not have leadership experience in governing all aspects of a campus. ...
2. New presidents are especially vulnerable to unfettered enthusiasm for change. ...
3. Time is short. ...

4. Trust is a terrible thing to waste. ...
5. Things look different from their side of the desk. (Purcell et al., 2012, pp. 135–138)

Posey and Pitter (2012) note the chief academic officer plays a key role in responding to accountability demands. They note that IR offices that report to the provost (the most common pattern for “mature” offices) should expect to be engaged in assessing student learning, supporting accreditation, planning for new academic programs, conducting surveys of graduates, analyzing research productivity, and studying the relationship of faculty resources to students. They note the importance of IR professionals having what Terenzini terms issues and contextual intelligence in order to effectively serve the provost. The authors also highlight the importance of IR in demonstrating institutional effectiveness, which they relate to evaluating academic functions, demonstrating that resources are utilized in a manner consistent with the strategic goals of the mission, and establishing performance measures to indicate the institution is making continuous progress in meeting its mission.

Posey and Pitter (2012) stress the importance of not just providing information, but also of providing implications or making meaning of the information. I agree, and stress the same in my own work (Knight, 2010b). This is what some people refer to as actionable information. In addition, Posey and Pitter stress the importance of timing, of providing information in multiple formats, and of being prepared for ad hoc requests with very short timelines. In order to effectively support the provost, institutional researchers must understand the complexity of interactions between the provost and other constituents and the complexity and multiple levels of data required. The authors state that provosts function at the managerial or administrative level that exists between the level of the faculty and the level of the president and board and involves balancing these two, often quite different, perspectives. They explain that institutional effectiveness activities are often viewed with suspicion by faculty members. It is important to not underestimate the ability of the faculty to undermine administrative initiatives.

Integrating information use with the material in previous chapters and reflecting on my own experiences, I can identify the five following reasons why information generated by IR might not be used:

1. The person with whom the information is shared simply has no time to think strategically and connect the dots between the information from IR and institutional priorities. That person is too busy with day-to-day issues and problems.
2. The information is not shared in a way that readily leads to action, or to the information being perceived as relevant.
3. The information is not provided at the right time to make a difference.
4. The information may imply the need for changes that the person receiving it or the institution is not ready to make.
5. The information does not support the political agenda of the person receiving it or that of the receiver's supervisor (e.g., the president).

A good friend and colleague gained a very useful perspective several years ago when she had the opportunity to serve as her institution's chief academic officer (the role of her supervisor) on an interim basis for a few months. One thing she took away from this experience was that the individuals who supervise the IR office or function are often so busy putting out fires that they simply do not have the time or energy to think through the implications of our work. They need us to be very clear about providing recommendations. While this fact may be very clear to our supervisors, providing meaningful recommendations can be very difficult for us if we are out of the loop in terms of being able to link our work to key priorities, events, and discussions. Even if we know the context and have the support to provide recommendations, we need to have and use our emotional intelligence and understand the perspectives of others so as to realize the various reasons why those recommendations still may not be acted upon.

I also have some specific advice to offer about working effectively with the person to whom IR reports:

- Come to meetings with an agenda and stick to it.
- Learn and use the preferred communications style of the person to whom IR reports.
- Know your boss well enough to be able to predict how that person will react in various situations. (Chu, 2006)
- Never let your supervisor be surprised.
- Understand your supervisor's agenda.

Especially if the individual to whom IR reports is the institution's president or vice president, face-to-face meeting time is a precious commodity. Since I have been an IR director, I have had only one hour per month in regularly scheduled meetings with my supervisors. It is helpful to determine what items are simply informational and do not require discussion and decision-making and share these via e-mail, if possible. Structure your meeting agenda so that critical items requiring timely decisions are at the top of the list. Determine if the supervisor is comfortable doing business via e-mail or telephone or if everything has to be face-to-face. (I have had supervisors with all possible variations of these styles.) Take time to make the supervisor aware of interactions with other areas of the institution that might present problems. (Surprising the supervisor is never a good thing!) Try to have sufficient ongoing interaction with the supervisor so that you can predict how that person will react in various situations and be prepared as such situations present themselves. Finally, realize that all of these issues can change drastically when IR reports to different university leaders.

## **Viewing Information Use from the Lens of Emotional Intelligence and Campus Politics**

In this section we focus on the example of lack of use of a university's new online faculty activity reporting tool. We will assume that the institution has purchased a well-established product that has been used on many other campuses, that the tool integrates well with the student and human resources information systems, and that the IR office (as the sponsor of the new tool) has both provided training for

faculty members and administrative assistants on entering data on faculty activities, and has persuaded the provost to provide one-time funding to employ a group of temporary staff members to do the initial entry of faculty data. A few months have passed from the initial rollout of this tool and the vast majority of faculty members' data are now in the system. To his frustration, however, the IR director finds that, aside from the university-level reports that he has run for the provost, almost none of the deans, chairs, or individual faculty members have run reports from the system. Faculty members continue to be asked to provide information for a variety of reports even though all of this information is in the new system and could easily be retrieved with a few keystrokes. Various persons on campus continue to complain that they do not have the information about faculty members that they need for important projects, even though this information is in the system. Faculty members continue to be required to produce information themselves for the annual raise process and to produce large notebooks for promotion and tenure review, although all of the required elements are in the online database. The IR director is beginning to receive complaints from faculty members who told him he promised faculty that if they entered their information into the system, these requests would stop. How can our understanding of emotional intelligence and campus politics help us to improve this situation?

From an emotional intelligence perspective, the IR director needs to recognize and act from the framework of both personal and social competence. It would be a very understandable reaction for him to be frustrated that he has already put a great deal of work into bringing this project to people's attention, doing substantial background work to acquire and integrate the tool, and helping faculty members get their information into the system. He might conclude that people should be willing to do just a fraction of the work he has already done by making just a few clicks on the screen to run reports. While we may understand why he feels this way, part of the resolution to this problem involves him recognizing how the situation is affecting him, practicing self-control, realizing that he has the ability to positively affect what is happening, being flexible, being willing to pursue goals beyond what is expected or



required, and persisting in seeking goals despite obstacles and setbacks. Maybe the deans, chairs, and faculty members are actually grateful for the work the IR director has done, are willing to do additional work, and are supportive of change, but perhaps there are additional factors coming into play. The first step in improving the situation is for the IR director to practice self-awareness and self-regulation.

The next thing that our understanding of emotional intelligence tells us the IR director should do is to effectively engage others in understanding their perspectives. He needs to understand how the deans, chairs, and faculty members feel about this situation, take an active interest in their concerns, listen openly, appreciate emotional currents and power relationships, and try to manage change in this setting. Since the people involved might be hesitant to explain in a group setting why they are not using the information contained in the new faculty activity database, having a series of one-on-one conversations would be a better strategy. Asking open, objective, and nonjudgmental questions of a few key contacts—perhaps some deans, chairs, and faculty members with whom the IR director has built a good relationship over time—might reveal some reasons for lack of information use that the IR director had never considered. For example, although the process of running reports from the new system seems very easy from the IR director's perspective, others may find the task intimidating and they may hesitate to ask for help. Decision-makers may not trust that all information is complete in the new system and may want to continue to use the old, manual data collection processes as a backup. Key individuals, such as assistant deans, committee chairs, or administrative assistants, may not be aware of the need to change procedures given the existence of the new system. It may take substantial time (perhaps years) for people to feel sufficiently confident in the new system to allow high-stakes decisions such as promotion and tenure to be based on the information it provides. Although they may not have communicated this concern to the IR director, many persons may be uncomfortable with the “big brother” aspect of the online database and may not know about or trust the provisions for information access and security. Although learning to run reports in the new system may actually be quite easy, busy people

working in an environment of constant change may view this new skill as the straw that broke the camel's back, the task that represents the point at which they decide they are unwilling or unable to do one more new thing. While either the IR director or others in the institution may address all these possible reasons for not using the new online faculty activity database, it might take a high degree of social competence for others in the institution to reveal those reasons so that both the IR director and others in the institution may address them.

From the perspective of understanding campus politics and cultures, the key to understanding the use (or lack of use) of information from the online faculty activity reporting tool is understanding how this fits with campus traditions, values, and ways of doing business. Consider how this would play out at the four fictitious institutions discussed in the last chapter. Although I doubt that Heritage College would have implemented such a tool, lack of use of its resulting information would likely result from the fact that people there are used to gaining information from face-to-face interactions. The tool would be threatening because it would represent a change in the traditional ways of doing things and an unequal distribution of information (and therefore power) on the part of IR and the provost or president. Sharing access to all of the information in the database with everyone on campus might be a useful strategy at Heritage. At People's Community College, the use of the information by IR and central administration would probably not be unexpected or threatening, but its use in divisions or departments might be hampered by the perspective that the information was meant for use only by the People's Community College leadership and that it is not appropriate or useful at the division or department level. Being able to customize the reports and demonstrate their effective use for activities such as program accreditation might help to increase usage. Deans, chairs, and faculty members at Regional State University might simply ignore the new tool since they do not see its use as advantageous to them, but they might be persuaded to use it if doing so demonstrates their effectiveness in activities that have been determined to be politically important—perhaps community engagement, online education, or diversity and inclusion. The IR director at Flagship University needs to

realize that using information from this new tool is just one more of a myriad of developments there. It is just one more thing competing for people's attention and something that may be used more effectively if it is customized and contextualized to each academic unit. Developing a user community for the tool might be a useful strategy at Flagship.

## **Strategies for Improving Information Use**

Tetlow (1983) provides the following recommendations to institutional researchers:

- Understand that not all information that is requested will be used to influence a decision.
- Diagnose the style and method used by the decision maker(s) and determine which dimensions are pivotal.
- Recognize that one's concept of the decision-making process largely predetermines one's response to other people's logic, behavior, and opinions.
- Take into account the situational context of the decision.  
(Tetlow, 1983, p. 9)

Reflecting on Tetlow's points 30 years later, I think they all remain highly relevant. My own experiences lead me to provide some additional advice. On a technical-analytical level, benchmarking information against other institutions (where available and appropriate), providing trend information, and disaggregating information by academic unit and student groups may provide a more useful basis for action. Providing information in multiple formats, such as a Fact Book, dashboards, narrative reports, and verbal presentations, is often helpful in promoting the use of information. It is also important to recognize that the time when IR information is produced may not be the optimal time for it to be used; summarizing information in a newsletter or e-mail factoids and having IR representatives on important institutional committees so that information can be offered in the context of crucial discussions may improve utilization. Events such as institutional accreditation, state reporting mandates, and media requests can also

serve to spotlight the work of IR. I have also found it to be extremely valuable to have some key contacts on campus as well as a network of colleagues at other institutions to whom I can turn to explore reasons that information is not used and how it could be used more effectively.

Having a sufficiently large staff that allows some time and energy to be devoted to effective information utilization, having an office priorities statement and leadership support for enforcing it, and having a leader of the IR or institutional effectiveness organization with the capabilities discussed by Leimer (2012) and summarized in this book are all strategies for moving one's institution toward what has been termed a culture of inquiry or a culture of evidence. Specific leadership strategies, including ideas about how to lead with limited formal authority, are provided in the next chapter.

