

# Core Competencies **AND** Jail Leadership

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**What skills, knowledge, and abilities do you need in order to be a credible and successful jail leader?** Beginning with the July / August 2015 issue of *American Jails*, we are exploring the 22 core competencies identified by jail administrators across the country. Welcome to the sixth installment on core competencies and jail leadership.

In this issue of *American Jails*, we take a closer look at the core competency identified as “Manage Time” and recommend several valuable resources related to leadership.

### Time Management Is Managing Yourself.

**Description:** Set an agenda that includes realistic deadlines, defines priorities, and addresses critical issues promptly.

**Rationale:** Because so many issues are competing for the jail leader's attention, it is essential to establish priorities in order to avoid becoming consumed by the job, and to allow the personal time needed to decompress. This includes setting and meeting deadlines, delegating when appropriate, and avoiding the temptation to try to "do it all" at once.

#### Knowledge:

- Tools and techniques for efficient time management.
- Internal and external priorities.
- The importance of a balanced lifestyle and how to achieve it.

#### Skills:

- Recognizing time management weaknesses (e.g., procrastinating).
- Remaining focused and on-task.
- Delegating appropriately and inspiring others.
- Multi-tasking.
- Employing technology to enhance efficiency.
- Understanding the priorities of one's supervisor as well as influential stakeholders.

- Determining a timetable for achieving organizational goals.
- Establishing priorities.
- Setting and meeting deadlines.
- Cultivating self-awareness; realizing when you're stretched too thin.
- Developing positive, healthy coping techniques.
- Proactively reducing sources of stress in the work environment.
- Assuring time for yourself and your family.

#### Abilities:

- Be honest with yourself.
- Avoid distractions.
- Feel comfortable delegating.
- Prioritize.
- Maintain time sensitivity.
- Analyze.
- Think strategically.
- Balance conflicting priorities.
- Balance one's personal and professional life.
- Avoid burnout.
- Make time for yourself.
- Be aware of creating stress for others.
- Serve as a role model.

## 22 Core Competencies for Jail Leaders

- Anticipate, analyze, and resolve organizational challenges and conflicts.
- Assure organizational accountability.
- Build and maintain positive relationships with external stakeholders.
- Build and maintain teamwork; mentor and coach others.
- Communicate effectively, internally and externally.
- Comprehend, obtain, and manage fiscal resources.
- Develop and maintain a positive organizational culture that promotes respect for diverse staff.
- Develop and sustain organizational vision/mission.
- Engage in strategic planning.
- Enhance self-awareness; maintain proactive professional commitment.
- Establish organizational authority, roles, and responsibilities.
- Leverage the role of the jail in the criminal justice system.
- Make sound decisions.
- Manage change.
- Manage labor relations.
- Manage power and influence.
- **Manage time.**
- Obtain and manage human resources.
- Oversee inmate and facility management.
- Oversee physical plant management.
- Reduce jail-related liability risks.
- Understand and manage emerging technology.

## Meeting Management

Leaders cite having to convene and/or attend *too many* meetings as one of the reasons they lose their hold on time management. For many of us, we are the invitees who must sit through sometimes unfocused or unproductive meetings. For others, we are the ones who hold the meeting. Here are some suggestions for improving meeting outcomes.

