



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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## The complete actuary

# Demand better results and get them

by Leonard E. Tandul

**A**s the business environment becomes increasingly competitive, our organizations must be more effective. We must establish high performance expectations to get the results we require.

### First step toward results

The first step to get the results you want is to set objectives or goals. Previous articles in "The complete actuary" series have detailed how to set objectives. Important points to remember are that objectives should be:

- Set with staff's participation
- Clearly stated and easy to understand
- Measurable, with deadlines
- Related to specific work
- Meaningful and "owned" by those who must fulfill them
- Realistic and able to be accomplished

A good model for writing objectives is given in a book by the Minnesota Viking's former football star quarterback, Fran Tarkenton, on *How to Motivate People*. His model was: "To (action verb) (quantifiable improvement in designated area) by (date)."

An example of a well defined objective is: "To reduce expenses of the administrative department by 10% by September 30, 1993." A poor example is: "To reduce administrative expenses this year."

Realistic deadlines take into consideration all the jobs required of the staff and have a cushion built in for the unexpected. The longer the total job will take, the more important it is to break it down into smaller steps with intermediate deadlines.

**Staff motivation as the driving force** Just setting objectives will not get the job done. If your staff does not understand how the objectives fit into an overall plan, it may not be motivated to do the job. If you have involved the staff in the objective setting process, you are way ahead. Fran Tarkenton writes, "People don't resist their own ideas."

Because motivation comes from within, you need to develop

an atmosphere that fosters self-motivation, self-assessment, and self-confidence. Some ways to do this are:

- Assume that people want to achieve.
- Build on strengths and help individuals overcome weaknesses.
- Let your staff know when you think they are doing a good job. Do this on an ongoing basis, rather than sporadically.
- Emphasize teamwork as your staff integrates with those in other areas who have to put the work to use.
- Delegate not only responsibility, but also the authority to do what is necessary to achieve.

The last item relates to the current motivational buzzword, "empowerment." Delegation or empowerment does not mean abdication of a manager's responsibility. The manager must provide the information and resources needed to do the job, monitor the process to see if deadlines are met, and be flexible enough to make mid-course corrections or even changes in objectives if needed.

### Trust important to achievement

You can best help your staff achieve by developing a relationship of trust through openness. Your staff must not be afraid to make honest mistakes. If finger pointing becomes common, your staff will develop a defensive attitude and be reluctant to offer new ideas or suggestions for solving problems that develop. Avoid the blame game.

Without trust, people will not put themselves at risk. Without risk, no growth or self-confidence can develop.

An anonymous author tells this appropriate story, named "Who's on First?":

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done, and Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but

Nobody realized Everybody wouldn't do it. So Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

### More on this subject

If you are interested in reading more on this subject, these books may be helpful:

- *A Passion for Excellence* by Tom Peters and Nancy Austin, 608 pages, published by Warner Books, New York, 800/733-3000
- *How to Motivate People: The Team Strategy for Success* by Fran Tarkenton, 243 pages, published by HarperCollins, New York, 800/331-3761
- *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices* by Peter F. Drucker, 839 pages, published in 1985 by HarperCollins, New York, 800/331-3761
- *The Man Who Discovered Quality: How W. Edwards Deming Brought the Quality Revolution to America — The Stories of Ford, Xerox, and GM* by Andrea Gabor, 326 pages, reprinted and published in 1992 by Penguin Productions, New York, 800/933-4942

Leonard E. Tandul is a member of the Committee on Management and Personal Development and the Actuary of the Future Section Council.

### Mail alert

The first ballots for the Society's 1993 elections were mailed to all Fellows on March 23. If you are a Fellow and have not received the first ballot, please call Marilyn Meier at the Society office, 708/706-3500. To be valid, ballots must be returned to the Society office by April 23.

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The *1993 Society of Actuaries Yearbook* was mailed to members during the first week of March. If you have not received your copy, please call Laura Kammeier at the Society office, 708/706-3526.