## **Examples for Further Consideration**

1. Following an ERP transition, you, as the associate vice president for IR, are asked to lead up the development of a data warehouse. From a technical perspective, the warehouse is up and running and provides timely and accurate information, yet few people seem to be using it. What are some reasons why this might be the case and what can you do to increase use?
2. As the IR director, you are anxious to share with your institution's deans and department chairs the good work you and your colleagues have done with the Delaware Study of Instructional Costs and Productivity. They are anxious to receive the information, but the provost, your supervisor, keeps asking you to make changes in the format of the reports. You are happy that he is so interested, but these requests for changes are keeping you from moving forward with sharing the results and progressing with other projects. What can you do to be able to move forward?
3. As the assistant provost for IR and Assessment, you were delighted to learn that your institution's regional accreditation team found no need for follow-up action concerning

assessment, although their report did agree with your concern that in many units assessment is being carried out in order to satisfy institutional and external mandates and is not being used for institutional improvement. Now, after the accreditation team report is in, you have heard people say that they can stop worrying about assessment for several years. Why are people at your campus looking at assessment of student learning with a bureaucratic compliance mindset rather than as a tool for improving learning? What steps can you take to better understand this perspective and leverage more meaningful use of assessment results?

*See Appendix 1 for sample solutions.*



# **PART V**

Developing Yourself as a Leader





# LEADERSHIP FRAMES AND PRACTICES

*Objective: This chapter will provide an overview of leadership principles within an IR context, including a discussion of leading with limited authority.*

While this entire book is about various aspects of leadership and management, this chapter is about leadership and leadership effectiveness specifically. What do I mean by leadership? I have reviewed several definitions of leadership and find that the common concept seems to be organizing or influencing people to achieve a common goal. I hope you can already see the critical importance of self-awareness, self-regulation, and social competence for leadership; this is why I have called emotional intelligence the foundation for effective leadership. This chapter provides a summary of some of the vast literature available about leadership and suggests an application of these concepts to IR. It ends with a section on leadership without formal authority.

## **Leadership Frames**

Bolman and Gallos (2011) note colleges and universities are extremely complex organizations in which it is often difficult to understand what is going on. They write that academic leaders tend to go awry for two reasons: they see a limited or inaccurate picture, and they fail to take people along with them in the changes they are trying to make. The authors state that academic leaders can enhance capabilities through better understanding of three issues: links among thinking, learning, and effective action; major challenges and dynamics in the academy; and strategies for sustaining self and leadership. They assist leaders with

addressing four recurring challenges—how to bring institutional clarity, how to manage differences, how to foster productive working relationships, and how to enact a powerful vision—by introducing four frames or perspectives that highlight distinct components of life in academe. These frames are summarized below.

Within the structural view, successful leaders create processes and relationships that make work easier by making it clear to all involved who is supposed to do what. The successful leader within the human resources frame creates supportive and nurturing environments that enable everyone to use their talents fully and work effectively with each other. Understanding and appreciating differences, managing them productively, and responding appropriately to the needs of multiple individuals and groups, while at the same time allowing the whole organization to move forward toward accomplishing its goals, is the role of the successful leader within the political frame. Imparting energy and meaning into day-to-day efforts in order to strengthen commitment and purpose is the key role of the successful leader within the symbolic perspective.

The metaphor for the academic institution within Bolman and Gallos' (2011) structural view of academic leadership is the factory. Images of academic leaders include architect, analyst, and systems designer. The basic leadership task is to divide the work and coordinate the pieces. The leadership logic model is rational analysis. Clarity is the currency of leadership. This view or frame emphasizes formal roles and relationships. Key leadership assumptions are that specialization increases efficiency; clarity and control enhance performance; and problems result from structural misalignment. The areas of leadership analysis are rules, roles, policies, procedures, lines of authority, technology, and the environment.

Extended family is the metaphor for the academic institution within Bolman and Gallos' (2011) human resources view of academic leadership. Images of the academic leader include servant, catalyst, and coach. The basic leadership task is to facilitate the alignment between individual and organizational needs. The leadership logic is

attending to people. The leadership currency is care. This view or frame emphasizes satisfaction, motivation, productivity, empowerment, and skills development. Key leadership assumptions are that institutions and individuals need each other, individual–organizational alignment benefits both sides, productive relationships are vital to organizational health, and learning is central to productivity and change. Areas of leadership analysis include needs, skills, relationships, and fit.

The metaphor for the academic institution is the jungle within Bolman and Gallos' (2011) political view of academic leadership. Images of the academic leader are advocate, negotiator, and political strategist. Basic leadership tasks are bargaining, negotiating, building coalitions, setting agendas, and managing conflict. The leadership logic is distributive justice and the leadership currency is empowerment. The frame emphasis is the allocation of power and scarce resources. Key leadership assumptions are that differences are that enduring, resources are scarce, conflict is inevitable, and key decisions involve who gets what. Areas of leadership analysis include power, conflict resources, interests, agendas, and alliances.

The metaphor for the academic institution within Bolman and Gallos' (2011) symbolic view of leadership is a temple or theater. Images of the academic leader include artist and prophet. The basic leadership tasks are to see possibilities; create common vision; manage meaning; and infuse passion, creativity, and soul. The leadership logic is building faith and shared meaning; the leadership currency is hope and promise. The frame emphasis is meaning, purpose, and values. Key leadership assumptions are that people interpret experiences differently; meaning-making is a central organizational process; culture is an institution's emotional and intellectual glue; and symbols express institutional identity, values, and beliefs. Areas of leadership analysis include culture, rituals, ceremonies, stories, myth, vision, and symbols.

How can Bolman and Gallos' four frames of academic leadership be applied specifically to IR? The most important point I want to make here is that, while I don't have hard data on this issue, after 25 years in the profession and my interactions with many institutional researchers I strongly suspect that the great majority of us have a structural

perspective on leadership. A logical, rational approach to breaking down tasks into steps, making those steps and each person's role in accomplishing them clear to everyone, and carefully coordinating the process to make sure it proceeds as efficiently as possible seems to be the worldview of most IR people I know.

The two problems with nearly all people in IR working and leading from a structural frame, and the reasons for understanding Bolman and Gallos' four frames, are that not everyone else with whom we work naturally follows the structural frame and that making an effort to incorporate the other frames into our work can help us solve problems and accomplish goals that cannot be achieved from the structural frame alone. The human resources frame is very important for all of the issues discussed in Chapters 5 through 7 about managing and developing staff. The political frame is crucial for understanding and managing differences in perspectives and competing influences on power and resources. Although examples of the symbolic frame are typically provided for top-level leaders, there are situations where this perspective is useful for institutional researchers as well. I hope it is apparent how emotional intelligence is a necessary prerequisite for successful use of the human resources, political, and symbolic frames. Let me provide a personal example of each of these frames in action in a leadership situation in IR.

When I started my current job I was faced with many alternatives for the first actions I should take as the leader of the new office. Because there had been staff turnover in the office in past years and several people were fairly new, there was a question of who should be doing what within the office. Also, since several of the activities that I believed should be done by our office had been taken up by staff members in other offices, it was important to have several conversations about which offices should be doing which things. It was very tempting for our first task to be to have a series of conversations on who should be doing what and then draw up a large spreadsheet with tasks in rows and people and offices in columns to assign and agree on responsibility.

As I discussed in Chapter 4 in the section on motivation, I took each of my new colleagues to lunch during my first week and asked them what they liked about their jobs, what they did not like, what they

wished could change, and where they saw themselves in the future. In nearly all cases I learned about some changes in people's circumstances that I wanted to work on immediately to improve. From a human resources perspective, the most important thing that I should work on first in my new job was supporting my new colleagues in order to make their experiences as good as possible and to improve our effectiveness as a result.

A third thing that I needed to work on quickly was how the office was perceived and how this affected our influence within the university. The previous office staff members spent a lot of time telling people that they could not help them. As a result, faculty and staff members seeking information went to other offices for help and the IR function became distributed across campus. Since information providers used their own definitions to provide responses, a great deal of time was wasted pointing fingers and defending one's information as correct while finding fault with the information produced by others. I was clear that I needed to spend time getting out across campus and listening to a large number of people in order to demonstrate a genuine concern for their needs, to reestablish the role and responsibilities of the office, and to get people to agree on definitions and establish data governance.

The last set of things I needed to do were to make some seemingly minor but nevertheless important changes such as changing the office name from Academic Assessment and Institutional Research to Institutional Effectiveness, having a standard format within reports and presentations, and having some branded materials such as coffee mugs with the name of our new office on it, all in order to symbolize that we were a new office with new staff, new responsibilities, and a new orientation toward service and excellence.

I hope this demonstrates how is the need for IR leaders to be aware of and operate from all four of Bolman and Gallos' four frames. In my case at the start of my new job I decided that it was most critical to function first within the human resources frame and attend to ways to support my new colleagues, but it was important for me to work within all four frames fairly quickly. The office is now perceived as much more

effective and useful, our work is being used much more extensively, the staff members are happier and producing better work, and the responsibilities of our office and related offices are much more clear to everyone involved.

## **Leadership Practices in an Institutional Research Context**

Maxwell's (2007) 21 irrefutable laws of leadership are a good starting place for a discussion of leadership practices. Let me share just a few examples from Maxwell's laws that I find particularly important to IR. I have seen several examples of Maxwell's Law of the Lid (Maxwell, 2007) with colleagues who express an interest in moving to leadership positions, but are hesitant or unable to refocus their efforts from technical-analytical skills (using Terenzini's terminology) to understanding and influencing people around them. ("The Law of the Lid: Leadership ability determines a person's level of effectiveness." The higher you want to climb, the more you need leadership. The greater the impact you want to make, the greater your influence needs to be. Personal and organizational effectiveness is proportionate to strength of leadership.) I remember someone who had worked for a long time as an assistant director who was interviewing for director positions. When asked how she would respond to a pressing need at the institution, she said she would wait until someone told her what kind of SPSS program she needed to write. This is not leadership! This person, although incredibly talented in the technical sense, could not successfully think through how her own emotions were affecting her and how she was being perceived by others. In other words, she had not mastered the key concepts of emotional intelligence.

Another example was a colleague who had become director of an IR office but was still essentially performing as a frontline staff member. He spent his time working on the tougher projects in the office himself, but didn't look at the possibility of sharing these tasks with those who reported to him and viewing this as an opportunity for them to improve their skills. He was great to work with, but he could not rise above the day-to-day tasks in order to develop the other staff members and to give them the opportunity to have some leadership experiences themselves.

This situation seems to me to relate to several of Maxwell's laws (2007):

- “3. The Law of Process: Leadership develops daily, not in a day. Becoming a leader is somewhat like investing successfully in the stock market. If your hope is to make a fortune in a day, you're not going to be successful” (p. 25).
- “5. The Law of Addition: Leaders add value by serving others. The bottom line in leadership isn't how far we advance ourselves, but how far we advance others” (p. 51). “Inexperienced leaders are quick to lead before knowing anything about the people they intend to lead. But mature leaders listen, learn, and then lead” (p. 55).
- “6. The Law of Solid Ground: Trust is the foundation of leadership. When it comes to leadership, you just can't take shortcuts, no matter how long you've been leading your people” (p. 63). “To build trust, a leader must exhibit competence, connection, and character” (p. 64). “How do leaders earn respect? By making sound decisions, by admitting their mistakes, and by putting what's best for their followers and the organization ahead of their personal agendas” (p. 66).
- “10. The Law of Connection: Leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand. You can't move people to action unless you first move them with emotion. The heart comes before the head” (p. 115). “The stronger the relationship and connection between individuals, the more likely the follower will want to help the leader” (p. 116). “To connect with people in a group, relate to them as individuals” (p. 117). “It's the leader's job to initiate connection with the people” (p. 120).
- “11. The Law of the Inner Circle: A leader's potential is determined by those closest to him. Only if you reach your potential as a leader do your people have a chance to reach their potential” (p. 131). “It's lonely at the top, so you'd better take someone with you” (p. 134). “Hire the best people you can find, develop them as much as you can, and hand off everything you possibly can to them” (p. 137).

