

# Experiential Exercise

## Goal-Setting Task

**Purpose**

This exercise will help you learn how to write tangible, verifiable, measurable, and relevant goals that might evolve from an MBO program.

**Time**

Approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

**Instructions**

1. Break students into groups of three to five.
2. Spend a few minutes discussing your class instructor's job. What does he or she do? What defines good performance? What behaviors will lead to good performance?
3. Each group is to develop a list of five goals that although not established participatively with your instructor, you believe might be developed in an MBO program at the college. Try to select goals that seem most critical to the effective performance of your instructor's job.
4. Each group will select a leader who will share the group's goals with the entire class. For each group's goals, class discussion should focus on their (a) specificity, (b) ease of measurement, (c) importance, and (d) motivational properties.

## Ethical Dilemma

### Is Goal-Setting Manipulation?

Managers are interested in the subject of motivation because they're concerned with learning how to get the most effort from their employees.

Is this ethical? For example, when managers link rewards to productivity, aren't they manipulating employees?

"Manipulate" is defined as "(1) to handle, manage, or use, especially with skill, in some process of treatment or performance; (2) to manage or influence by artful skill; (3) to adapt or change to suit one's purpose or advantage." Aren't these definitions compatible with the notion of managers skillfully seeking to influence employee productivity for the benefit of the manager and the organization?

Do managers have the right to seek control over their employees? Does anyone, for that matter, have the right to control others? Does control imply manipulation? And if so, is there anything wrong with managers manipulating employees through goal setting or other motivational techniques?

**Teaching Note:** Students' responses will vary significantly. This exercise will produce stimulating discussion in class. No preparation is necessary other than having completed the reading of the chapter.

#### Suggested Responses

1. Linking rewards to productivity is not "control" nor is it "seeking control" over employees. It is not manipulation but rather providing the opportunities for individuals to pursue valued rewards. Individuals can exercise their freedom to choose. If the rewards are valued, employees will pursue those behaviors.
2. Managers are not seeking control over employees. However, managers do have the responsibility to control the work environment in ways that ensure employee safety and security. Managers are responsible for productive work environments and for stakeholder satisfaction.
3. Control does not imply manipulation. Managerial control is one of the functions of management. Control over processes, procedures, rules, and resources. All individuals attempt to manipulate their environments to produce satisfying rewards. Manipulation is not a pejorative term.
4. The implication is that managers are negatively manipulating employees. What managers should do is to provide the necessary resources for employees to manipulate the environment for productive ends that lead to organizational effectiveness and employee rewards.