- “13. The Law of the Picture: People do what people see. Great leaders always seem to embody two disparate qualities. They are both highly visionary and highly practical” (p. 158). “The leader’s effective modeling of the vision makes the picture come alive!” (p. 159). “Followers may doubt what their leaders say, but they usually believe what they do” (p. 161).
- “15. The Law of Victory: Leaders find a way for the team to win. Victorious leaders are unwilling to accept defeat. The alternative to winning is totally unacceptable to them” (p. 180). “When the pressure is on, great leaders are at their best. Whatever is inside them comes to the surface” (p. 183). “Leaders who practice the Law of Victory have no Plan B. That is why they keep fighting” (p. 189).
- “16. Law of the Big Mo: Momentum is a leader’s best friend. Momentum is like a magnifying glass; it makes things look bigger than they really are” (p. 198). “Even average people can perform far above average in an organization with great momentum. It takes a leader to create momentum” (p. 199).

Unfortunately, many of us have witnessed situations where someone who has excellent technical-analytical skills is placed into a position of leadership—maybe for a project, or as director of the office for an interim or, worse yet, permanent basis—and does not do well. This individual knows the “stuff of IR,” the data, the tools, the issues, the institution, so what goes wrong? The answer is almost always the same. Leadership, by definition, cannot exist in a vacuum; it takes effective interaction with people. People will follow you for a while when you are given a formal leadership position. But being a real leader is about understanding people; interacting with them effectively; establishing trust and respect; modeling the behavior you want others to practice; understanding that it is primarily about people, not projects, while still getting the work done; and realizing that you need to take risks, make yourself vulnerable, and make personal sacrifices.

The skills needed for being a good leader in IR are different from those needed for being a good practitioner. Just trying to do it all



yourself, simply dictating what needs to be done, or somehow assuming that the people you are responsible for leading will figure it out on their own will not work. Not everyone is cut out to be a leader in IR, and that is fine. The good news is that if you want to be one, there are knowledge and skills that are learnable. As Maxwell (2011) says in his book *The 5 Levels of Leadership*, those who move from being practitioners to being leaders need to focus on their growth as a leader, shift from position and formal rules to potential and relationships, and focus on people. Effective leaders have a realistic understanding of themselves, a people-oriented leadership style. They treat others as they want to be treated, and strike a balance between care and candor. They also understand, however, that effective relationships are the start and not the end of good leadership. Good leaders build on effective leadership to produce results. Relationships lead to credibility, which leads to motivation and momentum, which produces results. Most people want to be part of something greater than themselves. They become effective members of a team when they see how a leader has created a vision that connects their success to that of the office and the institution. They understand and buy into priorities crafted by a leader who has put the team ahead of himself or herself.

As I think about Maxwell's ideas about leadership effectiveness and relate them to what I have seen in the very best IR operations and what I have emphasized in my current job, the words that most resonate with me are respect, trust, and victory. I have never assumed I would have respect from my colleagues based on my past accomplishments or formal recognitions. Instead, I assumed I would have to earn it based on my own accomplishments now and, more importantly, based on our accomplishments as a group. As soon as I began my current job, I jumped in and completed a couple of projects that had been tabled. This was both to show that I know how to do work (to establish credibility) and to show that I do not consider myself above doing it. During times when we have been short staffed, I built time into my own schedule to do things such as administer exams. This is probably not the best use of my time from the perspective of my salary, but it meant that I was willing to help with any tasks necessary to allow the office to get its

work done. This sent an important message to my colleagues and was received well; people were more willing to help with projects outside of their job descriptions when they saw that I was doing the same. When we wrote new job descriptions; created tools such as the client satisfaction survey, master project calendar, and so on, outlined in Chapter 3; and began new projects such as surveys and reports, I made certain I shared these with my colleagues for their reactions and advice before finalizing them. This demonstrates my respect for them, thus helping to earn their respect. Another tangible way to demonstrate respect is how you use your time. As busy as you are with projects, ensuring that you make time to meet about their questions and concerns, keep scheduled staff meetings, and pass along news that you receive elsewhere in the university makes it clear to your colleagues that they are your priority.

The best way I know to establish trust is to give people important tasks and get out of their way to complete them unless I am needed. People need varying levels of interaction, guidance, and support, and different projects require different levels of my involvement. I have made it my basic approach to give my colleagues meaningful work, the tools to accomplish it, and the understanding that I am there to help. I then back off and trust them as professionals to get the job done and done well. Another important way I have to establish trust is to step in with clients who have made unreasonable requests or interacted in an unpleasant way with my colleagues. Demonstrating to those to whom you provide leadership that you have their backs is a very effective way to build trust; failing to do so is a very effective way to lose trust by demonstrating that you will not support them.

For me, victory, as a component of leadership, can be about both very simple things and major accomplishments. In either case, using emotional intelligence and being tenacious demonstrates that we can achieve our goals and take charge of our future. When I arrived in my current job there were several small things we needed to accomplish. As I noted in Chapter 1, we needed to move money from the supplies and equipment part of our budget to the travel part so that there would be enough money for all of us to attend conferences. We had the money; the challenge was to push the organization to change how we

use our resources. Another task was to get our office name changed to Institutional Effectiveness in order to signal that we were a new office with new staff and new responsibilities that was conducting itself in a new way. A third task was to establish a file server for our office so that we could share data and documents more effectively. While all of these were seemingly easy tasks, they all involved overcoming various roadblocks; we persevered through all of them and reached our goals. This not only made our lives easier in various ways, but it also sent a message that we have control over our own destiny. An example of a larger accomplishment involved everyone in the office assuming additional responsibilities so that we could accomplish numerous projects left unstaffed after two resignations. Maxwell (2007) discussed the need for unity of vision, diversity of skills, and leadership that provides motivation, empowerment, and direction: those are exactly the components we drew on to be victorious.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) conceive of leadership not as being about personality, but rather as being about a set of learnable, personal, best leadership practices that they have summed up in the following five practices.

1. To “Model the Way” is to act in ways that earn you respect. It is to model the behavior that you expect of others. In order to model the way, leaders must be clear about and willing to share their values. They must not only talk about their values, but also act in ways that demonstrate them. An example of an IR director modeling the way might include responding to an information request with more details than were requested and following up with the client to ensure that the client’s needs were met.
2. Leaders who “Inspire a Shared Vision” imagine attractive futures for their organizations. Effective leaders have strong confidence in their visions for the organization and in their ability to lead it toward a goal. They are constantly recognizing opportunities for the organization. Effective leaders must know their constituents and how to effectively engage them in

their vision. This part of leadership is about building bridges between individuals' values, interests, and aspirations and the collective vision for the organization. An example of an IR director inspiring a shared vision might include promoting a vision among everyone in the office about how much better the office would be if it were to adopt data warehousing and business intelligence procedures. While staff members might wish to dwell on the difficulties of learning new data definitions, the inspiring leader focuses on how well the office will be appreciated once it can deliver information much more effectively to leaders.

3. Leaders who “Challenge the Process” are proactive, question the rules of engagement, and do not accept at face value the response, “This is how we have always done things.” These leaders search for opportunities to innovate and improve. They may have invented new approaches, products, or services, or they might be early adopters of practices learned from others. Effective leaders recognize and are not afraid of the fact that some innovations may fail. Recognizing that change is difficult for many people, leaders who challenge the process may start by focusing on small changes that lead to easy wins, thereby demonstrating that more victories will result from changes that are more substantial. A simple example of challenging the process that led to a small win for my colleagues and me was to take over IPEDS key-holder responsibility from a staff member in another office and to change the peers for our IPEDS Data Feedback Report to a more appropriate list, thereby making the report more useful for university leaders; this helped us to gain credibility. This simple change helped my colleagues to become more comfortable with more-substantial changes that we made subsequently.
4. To “Enable Others to Act” is to foster collaboration and build trust. Leadership is a team effort. Effective leaders make it possible for others to do good work not just by doing things themselves, but also by involving colleagues in important

activities and giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their good work to others. They recognize that power is not a zero sum game; effective leaders give away power to their colleagues and find that the office collectively benefits from greater recognition and appreciation than it had previously. Leaders who understand this principal challenge and support their colleagues take risks. Having colleagues join you in important meetings demonstrates your willingness to share power and involve them in important work. Later, helping them to prepare to represent the office on their own enables them to learn and grow.

5. Leaders who “Encourage the Heart” demonstrate caring and support for their colleagues to carry on. Such gestures can be simple rather than dramatic. Done with genuineness and authenticity, gestures and celebrations can help to build a collective identity and get the group through difficult times. Examples of encouraging the heart by an IR director could include a written thank you note, acknowledgement to others of the contributions of colleagues, or more formal recognition from an institutional awards program.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) note that leadership is fundamentally about relationships and credibility. Effective relationships are established through building trust and respect, demonstrating commitment to the group, and perceiving situations from others’ points of view. Leaders build credibility by actively demonstrating honesty, a sense of direction and concern for the future of the organization, the ability to get things done, and an enthusiastic positive outlook.

In the book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins (2001) discusses his concept of “Level 5 Leadership.” This notion builds on the idea of great leaders first being highly capable individuals (Level 1), then contributing team members (Level 2), then competent managers (Level 3), then effective leaders (Level 4). Whereas the Level 3 competent manager “organizes people and resources toward the effective and efficient pursuit of predetermined objectives” (p. 20) and the Level 4 effective

leader “catalyzes commitment to and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision, stimulating higher performance standards,” (p. 20), the Level 5 executive “builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will” (p. 20). Collins says Level 5 leaders have strong ambition, but they channel it toward the organization, not themselves. He provides Abraham Lincoln as an example of a Level 5 leader who was “modest and willful, humble and fearless” (p. 20). Level 5 leaders not only put the organization before themselves, but they also set up successors for success; the organization does not fall apart when the leader departs, but rather actually continues to grow even stronger. Level 5 leaders are fanatically driven and show a modest, worker-like diligence, “more plow horse than show horse” (p. 39). When the organization is successful, they contribute that success to others, but when there are problems, they take full responsibility.

In his follow-up monograph, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, Collins (2005) discusses Level 5 Leadership in nonbusiness settings where “because I said so” is typically not a sufficient response for leaders to motivate people. He describes the leadership style of the CEO of the Girl Scouts USA organization. She has limited executive power over hundreds of local councils and tens of thousands of volunteers. She describes her leadership style as involving “the power of inclusion, the power of language, the power of shared interests, and the power of coalition” (Frances Hesselbein, quoted in Collins, 2005, p. 10). Collins describes this as a legislative rather than executive style, one that relies more on persuasion, political currency, and shared interests than does the classic business executive power leadership model.

It seems to me that leadership of an IR office is somewhere between the two extremes that Collins describes. As the director, you have the authority to hire, supervise, develop, evaluate, and, if need be, fire employees. Nevertheless, colleges and universities are generally environments that highly value shared decision-making and participative leadership. Various employee-centered human resources practices, possible collective bargaining, and the strong sense in many institutions that “this is how we have always done it” make leadership through authority difficult. An effective IR leader balances commitment to

the principles of learning organizations, such as those outlined in the *Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes & Posner, 2002), with a commitment to moving the office forward, and does so with a focus on the office, not on himself or herself.

Another of Collins's concepts in *Good to Great* (2001) that has an application for an IR director is what he calls "confront the brutal facts (but never lose faith)" (p. 65). He says that great organizations must confront the brutal facts of their current reality. The manager's role in promoting confrontation of brutal facts is in creating a climate where everyone is comfortable discussing the truth. Collins (2001, p. 88) discusses a key approach that he calls the Stockdale Paradox: "Retain absolute faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, AND *at the same time* [emphasis in original] confront the most brutal facts about your current reality, whatever they might be."

While this chapter has so far summarized some general literature on leadership and applied it to IR, there are also some sources specific to higher education that are valuable for our consideration here. Chu's (2006) primer for department chairs has some important considerations that I paraphrase:

- You are the official representative of your office. Be aware of what you say, how you say it, and what you do.
- Credibility is your most important asset. Never be afraid to admit a mistake or to apologize.
- Political capital is an important asset. Always go the extra mile for someone, because you never know when it will pay off down the road.
- Do not let it get personal.
- Political power is increased by the perception of competence and excellence.

Rob Jenkins's post on "What Makes a Good Leader" to his "The 2-Year Track" blog for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* also provides some important insights about the qualities of good academic leadership:

- Listening. A good leader doesn't think he or she knows everything, or always knows better than other people.
- Inclusiveness. A good leader not only listens, but listens to lots of different people—and takes their advice and their views into account when making decisions.
- Delegation. A good leader recognizes the importance of giving up control in certain areas because other people know more about that area and/or bear primary responsibility for it. Inclusiveness and delegation, together, are the essence of shared governance.
- Sincerity. A good leader doesn't just pretend to listen or pretend to delegate. He or she doesn't merely pay lip service to the concept of shared governance or attempt to manipulate the process for personal gain.
- Decisiveness. Once all sides have had their say, and the decision-making ball is in the leader's court, he or she will make that decision and accept responsibility for it.
- Accountability. A good leader is not constantly pointing fingers or blaming others for problems—even if they actually did create them.
- Optimism. Whatever challenges a unit or institution might face, a good leader is always positive (at least publicly), consistently projecting an attitude of realistic optimism about the future. A good leader can address issues openly and frankly without spreading doom and gloom.
- Realism. At the same time, a good leader is objective about challenges.
- Frankness. A good leader tells it like it is. He or she does not pat faculty and staff members on the head and assure them that everything's going to be OK when it might not be. (Note: Most leaders I've known who liked to think of themselves as "straight shooters" earned that reputation by saying unkind things to people, often unnecessarily. To me, that's not what being a "straight shooter" means.)



- **Self-Effacement.** A good leader not only accepts blame; he or she also deflects praise and credit to others. A good leader understands that, when others in the unit earn recognition, that reflects positively on him or her. A good leader does not always have to be the one in the spotlight—and, indeed, may actually shun the spotlight. A good leader is also not primarily concerned with moving up the ladder or making himself or herself look good. The best leaders want others, and the institution, to look good.
- **Collegiality.** A good leader does not place himself or herself above rank-and-file faculty and staff members but rather considers them colleagues in the truest sense of that term.
- **Honesty.** A good leader is scrupulously honest in all of his or her dealings. No lies, no dissembling, no double-talk or administrative-speak. If the situation warrants, a good leader simply says, “I can’t comment on that right now.”
- **Trustworthiness.** If a good leader commits to do something, then he or she does it, if humanly possible—and if not, explains why and accepts responsibility for failure. If one tells a good leader something in confidence, that information remains confidential.
- **Morality.** When all is said and done, a good leader can be counted on to do what he or she believes is right and best for all concerned, even if it is unpopular in some quarters.

*Source: Reprinted from Jenkins (2013), with permission from Rob Jenkins.*

While several of the items on these two lists seem similar to concepts in the leadership literature summarized earlier, there are some additional specific items here that bear consideration for leadership in IR. Whether you are the director of the office, an assistant or associate director who interacts with others outside the office on projects and committees, or an analyst who interacts with those on campus who provide data and are recipients of external surveys, you are a represen-

tative of the office, so what you say and how you say it influences how others perceive the office. While the literature hopefully makes it clear that leadership is intensely personal concerning your understanding of yourself and your interaction with others, the advice to not let situations get personal in Chu's (2006) writing means that you should work to not internalize problems in the office to the extent that they lead to job stress that takes a toll on your mental and physical health. (There will be more on this point in chapter 11.) While it is a perfectly normal reaction to sometimes think, "It will be easier if I just do it myself," lack of ability to delegate is a sign of ineffective leadership. Not letting your colleagues become involved in important work not only exhausts you, but also inhibits staff growth and may lead to a lower-quality product or service if others have greater knowledge and skills to bring to bear. As we noted in the earlier chapter about developing staff, not being willing to share hard truths does not help anyone and means you are not doing your job as a leader.

Given the volume of information from Maxwell, Kouzes and Posner, Collins, Chu, and Jenkins that was summarized above, providing some personal key take-aways might be useful. The list below is my own summary of the most important leadership principles to apply to IR:

- Leadership is a learnable process that develops over one's career. People are not born as leaders, but must work to develop leadership ability.
- Leadership is about how far we advance others, not ourselves.
- Integrity, humility, frankness, trust, and respect trump formal position authority.
- Leadership is about making effective emotional connections with individuals.
- Great leaders couple challenge with support, candor with care.
- Great leaders give people the opportunity to be successful in achieving something important.
- It's okay to try something and fail, but it's not okay not to try.

I followed up on a suggestion of one of the reviewers of a draft of the book to ask former AIR presidents about key leadership lessons they have learned. The full set of 15 responses is included as Appendix 2. Some of the advice that particularly resonates with me includes

- Benefit from the support of peers, mentors, and senior leadership;
- Learn as much as possible about the culture and politics of one's institution;
- Keep politically engaged but keep the data unbiased;
- Prioritize, identify, and work on important things for people who can make a difference at the institution;
- Have fun;
- Do not be so focused on data and analyses that you forget it's ultimately all about people;
- Assemble a great team of motivated, smart and creative staff;
- Listen; and
- Be authentic.

## **Leading with Limited Authority**

A specific aspect of leadership that it is important to touch on is leading people without any (or little) formal, positional authority. How can an institutional researcher influence faculty members, chairs, deans, or others to make effective use of institutional information and establish a true culture of inquiry of culture of evidence? This is something that I am working on at this point in my own career. I certainly do not claim to know all of the answers, but some reading I have done, conversations I've had, and reflection I've done on my experiences leads me to a few ideas that I offer as a starting point on this crucially important issue:

- Recognize that many people will extend authority to you based on professional expertise. Demonstrate confidence without arrogance. Couple respect for your knowledge, skills, and experience with demonstration of your enthusiasm and genuine curiosity.

- People need to believe that you are supporting their needs and the institution's best interests. The paramount goal is the success of the group, not your personal success as its leader. Others' perception of your integrity is critical.
- Focus more on building and maintaining effective relationships than on solving problems. When there is a need to focus on problems, seek to understand underlying systemic problems, not surface symptoms.
- Communicate effectively by showing both active listening and great respect for the perspectives of others. Solicit input and demonstrate how input is being used.
- Flexibility and resilience are crucial for success.

This list seems to me to summarize the many resources I have reviewed on this issue. While none of these is tailored to IR, a colleague shared one source with me that has been used in numerous settings and that may hold a high degree of promise: the World Café (<http://www.theworldcafe.com/principles.html>). This resource is based on the concept of conversational leadership and a set of seven design principles. The Web site provides numerous resources such as a tool kit, publications, consulting, and access to an online community.

These ideas are also represented and extended in an article by Bers and Sullivan (1985). The authors note that the chief obstacle to change is often not structure but agreement, and that people who are successful (especially in organizations such as colleges and universities) are those who concentrate on building consensus. Their basic thesis is that agreement is leveraged by interaction and communication.

Bers and Sullivan (1985) specify three prerequisites for innovation: (1) problem definition, (2) coalition building, and (3) mobilization of resources and support. Problem definition involves active listening and a willingness to pay attention to people and information outside of one's usual circle. It involves understanding the political stakes involved in a change and who controls the necessary information. It is also necessary to gather evidence that demonstrates the need for change and

the probability of success. Coalition building concerns getting others to lend support, or at least to not resist a project. Those following the leadership style suggested by Bers and Sullivan spend substantial time out of their offices interacting with those who are critical to each of the phases of innovation. Bers and Sullivan (1985) do not provide any further advice about mobilization of resources and support, but it seems to me mobilization of resources and support involves getting people to contribute their time and energy and perhaps tangible resources such as budgets to help make change happen.

The authors suggest an indirect approach that involves planting seeds that suggest that there is a need for change. This opens the door for further discussion. Institutional researchers can use a variety of information available to share unexpected results with various people on campus. Such information should be offered with the attitude of, “This is unexpected. What do you think it means?” rather than, “Here is evidence of the need for a specific change.” By casually interacting with a variety of people rather than setting up formal meetings, the institutional researcher can be perceived as a colleague with no other agenda than offering interesting and potentially useful information. The Bers and Sullivan (1985) article suggests that the keys to successful use of their espoused leadership style are patience, the willingness to have the same conversations many times, and the willingness to provide the same information and ask the same questions over and over again, but in different ways and with various people. Although this approach does not lead to immediate change, it may wear people down by repetition and get them to think that what you want them to do was their idea all along.

Bers and Sullivan (1985) end their article with the following axioms.

1. No piece of inside information is so insignificant that someone will not treasure it.
2. When at all possible, stay out of your office.
3. Use the telephone sparingly. Visit people. It usually doesn't take much longer—people often spend days returning each other's calls and seldom does the disembodied voice convey information as well as a live, present human.

4. Never eat alone.
5. Everyone's opinion is worth consideration; you never know where he heard it first.
6. If someone makes a suggestion which you use, tell him later. This will ensure absolute support.
7. Take a lesson from trial lawyers. Never ask a question or make a statement in public unless you already know the answer or reaction.
8. Bad advice is just as useful as good, perhaps more so, because you know what you are up against.
9. Everyone believes he is right. The least effective way to counter this is direct evidence of error.
10. Academic conservatism and liberalism are of little importance in getting things done. People will, finally, do identical things for opposite reasons, and what do you care?
11. Placement in the hierarchy is of deceptive importance. Know who shapes opinions, and whose opinions matter.
12. The written word is for confirmation. All really important communication is first oral.
13. Agreement given casually should be reinforced later, just as casually.
14. Most organizations communicate primarily by rumor. Pay more attention to these and try to make them convey what you want.
15. Being right is of no importance in an organization if you cannot make anyone else believe you and act accordingly.
16. To encounter people above you in the hierarchy (when you have no occasion to visit or bump into them) work in public areas—faculty lounges, lawns, classrooms—and at odd hours. You can claim to be so busy that you must avoid the phones, and you'll meet trustees and other rarefied folk and gain a reputation for being hardworking, if a bit eccentric.

*Source: Reprinted from Bers & Sullivan (1985, p. 9), with permission of the Society for College and University Planning. The article was originally published in Volume 13, Issue 4 of SCUP's Planning for Higher Education journal. Visit [www.scup.org/phe](http://www.scup.org/phe) for more information.*

## **Examples for Further Consideration**

1. The associate director who has reported to you for several years has just accepted a job as an IR director at another institution. She asks you for advice about her first steps in managing her new office. Let's assume she has excelled in her role in your office, and she has demonstrated good emotional intelligence. Drawing on any of the leadership ideas in this chapter, what would be your advice to her for her first month on the job, her first six months, and her first year?
2. As the associate director in the IR office, you have been given frontline responsibility for implementation of your institution's new data warehouse/business intelligence system. You are confident in your technical-analytical abilities, but concerned about your ability to get a large group of people to work together to accomplish numerous tasks that are part of the project. What steps can you take to prepare yourself to be successful as the project begins and as it proceeds?
3. As the IR director, you have received consistent, very positive performance evaluations from your supervisor. After that individual retired, however, your new supervisor has expressed concern about your leadership abilities, but is not willing to be more specific. What should you do to gain additional information and take steps to be successful in your work?

*See Appendix 1 for sample solutions.*





# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AND NAVIGATING YOUR CAREER PATH

*Objective: This chapter will provide practical advice on maintaining health and well-being in the IR workplace, an overview of career management, and practical advice on advancing within an IR career.*

Job stress is a major problem in the workplace and a significant factor in job turnover, both in general (Goleman, 1998; Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2009; Maxwell, 2007) and in IR in particular (Knight & Leimer, 2010). A good definition of job stress is a situation that “involves an interaction between the person and the environment that is perceived to be so trying or burdensome that it exceeds the person’s coping resources” (Greenhaus et al., 2009, p. 263). Job stress can take an enormous toll on physical and mental health, leading to problems in relationships, depression, headaches, stomachaches, muscle tension, fatigue, anxiety, depression, weight gain or loss, smoking, substance abuse, or potentially heart attack, stroke, or suicide. Job stress also lowers employee productivity and office morale and increases absenteeism and medical costs. While this entire book could be viewed as guidance on ways to lower job stress through more-effective personal and office performance, the focus of this section is on coping strategies.

Greenhaus et al. (2009) discuss three categories of coping strategies for job stress. The first is attempting to change the situation that produces the stress. The authors provide the following examples:

1. Attempt to eliminate burdensome parts of job.
2. Attempt to add or better use staff to relieve pressures.
3. Attempt to build more challenge or responsibility into job.

4. Seek clarification of job duties.
5. Seek clarification of career prospects.
6. Seek feedback on job performance.
7. Seek more flexible work schedule.
8. Seek job transfer.
9. Seek different organization or career field.
10. Seek others' advice.
11. Attempt to upgrade job skills through education and/or experience.
12. Attempt to resolve conflicts with supervisors, peers, and/or subordinates.
13. Participate in a career planning program.

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The second category of coping with job stress is changing how you think about the stress. This can be accomplished through reappraising the situation and changing your priorities. In addition to processing the situation yourself, you can talk the situation through with family members, friends, colleagues at the institution, colleagues in IR at other institutions, your institution's human resources staff, representatives of an employee assistance program, or a licensed counselor. The third category of coping with job stress focuses on dealing with the symptoms of stress. Options include relaxation techniques, physical exercise and recreation, proper nutrition, meditation, and prayer.

I have adapted the following good practices from Northern Illinois University's (2009b) self-care tips for department chairs:

- **Network.** The transition from IR staff member to IR director can leave the new director feeling isolated as former friends and colleagues shift their perceptions and expectations. This distancing is accentuated by the reality that the director has

information and influence and power that are not available to other staff members. To avoid becoming isolated, it is important to develop collegial relationships with other administrators, especially those with whom a degree of confidentiality can be maintained. Sharing war stories and problem-solving strategies can be essential for keeping the demands of the job in perspective.

- Avoid living on red alert. As the leader who is responsible for the well-being of the department and its members, the director can be vulnerable to a limitless flow of requests, many of which come packaged with the expectation of an immediate response. Learn to identify genuine emergencies. There is more to the job than can be finished neatly at the end of the day, or week, or semester. It is critical to pace work demands and plan ahead for deadlines that may cluster at certain junctures in the academic year.
- Manage expectations. Depending on the characteristics of the office, what a director can accomplish for that person's own professional development may be limited. You probably cannot learn a new student information system thoroughly, learn new software, become active in professional organizations, or perhaps teach at the same time that you are learning to be a director. Be willing to reevaluate priorities, if necessary.
- Learn to juggle. Much of the work day will involve putting out administrative fires while the to-do list lies neglected on your desk. Interruptions are part of the job description. To be effective and efficient, plan the flow of the workday. If it is not possible to be sequestered in your office to concentrate on a large project, develop the ability to multitask through smaller responsibilities and chip away at the more demanding projects in the quiet of early morning or the late afternoon.
- Take breaks. You have vacation days. Use them. The same rule holds for sick days; ill or injured directors are less effective. The best defense against burnout is to avoid exhaustion. Schedule time during which you are away from your phone, your computer, and access to e-mail. If you cannot get away, learn relaxation techniques that you can do in the office.

The staff of the Office of Institutional Research at Indiana Wesleyan University have taken an innovative approach to addressing self-care and job stress. They have developed a Life Balance Index (Sproul & Parandi, 2013) that staff members use to measure and reflect on the balance of their personal and professional lives. On a weekly basis, staff members indicate their wellness and balance within the domains of physical health, mental/emotional health, social relationships, and well-being (professional, spiritual, and financial).

## **Navigating Your Career Path**

Daly (2014) provides ideas about a career path for IR that I have summarized in Table 11.1. His advice for successfully transitioning between the stages—obtaining extensive institutional/contextual knowledge, being dependable, thinking out of the box, being a great communicator, taking on leadership roles—aligns well with the ideas in this book.

As with other aspects of leadership, management, and personal and professional effectiveness, the concept of career management rests in the idea that it consists of knowledge and skills that can be learned. In this case, the premise is that people can control many—but not all—aspects of their careers. Greenhaus et al. (2009) define career management as “a process by which individuals develop, implement, and monitor career goals and strategies” (p. 12). It is a process in which an individual

1. Gathers relevant information about himself or herself and the world of work
2. Develops an accurate picture of his or her talents, interests, values and preferred lifestyle; as well as alternative occupations, jobs and organizations
3. Develops realistic career goals based on this information
4. Develops and implements a strategy designed to achieve the goals and
5. Obtains feedback on the effectiveness of the strategy and the relevance of the goals. (Greenhaus et al., 2009, p. 12)

Table 11.1.

*Six Stages of Growth for the Institutional Research Professional*

	<b>Career Level</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Communication Skills</b>	<b>Presentation Skills</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Stage One Data reporter: When an IR career starts</b>	Beginning position	Often missing	Sending	Good data reports	Supportive
<b>Stage Two Analyst: Has some IR experience</b>	Mid-level	Often in context	Receiving	Refined display and organization of data	Some influence, authority in a few areas
<b>Stage Three Evaluator: Begins to make an impact</b>	Mid-level plus experience	Analysis in context in evaluative areas	Understanding	Creative in display of data	Recommendations
<b>Stage Four Authority: Understands campus operations</b>	Advanced	All analyses in context	Still understanding	Talented and creative in presentations	Innovative solutions and recommendations
<b>Stage Five Advisor: Causes change</b>	Mid-level manager	All work in context, internally and externally	Agreements	Proactive in presenting solutions	Advice can directly cause change
<b>Stage Six Visionary: At the IR career pinnacle</b>	Senior-level manager	Always in context plus political environment	Action	Visionary for IR office an institution	Takes action, creates change

*Source: Based on Daly (2014).*

While much of the literature on career management concerns collecting and aligning information on talents, interests, values, and occupations in order to make decisions about broad occupational choices, we will restrict this section to a consideration of making career changes within IR, such as changing institutions and/or advancing to a leadership position. Greenhaus et al. (2009) provide a list of items relevant to career exploration.

- Task activities
- Task significance
- Ability/training requirements
- Financial rewards
- Job security and financial health of the institution
- Social relationships
- Physical setting
- Lifestyle considerations (like commitment to work, work stress)
- Career path flexibility
- Size and structure
- Reward system
- Job independence/autonomy
- Spouse's career aspirations
- Spouse's and child(ren)'s emotional needs
- Family financial needs
- Family desired lifestyle
- Self and spouse career stage

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These are all reasons why people change jobs in IR. They may want to move into working in additional areas that are not part of

their current jobs such as faculty salary analysis, financial analysis, or space utilization. They may develop more interest in research than in just reporting information, and go on to obtain an additional degree. They may have realized that there are substantially different salaries within different IR jobs, at different levels of authority, or between institutions. Concerns about job security resulting from the declining financial health of the institution may occur following changes in state support (for public institutions) or in enrollment. A new supervisor, new colleagues, or new institutional leadership might lead to consideration of a job change. Other reasons for changing jobs might include wanting to relocate to another area, wanting a greater level of responsibility, wanting to work at a different type of institution, or wanting or needing to have different benefits such as retirement or health care.

The major reason that institutional researchers choose to leave their jobs as determined by a study by Knight and Leimer (2010) was the concept of perceived organizational support, which can be manifested as salary or benefits; relationships with one's supervisor or colleagues; resources such as staffing, budget, equipment, or space; access to necessary data; autonomy or ability to work on desired projects; support for work-life balance; or ability to advance in one's career. Notice that these factors are phrased positively; their presence may influence people's decision to stay in their jobs, while their absence may lead them to change jobs. It is also possible, perhaps even likely, that not all perceived organizational support factors work in concert. For example, you may be very satisfied with all aspects of your job and the institution, but your spouse's career situation may lead you to change jobs.

Although our experiences may lead us to consider a career change, there are various reasons why someone may avoid making career decisions. Greenhaus et al. (2009) provide the following reasons for career indecision:

- Lack of self-information (not knowing what you want from a job)
- Lack of internal work information (not knowing the direction in which your office and/or institution are going)

- Lack of external work information (not knowing about career opportunities outside your institution)
- Lack of self-confidence
- Decision-making fear and anxiety
- Non-work demands (for example, family or health issues)
- Situational constraints (for example, having so many years invested in a job or so much money invested towards retirement that you feel you cannot explore other options)

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While resolving some of these barriers to career decisions are straightforward (such as speaking to a supervisor or others about the future direction of your office and/or the institution; checking the AIR jobs page, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, or other higher education career Web sites; or having serious discussions with family members), others require serious self-reflection, feedback from colleagues, and perhaps the assistance of a counselor.

While a full discussion of career and life stages is beyond the scope of this book, a brief note about midcareer transition may be useful. I was surprised to read in Greenhaus et al. (2009) that 85% of women and 80% of men experience some sort of crisis during the midcareer stage of roughly age 40–55. “Crisis” does not necessarily need to be associated with a highly negative outcome. While for some individuals it may mean an unexpected job loss or a decision to begin an entirely new career, for others it may mean gaining additional skills or responsibilities or making a considered decision to stay in one’s current job. In any case, the time in the middle of one’s career should be expected to be associated with some type of change.

Two career-management-related concepts that are cited by Greenhaus et al. (2009) as increasingly critical are work-family conflict and diversity in the workplace. Coping with work-family conflict occurs with the family and with the employer. Approaches with family



include these: be clear about your career and family plans and how they intersect, and communicate your priorities, hopes, and expectations with your spouse and family; understand the effect that work-family conflict has on your physical and mental health; work toward compromise; develop plans but also recognize that both your work and family situations may change unexpectedly; strive to be organized and maintain communication; seek a fair division of labor at home and consider how family, friends, and paid assistance can help; seek understanding and advice from family and friends; and learn to cope effectively with stress. Coping mechanisms in the workplace might include being very clear about values, expectations, and priorities with supervisors and colleagues; effectively using sick time and vacation; exploring flexible schedules and telecommuting; and investigating child-care and elder-care options.

Workplace diversity is a topic that has received little attention in IR, but one that is as important for us as in any other area of employment (Knight et al., 2006; Knight 2010a). Greenhaus et al. (2009) suggest the following individual actions for all employees in the workplace. I certainly think they are relevant for IR:

### **Awareness of Self and Environment**

- Understand the stereotypes you hold about members of other cultural groups. Be willing to admit that you (like all people) may hold preconceived biases against people who are different from you.
- Understand other people, including those from cultural backgrounds different from yours. Understand similarities and differences among cultures.
- Recognize that there is considerable variation in ability, interests, values, and personality within each cultural group.
- Understand situations from other people's (and other groups') perspectives.

- Understand your current organization's culture and its view of diversity. When seeking a new job in a different organization, assess its culture and view of diversity.
- Understand what it takes to be successful in your current work environment.

### **Career Goal Setting**

- Set career goals that are personally meaningful to you.
- Avoid setting career goals based on stereotypes unless they are also compatible with your talents, values, and interests.
- Pursue your vision of success and don't be constrained by what members of various groups are supposed to want.
- Communicate your goals to others inside and outside your organization.

### **Career Strategies**

- Establish a broad network of social relationships inside and outside your organization.
- Don't compromise personal values in pursuing career goals.
- Be assertive in managing your career and in seeking new experiences and opportunities to develop new skills.
- Don't give up your uniqueness or cultural identity in trying to achieve success.

### **Career Appraisal**

- Be willing to modify your attitude toward other people or groups as a result of your ongoing experiences with them.
- Be willing to change your own behavior toward people who are "different" from you.

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## Practical Career Advice

I would like to end this chapter with some practical advice about navigating one's career path with an IR office or to other areas of administration, using my own career as an example and providing some additional advice.

My career in IR and related areas started in 1990 when I was a graduate assistant in the IR and assessment office at Kent State University and was asked to interview for a new full-time professional position with Kent's associate degree-granting system of seven regional campuses. I was very lucky to be able to draw on my experience from the assistantship, my contextual knowledge as a former student at one of the regional campuses, and a relationship I had developed with the person who became my supervisor (who I got to know earlier as someone who had been the dean at the regional campus I had attended and also served as a faculty member in my graduate program). While a number of things fortunately came together in an unplanned way that allowed me to get my first real IR job, I very intentionally used the experiences I had during the job to position myself for my next job. I used this opportunity to turn interest and academic skills into tangible experience, creating the organization's first fact book, carrying out numerous surveys, responding to many ad hoc information requests, and participating on various committees and working groups. I also worked on my understanding of what it meant to be a successful institutional researcher, how the organization worked, what people's concerns and perspectives were, how to prioritize the work, what I enjoyed in the job, and what I wanted to do next and what I would need to do to get there.

Although I was planning to look for another job anyway when I finished my doctorate, cuts in the state budget led to the job being eliminated in 1992. Fortunately I had sufficient experience to be able to be a successful candidate in several searches. I chose the offer to come to Georgia Southern University as assistant director of institutional research and planning because it would allow me to gain experience as part of a larger office and specifically to gain further experience in a

four-year institution in areas such as strategic planning, budgeting, and accreditation. As had been the case at Kent, I was very fortunate to have great colleagues who taught me a lot. The time at Georgia Southern helped me confirm that I wanted to continue a career in IR and also that I wanted my next job to be director of my own office. Knowing this, I spent time with my boss, getting a sense of what his responsibilities were as director that were different from what I had been doing, such as interacting with a wider range of people on campus and representing the office as well as managing personnel and budget.

The same state budget problems that had led to the elimination of my job at Kent also caused the dismantling of the IR office at Bowling Green State University (BGSU). An improvement in finances and the appointment of a new president who valued evidence-based decision-making allowed me to come to BGSU as director of IR in 1996. My 15 years at BGSU allowed me to further expand my experience and perspectives through involvement in activities such as serving on the university's assessment, budget, compensation, and president's advisory committees; serving on deans' council and provost's cabinet; cochairing the strategic planning committee along with the president for several years; serving on statewide committees that developed and managed Ohio's higher education information system and used it for performance reporting and state support; serving on and later chairing search committees for several high-level professional positions; and serving as a visiting scholar in China. Three additional sets of experiences during my time at BGSU were particularly important: cochairing the regional accreditation effort and later becoming a consultant evaluator and team chair for the Higher Learning Commission; teaching classes; serving on and chairing a dissertation committee; participating in faculty meetings for the higher education administration program; and gaining leadership experience as an officer, conference chair, and president of the Ohio AIR and the national AIR. During my time at BGSU, my job title changed from director of IR, to director of planning and IR, to assistant vice president for planning and accountability, to associate vice provost for planning and accountability. Over this period I reported to the vice president for planning and budgeting (who later became the senior vice

president for finance and administration), assumed a second reporting line to the president, assumed a third reporting line to the provost, then later reported singly to three provosts.

While I was fortunate to have a tremendous number of positive experiences at BGSU, several issues led me to consider moving to another job. These included financial, enrollment, and leadership challenges at the institution, my desire to gain additional IR staff so that I could stop working 70 to 80 hours per week and concentrate more on being a leader, and my wife's job search. After much self-reflection and background research about the university, I moved to Ball State University in 2011. I started as executive director of Institutional Effectiveness reporting to an associate provost, and now have the title of assistant provost for Institutional Effectiveness and report directly to the provost. In addition to some new experiences such as chairing the data management committee, working with the Institutional Effectiveness Committee of the University Senate, and heading up and teaching in the IR graduate certificate program, my current job in an office with eight staff members allows me to spend more time building relationships across campus, mentoring colleagues, and managing resources. After taking the first two years to concentrate on getting the office off to a good start, I have now added a reasonable degree of effort as a Higher Learning Commission accreditation peer reviewer and as a member of thesis and dissertation committees back into my schedule. While at Ball State I have also had the wonderful opportunity to serve as coeditor of the *Handbook of Institutional Research* (Howard et al., 2012) and *Building Bridges for Student Success: A Sourcebook* (and as author of this book).

Even though I am very happy in my current job and could easily imagine myself staying in it 15–20 more years until retirement, I have lately been seriously considering a job as a vice president for institutional effectiveness as the next stage of my career. While such jobs are becoming increasingly common at community colleges and at for-profit institutions, they remain fairly rare at universities. I have been thinking about what steps I can take to further prepare myself.

Writing this book has allowed me to think about the importance of emotional intelligence, institutional culture and politics, and leadership development, which I believe are absolutely crucial for success at the vice presidential level, and to assess my own strengths and areas for improvement. I have also been working with a group of colleagues who are interested in leadership development within multifunction institutional effectiveness offices and have reached out to the few people in vice presidential positions at universities to learn more about their experiences and to seek their advice. I have also applied to participate in a formal leadership development program sponsored by a prominent institution.

The lessons I have learned as I have tried to be intentional about the development of my own career are the same lessons I offer to others: Be very purposeful in thinking about what you want in your career, assessing what you are good at and enjoy doing, what additional skills you need to develop, how your interests change over time, what opportunities are available, and how your career plans fit in with your personal situation such as family and your health.

Let me contextualize this advice to people at different stages on an IR career. Someone in an entry-level position in a reasonably large IR office (perhaps with a job title such as analyst), has the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills learned in college (perhaps including an IR internship) in order to gain full-time experience. Try to become involved in as many different IR projects as possible. Try to gain some experience interacting with persons outside the office. This is the time to decide if a career in IR is right for you. If it is, then think about whether you wish to remain in the same job or advance in your career. If you wish to advance to a mid-level position such as assistant or associate director, then learn how those jobs are different and what additional skills are required. The answer is likely more interaction with others outside the office and the ability to influence people.

The assistant or associate director who has greater experience managing projects, exercising a wider range of technical and analytic skills, and interacting successfully with others outside the office may

begin to think about moving to a director position. Since there is only one director position and the person in it may not be leaving, a move to another institution will likely be required, so this impacts family and other aspects of life outside the office. Someone considering a director position should also work to understand how responsibilities for this job differ from those of any current job, and what skills are required. Leading people, managing the office budget, establishing and advancing the vision for the office, serving as its representative across campus, interacting with clients at a higher level, and persuading and motivating people both within and outside the office are probably among those responsibilities. The person aspiring to the director level needs to decide if these are things he or she would enjoy doing and be good at. This person should try to find opportunities to develop skills in any current positions that will lead to success in a director's role.

The director who aspires to a position as assistant or associate vice president or assistant or associate provost, whether by moving to another institution or by being promoted at the current institution, needs to demonstrate the ability to exercise a wider span of responsibility, perhaps with responsibility for assessment, accreditation, academic program or unit review, strategic planning, academic program planning, or academic facilities planning. The director will need to focus even more on contextual knowledge and skills, emotional intelligence, and leadership.

Although I have not achieved a vice presidency, I know that some of the responsibilities at this level may include

- Collaborating to develop institutional strategy that will ensure the institution's viability and gain a competitive advantage;
- Leading the development, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of a system of integrated planning, assessment, and evaluation across the institution;
- Collaboratively leading alignment of budgeting and operational practices with the institution's strategy, planning, and key priorities;

- Proactively identifying, researching, and making recommendations on solutions or innovations that address institutional goals and challenges;
- Providing advice to the president in strategy, planning, policy formation, strategic initiatives, and institutional improvement;
- Collaborating with senior leadership as a member of the president's cabinet;
- Developing and maintaining key internal and external strategic partnerships;
- Leading cross-functional teams to achieve institutional objectives and facilitate change; and
- Representing the institution in areas of expertise and responsibility to internal and external stakeholders.

Such a position obviously requires very highly developed skills in persuasion and negotiation; the ability to effectively use evidence to make a compelling case for change; the ability to negotiate organizational dynamics and processes; and the ability to communicate effectively in public settings, remain composed under pressure, speak diplomatically on sensitive issues, and maintain confidentiality when necessary. Success in such a position requires not only many years of technical-analytical experience, but also a degree of emotional intelligence, adroitness navigating political and organizational culture, and leadership skills that are only one step below those of the president (Association for Higher Education Effectiveness, 2013).

## **Examples for Further Consideration**

1. After working diligently in graduate school you have obtained your first IR job. If you continue to work very hard and put in lots of extra hours over the next few years, you will likely be able to succeed your supervisor in his job when he retires, but you have small children and want to spend more time with them. How would you go about making decisions for this stage of your career?



2. You enjoy your job as associate director in the office but you have an interest in advancing to a director's position. Your director, however, is still at least 10 years away from retirement, and you sense that time is slipping away. You have heard that a director's job may soon become available at another institution nearby but all of your experience is at a small, private college and the other job is at a community college. What are your options?
3. Very serious state budget cuts may lead to your whole office being eliminated in a year. You are unsure what your future career plans are. What can you do now to plan effectively?

*See Appendix 1 for sample solutions.*



### **Sample Solutions to Examples for Further Consideration**

#### **Chapter 1. Your Office Budget: Understanding It and Shaping It to Achieve Your Goals**

1. Before a travel freeze is announced you can see if you can place your hotel reservation and perhaps book your air travel, even if it's too early to pay the registration fee. This shows you have already made a commitment. If travel is frozen, see what the rules are: Can you still spend the funds if you have them in your budget? Can you still travel if you are presenting? Is there any way to appeal the decision? Can you gain access to the presentations or at least contact the presenters whose sessions interest you most even if you cannot travel?
2. Try speaking with the provost or chief academic officer about this and ask if an exception to the policy can be made since this supports assessment activity. The argument will be stronger if your regional accreditation review is happening soon.
3. Try appealing to your supervisor about allowing an exception to the rule, and explain the importance of having all computer replacements on the same cycle. Perhaps contact IT to see if there are other offices in the same situation that have been allowed to save funds for the same reason.

## **Chapter 2. Goals, Priorities, Time Management, and Effective Meetings**

1. Try to explain to her how her work affects the operations of the office and the institution. This is why it is important that she give attention to goals other than those for her direct projects. Also, try to appeal to her interest in advancing in her career and link her advance to focusing more on personal goals.
2. Follow the steps for organizing your workplace and managing workflow that are provided in this chapter and in Chapter 3. Speak with colleagues in the director position in other offices about how they prioritize, manage time, and are able to focus on personal and project goals. Block time well in advance in your calendar and try to stick to it. Work with a colleague on a project to help you keep on track.
3. Try out the e-mail management techniques provided in this chapter and in Chapter 3. Ask your supervisor and key clients about their expectations for response to e-mails. See if others in the office can take your place in some meetings; this allows them to grow and also helps you manage your time. Speak with directors at other institutions about what they do to keep control of their time.
4. What is lost in this situation is your ability to hear from your colleagues (and for them to hear from each other) about activities, questions, concerns, successes, and so on not directly related to the project at hand. Severely cutting back on staff meetings decreases information sharing and relationship building. Use the time and meeting management techniques discussed above to give yourself more time to meet with your office colleagues and to use that time effectively. Can the rest of the group occasionally meet without you?

### Chapter 3. Improving Your Office's Effectiveness

1. Before the visit I would advise emphasizing with new staff colleagues that the purpose of the visit is getting as much information as possible in order to help make the office the best it can be. If the results are very positive concerning the staff, share this result; if not, frame that result as an opportunity for professional development. I would ask the consultants to separate their recommendations into those requiring additional resources and those not requiring additional resources. You could also benchmark your staff and budget against offices at peer institutions.
2. When I do visits like this (and there is not a standard set of evidence presented in a self-study), I ask to see a background description of the institution, findings in its most recent accreditation self-study that relate to IR, the office mission statement (if there is one), a list of tasks performed, staff position descriptions and resumes, any evidence of client feedback about the quality of work performed by IR, budget information, and the office strategic plan (if available). I also ask the director if there are any specific questions or requests for me as a reviewer.
3. This is difficult to answer without knowing many more details about each reader's IR office, but I would suggest that the director, the director's direct supervisor, other crucial clients, and the office staff be involved in developing the priorities statement. The director's supervisor is usually the key person in enforcing the priorities that are established.

## Chapter 4. Emotional Intelligence: The Foundation of Effective Leadership

1. With the analysts in the office I would stress the importance of developing emotional intelligence if they wish to advance in their profession. You (the associate director) and the director can give very concrete examples of the importance of the need to develop these competencies. Even if they do not wish to advance, you can probably easily find some examples of how increasing emotional intelligence skills can help people to get along better and make everyone's work easier. With your supervisor (the IR director) you might frame the time devoted to improving emotional intelligence among the staff as an investment that can result in better efficiency and effectiveness in the office—again, using tangible examples.
2. It is important to communicate that you are helping all staff members in the office to improve their workplace skills, and to emphasize that they are not deficient or incapable in some way. Hopefully you can get some assistance from someone in your institution's Human Resources office or perhaps from a faculty member in the business area. In any case, the books and Web sites cited in this chapter provide abundant resources to assist you.
3. The key here is understanding the perspective of the assistant director in the registrar's office. Is this person feeling threatened that the work of the IR office will lead to loss of a job? Were there interactions this person had with your office that were upsetting? Are there other relationships (perhaps between the vice presidents in your respective divisions of the institution) that are affecting this situation? It may be necessary to bring in an objective third party to help get these answers. The most important thing is for you to not be defensive and take this situation as a personal affront, but rather to try to objectively understand the situation in order to improve it.

4. My advice in this situation is to try to get to know the new provost, and the provost's background, priorities, and work style as thoroughly as possible. If you know what institutional issues are most important to this provost, you can work to showcase how IR can help. You might also contact those with whom this person worked previously to better understand how to work with him or her effectively. If the person you contact seems to be reasonably empathetic, you can be direct and share that you are concerned that the provost does not seem to understand or value what IR does and ask what you can do to change this. The provost may not be aware of your perceptions. If there are others that the new provost seems to be listening to, speak with them and ask them for advice and perhaps request that they share how your office has helped them in the past.

## **Chapter 5. Effective Hiring**

1. Hopefully this one is pretty obvious: speak with the vice president for student affairs about providing half of the funding for the position. If the vice president is incapable or unwilling to provide that funding, then you need to make it clear that the IR office cannot support the Division of Student Affairs at the requested level.
2. It would be important to have one or more members of the search committee be representatives of the Division of Student Affairs. The more closely they will work with the person who is hired, the more useful they will be on the search committee.
3. My advice here is to work your professional networks, including colleagues at other institutions and colleagues at your institution who may know of good candidates. If there is an official at your institution with responsibility for diversity and inclusion, ask that person for advice.

4. Try to find other persons (whether or not the candidate has listed them in the candidate's résumé) who can speak to the candidate's current performance. Does the candidate have copies of performance appraisals to share with you? Ultimately you will have to decide whether you are willing to offer the position to someone in this situation. I have been in this situation a couple of times, did offer the position, and it worked out fine.

## **Chapter 6. Performance Appraisal**

1. Create your own form with substantial input from the office staff. Perhaps ask them to contact offices at peer institutions and/or do some online searching for examples, then discuss these as a group, draft the form for your office, and give everyone enough time for feedback. Make sure your supervisor and the Human Resources office are in agreement. Make it very clear to everyone in the office that the new form is now being used and demonstrate how using the form is related to salary increases.
2. First, I hope you made it very clear to the staff member at the time that her title was changed that there was no provision for a salary increase. Beyond this, my best advice is to use your performance appraisal system to increase her salary as much as you can. If your institution has funds set aside for rewarding "above and beyond" performance, try to tap into this. You also need to realize that the staff member may ultimately choose to leave for another job due to this situation and there may not be anything that you can do about it.
3. Your Human Resources office hopefully can provide you with training or at least advice about carrying out effective performance appraisal. There might be someone on your business faculty who can provide such training. You can also consult with colleagues at a similar level to yours in the



institution. Ultimately, you are not doing your job effectively as the director if you cannot do good performance appraisal. You may need to work on the self-confidence, conscientiousness, achievement drive, and commitment aspects of emotional intelligence.

## **Chapter 7. Mentoring, Providing Professional Development, and Dealing with Difficult Personnel Situations**

1. How are the absences from work affecting her performance? How much flexibility in work hours and/or the ability to work from home does the institution provide? How did your predecessor handle this? How is the situation being perceived by others in the office? Answers to these questions and consultation with the Human Resources and/or other appropriate offices can help you decide what you can and should do. It is important to keep in mind that you need to have the work done, to follow institutional policy, and to be very sensitive to how the situation is affecting others in the office.
2. This person needs to develop the emotional intelligence, political, and leadership skills discussed in this book. To the extent that time permits, share with her the issues you are facing that require these skills. Be as specific as possible about how having these skills are essential to you in your job. You ultimately need to realize that she either will or will not listen to your advice and needs to make her own decisions and live with their consequences.

## **Chapter 8. Negotiating Campus Politics**

1. As you might have guessed, this is a real situation I faced when I started my current job. I spoke to the attorney directly and asked if she would bring this up when she spoke with her state colleagues. She did so, and then graciously admitted that her interpretation was too strict. The important lesson here is that I approached the conversation without suggesting that she was wrong, so it would not become personal; rather, I suggested that things might have changed since she formed this interpretation.
2. This is also a real situation that I faced in my job. I prepared by pointing out that information is a key tool to lead to improvement and that we all want the best possible workplace. It turned out that the general counsel's concerns ultimately led to our president's decision to cut back the survey substantially. I needed to rely on emotional intelligence to help me realize that, despite all of the work I had put into this project, the general counsel was working in the best interest of the institution and it was not personal.
3. Yet again, this was a real situation I faced. It required a strong degree of emotional intelligence from all involved to cope effectively with the situation. I needed to realize that the board member had an agenda that had nothing to do with the work that our office had done. My best advice on how to proceed in a similar situation is simply to remain in close contact with your supervisor and follow that person's direction.

## **Chapter 9. Promoting Effective Use of Information Produced by Institutional Research**

1. The most important thing is not to overreact and assume that people are not using the data warehouse just because they are being difficult or don't appreciate you and all of the work that you have done. An effective response requires putting yourself

in their place. How has information about the data warehouse been communicated? Have people received training on how to use it? Is it obvious to users what value it adds to traditional methods of accessing information? The most important step to take is to ask prospective users why they have not used the warehouse. You can also seek out colleagues who might have been in a similar situation and ask their advice.

2. There are all sorts of reasons that this situation may have developed that you may not have considered. Perhaps the provost is acting this way because he is receiving the same reaction from the president. The resolution to this situation lies in understanding what concerns have been expressed about the information. If the provost won't share this information, are there others involved who might shed some light? Is there an event (e.g., a deadline for an accreditation self-study) that can serve as a hard deadline for getting the information out there?
3. I suspect this is an all too common situation at many campuses. Can the provost, president, deans, or other influential individuals be called on to reinforce the idea that assessment remains an ongoing priority? If the problem is that assessment work does not count for anything within the faculty evaluation and reward process, can this situation be changed? If the underlying problem is that faculty members find the process too onerous, can you provide some tangible advice for decreasing the burden (e.g., using curriculum maps, evaluating previously collected student work with rubrics, sampling rather than collecting information from all students, not addressing every learning outcome every year)? Would having some funds that you can disperse to faculty members to encourage work on assessment projects encourage more attention on assessment? Would identifying venues where faculty members can publish and present the results of assessment help?

## Chapter 10. Leadership Frames and Practices

1. This obviously depends greatly on the specific situation, but my advice would include learning as much as possible, as soon as possible about the institution's history, culture, priorities, and key players; how the IR office is perceived; and how the past IR director was perceived. During her first month she needs to get to know the office staff—their backgrounds, concerns, and needs. She must make sure she is spending adequate time to be a leader in addition to being a researcher. The six-month milestone might be a good time to carry out an external review of the office. The one-year mark would be an ideal time to reflect on her performance and future goals.
2. Get to know the team. Listen to their concerns. Find ways to achieve small wins along the way to the accomplishment of the overall project. Model the behavior you want to encourage. Put the group and the project ahead of yourself. Lay out a vision for success and help the team work out a path to get there.
3. Ask others who you trust and who know you well for a frank assessment of your leadership abilities. Participate in a formal leadership assessment. Ask your supervisor what good leadership means to him. See if you can find out any additional information from people with whom your supervisor has worked in the past. If necessary, enlist the assistance of the Human Resources office or an ombudsperson.

## **Chapter 11. Taking Care of Yourself and Navigating Your Career Path**

1. The most important thing in this situation is to have a very clear discussion with your spouse about priorities. It is also useful to speak with your supervisor about ways that you might prepare yourself for succeeding him without putting in an inordinate amount of time. This is a complex situation with no easy answers, but communicating, arriving at a decision, and having a plan are much better than not actively addressing the situation and so being frustrated.
2. If you decide that you want to pursue the job at the community college, reach out to IR directors at other community colleges to learn how the job is different there and how you can best present yourself as a viable candidate. Do your homework on the issues affecting that community college that affect IR. Be prepared to speak directly to the likely question about how your experience is translatable to the new environment.
3. Think about where you are in your career and where you would like to be, what you are good at, what you dislike, and what skills you can realistically attain in the coming year to make yourself marketable as a candidate for other jobs. Discuss the situation with family and agree on a plan. Realize that sometimes bad things happen to good people for no good reason, and that sometimes you cannot control the situation, but you can always cope with the result.



### **Leadership Lessons Learned from Former Association for Institutional Research Presidents**

In December 2013 I contacted past presidents for AIR and asked them to share what effective leadership in IR has meant to them in their careers, and any advice they have for improving leadership effectiveness within IR. Their responses follow, extracted from email messages.

#### **Jim Montgomery, 1966–1967 AIR President**

Jim Firnberg sent the material over to me, and I would make one comment on leadership and survival. If you are to succeed and if you are to lead, you need to network through AIR or other professional organizations and on your campus or in your organization. In that manner you will be aware of trends, policy shifts, and issues of importance.

#### **Jim Firnberg, 1976–1977 AIR President**

On a somewhat serious note I had the great fortune over my 20 plus years in institutional research to work for presidents who valued the work we did. Contrary to some in IR we not only presented the data, but made suggestions or recommendations about a course of action. We reported to either the president or a senior vice president and, during the last several years, had the title assistant vice president for academic affairs and director of institutional research. We were involved not only in academic matters, but had input on the budget either through direct input or serving on statewide work groups to develop a funding formula for higher education. I should add here that I had to be reminded from time to time that I was not the president of the university.

Without the experience I had in IR, having input on many decisions, and directing a staff, I would not have developed the leadership skills to have become the president of two institutions and have a relatively successful third career as a consultant. I agree totally with the others

(Gerry McLaughlin and Bill Tetlow??) that military experience was invaluable. I served two tours of active duty with 11 and a half years in the Army Reserve. Nothing beats the military for leadership training.

### **Bob Walhous, 1978–1979 AIR President**

A recent book by David Kerpen lists *11 Simple Concepts to Become a Great Leader*. The three I wish I had developed early in my career are listening, simplicity, and authenticity, and I'm still trying.

### **Bill Tetlow, 1981–1982 AIR President**

My leadership training began in elementary school, was enhanced in high school, focused through my fraternity and ROTC in college, significantly sharpened by the U.S. Army Officer training and experience, and blossomed in IR beginning in graduate school. What significantly mattered during my 35-year IR career was the unquestioned support of my peers in IR and great mentors, especially R. Peter Jackson (Cornell's first IR director) and Thomas Mackesey, the provost of Cornell. Then, Robert Clark at UBC [The University of British Columbia] taught me a very rare skill—the ability to foresee the potential consequences of any policy wording. He was uncanny in foreseeing “unintended consequences” and to always be cognizant that there was more than one way to view anything. In retirement, I have learned to adopt and promote Policy Governance®, an integrated board leadership paradigm created by Dr. John Carver as a board member of public agencies.

An anecdote for you that all of us could probably replicate from personal experience: The UBC Board of Governors was the most significant policy-making body. It had representatives from every sector of the university community including billionaire entrepreneur alums. Deans and department heads, students, staff, union rep, etc. One night, the employee union rep asked me for a ride home. En route, he said, “I want you to know that while we sometimes disagree on the meaning of your data, we never feel that it is anything but accurate and unbiased.”



### **Bill Lasher, 1982–1983 AIR President**

I have never thought of myself as much of a leader. But with respect to leadership in IR, I've always thought I stood on the shoulders of my IR mentors—Jimmy Doi, Marv Peterson, and Don Lelong. And I've been fortunate to rub shoulders with other important IR leaders like Firnberg, Tetlow, Saunders, Teeter, and all you other guys.

I used to get annoyed at colleagues who thought that their responsibility stopped with just providing the data. I always told my staff that we should be more interested in turning the data into information, seeing what it meant and how it was used by the institutional leadership. (If something wasn't being used, let's not worry about it.) Like Firnberg, I was not afraid of institutional politics. (Hey, I spent my career at the University of Texas!) When I was intimately involved in IR (admittedly, a long time ago), we were always trying to determine not only what the important current questions were, but also what questions would be facing the institution next month, or next year.

As some of you know, I was fortunate to work on both the academic side and the financial side of the enterprise. But I always approached my responsibilities with the fundamental orientation of an institutional researcher. And it worked out pretty well.

### **Laura Saunders, 1987–1988 AIR President**

IR is so much focused on data and analysis that we forget the people. I always liked to have people who were smarter than me working for me. Kept me on my game and as they moved on to positions of power and influence it built my network.

### **Gerry McLaughlin, 1989–1990 AIR President**

I think the two things that shape my focus (and I am hesitant to call it leadership) were advice from Sam Adams and something Sidney Suslow said in his presidential address. First the Suslow quote—paraphrased a bit—“Do important things for important people.”

Now for the advice from Sam—given at an executive committee meeting for AIR—”Speak up.” So learn to identify and work on important things for important people (and avoid the ones that drain your resources and move you out of the domain of activity)—and learn to speak up.

Mary [Sapp] left out [of her reply] one of the things I have seen her do. She shares her knowledge forward and this builds the next person—and also makes it very likely that when she asks, someone will answer with what she needs.

### **Ed Delaney, 1992–1993 AIR President**

We have all been role model leaders of our staffs, most often with the following guiding principles:

- Empower your staff with professional development opportunities such as AIR and its regional associations, etc.
- Learn from mistakes as a learning community.
- Defend the integrity of the office and its functions.
- Articulate the politics and culture of the institution for staff.
- Focus staff efforts on relevant institutional issues.
- Avoid great studies on issues of little relevance.
- Do not simply raise problem issues without participating in finding their solutions.
- And celebrate office and institutional successes (as in Trudy’s “have fun”).

### **Rich Howard, 1994–1995 AIR President**

One form of leadership is to hire good people, give them responsibilities, and then give them credit and visibility with the bosses when the job is done.

## **Trudy Bers, 1995–1996 AIR President**

- Define your variables and document your work, because others won't know what you've done and you'll probably forget the details without having a written record.
- Find a balance between oversimplifying and getting lost in the details—easy advice to give but much harder to implement.
- Remember that while data ought to inform decisions, they will rarely if ever be the only influence; never forget that politics, whimsy, a single powerful voice, tradition, and sometimes even random and arbitrary actions will also affect decisions. Don't take it personally if the decision and your data aren't always aligned.
- If you can figure out how decision-makers respond to different data presentations, use that knowledge. Here's an example. More years ago than I care to remember my college did not have failing grades; the founding president believed every student could eventually succeed and wanted them to be able to repeat courses as often as they wanted to attain that success. We gave him data about the number of students who repeated courses multiple times and never managed to pass. That didn't matter. What finally moved him was looking at the transcript of a single student who had taken a biology course something like 10 times without succeeding. Then he got it.
- Cherish and nourish the collegiality and willingness to share that characterize our IR community. These are special attributes that we shouldn't just take for granted.
- Have fun!

## **Tim Sanford, 1996–1997 AIR President**

I always felt that IR should be above campus politics, that IR was based on data and data don't lie. For the most part I still consider that to be true, but I learned that IR should remain above campus politics only to the extent that senior campus officers also believe the same thing. As soon as someone looking for a scapegoat gets the IR office (or director)

in his/her proverbial crosshairs, all bets are off and the sanctity of data is out the window. Fight like hell to protect yourself and your office!

### **Mary Sapp, 1997–1998 AIR President**

- Have good role models and a good mentor—I was fortunate to have a wonderful boss and mentor for around 25 years (switching bosses made me realize how lucky I was) and I benefitted from knowing most of the people on this Listserv and learning from them as well.
- Network and make friends with professional colleagues at conferences. They provide advice and perspective, and having friends at conferences make them more enjoyable.
- Network and make friends at all levels within your institution; administrative staff are just as deserving of your respect and can be helpful allies.
- Listen actively at meetings so you can anticipate requests. It was great to have the provost ask me to do a new request and be able to pull it out of my folder at the meeting when he asked.
- Know how to set priorities and follow them; be able to figure out what's important as opposed to what's just urgent.
- Realize that controlling the presentation of information provides you with power; use it responsibly and not to forward agendas.
- Share reports as widely as possible so they will be used as much as possible. When we sent program-level data to departments for their accreditation reports, many actually looked at and used the reports.
- Ensure integrity of your data and your analyses. Planning, Institutional Research, and Assessment at the University of Miami has a reputation for accurate data and integrity in our analyses, which gives us more credibility.
- Keep up on technology: it will make your office more efficient, which means you can do more things and do them faster.

### **Michael Middaugh, 2000–2001 AIR President**

If IR is to be successful, it must enjoy the enthusiastic support of senior leadership. For 20 plus years, I had the pleasure of reporting to David Hollowell, the executive vice president at the University of Delaware. Dave began his own career by establishing an Office of Institutional Research at Boston University. So I had the good fortune to report to someone who had a thorough knowledge of IR and what it can do to support senior management. I learned much from Dave's leadership style; he would define his data needs, give me the necessary resources, then leave me to my own devices. Add to that the fact that we both worked with David Roselle as president of the university. David Roselle is a PhD mathematician with an inherent hunger for data. It was a wonderful run at the university, and the institution was transformed by the two Davids. I was delighted to be able to play a supporting role. Because of their leadership, projects like the Delaware Study were encouraged and nurtured.

### **Rick Voorhees, 2002–2003 AIR President**

Leadership-wise, there's little our group of past presidents doesn't understand about the relationship of institutional research to institutional health. George Keller hit it on the head with Academic Strategy in 1983, and the ensuing years haven't exactly produced a call to stand down from hard-headed thinking.

In our careers we've met many who should be influenced by actionable data but simply lack the acumen to act on those data. Those folks can be helped. Those dark forces described by Tim are another story. I don't think any of us ever aspired to being someone who simply fed data to greater powers only to wait for them to use it. [It is less] likely that these folks can be helped and I agree with the adage to watch your back, but we've got to hope that by feeding networks around them they will become isolated.

The other thing that works is anticipation. Either by intuition or common sense, IR folks need to be ready with data that count. There's a hierarchy of information that every organization requires. Understand-

ing that and producing it are different things, though, especially if one is bogged down in minutiae.

Last, I think institutional folks and those with a yen for data would do well by creating a culture of inquiry in their institutions. Explain the magic of information, sharpen one's presentation skills, and make it fun. My consulting practice has revolved around this for more than a decade especially in strategic planning. The good news is that folks who work at colleges and universities are inherently curious about qualitative and quantitative data about their institutions. Inventing processes to help satisfy their inner yearnings is another matter and much more dependent on culture and procedures embraced by the institution.

### **Vic Borden, 2003–2004 AIR President**

I want to gently rebut Tim Sanford about IR being above campus politics. The quote I would cite in this offense, is, "If you are not at the table, you may well be on the menu." Avoiding campus politics is like avoiding the weather. Instead I recommend dressing appropriately (Teflon-coatings or other BS repellents are helpful). But seriously, I highly recommend learning as much as possible about the culture and politics of one's institution to be an effective IR leader. Rather than being objective, fact-based, and above politics, I would suggest being balanced, evidence-informed, and culturally and politically aware. The notion that we deal with objective facts is the biggest and most dangerous pitfall for IR leaders-in-training. The very choice of which facts to attend to is highly subjective. The way we portray numbers in charts and figures shapes attention and focus. The effective IR leader must work with her colleagues within the office and elsewhere to fully understand the implications of how data focus attention and elicit perspective in order to contribute constructively to the institution and the profession.

That doesn't quite make a good song, so I'll close with the lyrics of the Windbreaker's song, Fact Man (sung to the tune of the Beatle's Tax Man):

## **Fact Man**

*Words by Vic Borden*

*Music by George Harrison*

Let me tell you how it will be.

D'vide by 15 for your FTE.

'Cause I'm the factman,

yeah I'm the factman.

If our retention rate's too low.

I'll stop counting freshmen who fail to show.

'Cause I'm the factman,

yeah I'm the factman.

If you want some trends, I'll give five years.

If you want benchmarks, I'll find you peers.

If you need more stats, I'll fill your cup.

If I can't find the data, I'll make it up. . . . Factman.

*(Guitar Break)*

'Cause I'm the factman,

yeah I'm the factman.

I won't ask what you want them for. (Ah-ah, Doctor Provost)

If you don't push for PeopleSoft. (Ah-ah, Doctor Pres.)

'Cause I'm the factman,

yeah I'm the factman.

When students die keep your grieving short. (Factman!)  
I'll remove them from the base cohort. (Factman!)  
'Cause I'm the Factman,  
yeah I'm the Factman.  
And you'll take them from no one but me.

*(Reprinted with permission from Vic Borden.)*

### **Jennifer Brown, 2011–2012 AIR President**

IR Leadership effectiveness does not require “position.” If you are ambitious for higher positions, that's great, but gaining higher positions will require different decisions and trajectories from a focus on what can be accomplished from wherever you are.

IR leadership effectiveness involves a real commitment to the mission of the institution you serve. If that [commitment] is lacking, your work may well be lackluster.

IR leadership effectiveness involves persistence and constant learning. Your context will constantly change as people come and go, and you have to get to know them and you will never be bored!

IR leadership effectiveness is greatly enhanced if you assemble a great team of motivated, smart, and creative staff, and launch them into the institution and the profession on their own two feet as soon as you can.



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