**For Conveners.** Here are eight strategies to improve communication and outcome:

- Why are we holding this meeting? Too often meetings are held because we always hold a Monday briefing or because it *seems* like a way to get problems solved quickly. Examine the *outcomes* of meetings to determine if the meeting is necessary, and if there are alternatives, and/or considerations to improve meetings. Consider technological options, like Skype, or other ways to get participants present that does not require them to drive and park.
- What is the agenda and the expected outcomes? Without an idea of topics to be discussed, how can the convener and participants prepare? Establish the rule “no meetings without an agenda distributed 48 hours ahead.” Be sure to designate the person responsible for developing and sending out the agenda. Identify the specific issues that need resolution. Identify who should be there, and who doesn’t need to be there. If your meetings have “standard agendas,” ask yourself if you need this meeting or need a better agenda.
- How much is too much time? Consider setting a start and stop time for each meeting (an hour is a good target). Begin the meeting on time and end the meeting as promised. Keep the participants on track and on topic.
- Set ground rules. For example, participants must arrive on time; no excuses, no texting, no reading or sending e-mail; and if a participant’s phone rings, it better be a real emergency. Confirm that all participants are there because their voices are equal. Suspend “rank” for the meeting. Allow for brainstorming within the agenda and time scheduled. Encourage differences of opinion or differences in possible solutions/strategies. Require everyone to communicate in a professional manner.
- Create a “parking lot.” For issues that are new, or need more post-meeting examination or research, put these on a “parking lot” list. But don’t forget to assign the responsibility for the needed work and due dates.
- Listen to how much you talk in the meeting. Sometimes meetings are opportunities for the boss to get the message across, but most of the time, the leader should *talk less and listen more*. Stop yourself if you are talking more than the participants.
- Keep summary notes and distribute. Assign yourself or someone else the job of preparing summary notes (not lengthy minutes) that must be completed and circulated to the participants within an hour or two of the meeting’s end. The summary should focus on:

- who was in attendance.
  - the specific issues.
  - summary of options, highlights discussed.
  - outcomes/decisions.
  - names of those who are responsible for following up (including the “parking lot” list).
  - next meeting date and time.
- Model the behavior you expect of your subordinates. Be polite. Thank people for their time. Lead discussions, but don’t monopolize them. Don’t avoid disagreements, but guide conversations to a collegial conclusion. Don’t let people leave the meeting angry, disenfranchised, or discouraged. Get feedback before you conclude the meeting to assure that the work assignments and due dates are understood. Get closure where you can, and use the “parking lot” for issues for which that is not possible. Politely manage participants who are not on point, or who are taking up time with irrelevant talk. If a participant is not prepared for the meeting, hold that conversation in a private setting; but do hold people accountable.

**For Meeting Attendees.** It is more difficult if you are the participant and the convener hasn’t read the eight strategies discussed above. What can you do?

- Be prepared. Even without an agenda, know the discussions from previous meetings. If more information is needed to focus on an anticipated topic, provide that information and data.
- Keep your own notes. If for no other reason, your notes will remind yourself of any tasks you were given, or ideas for work.
- Be attentive. Avoid unprofessional behavior such as sending texts to the person across the table, or looking at your e-mails during the meeting. Ever. Even if the convener is not polite, that doesn’t diminish your responsibilities to be so.
- Offer your help to set the agenda for the next meeting.
- Offer to keep summary notes and distribute them to participants.
- Be patient and respectful. This is sometimes hard, but what a legacy to leave!

A world without any meetings is not a good work world, as personal communication is at the heart of good internal culture and a great organization. Your role is to take charge of meetings, not to become the victim of meetings.

“How you spend your time is the single clearest indicator of what’s important to you” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Time management is much more than assuring that your work—or if you are a micromanager, someone else’s work—gets done by the end of each day. As a leader, organizing your day is about using your time to advance the agency’s mission, vision, and values. Leaders need to discern what’s important and then be able to identify the distracters from what’s important. “...time management is really a misnomer—the challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves” (Covey, 1989). This article provides an overview of how you, as a jail leader, can better manage yourself.

The topics addressed for your consideration are:

- Priorities aligned to vision.
- Putting people first.
- Technology.
- Delegation and follow-up.
- Overcoming procrastination.

This article also provides tips for improving time management and some brief advice on delegating tasks.

Consider the consequences when you don’t manage yourself and your time effectively. Not only are you a poor role model, but you will also miss deadlines, rush to complete work that is then marginal in quality, and create more stress for you and those who work with you. Some people in administrative positions think that their ability to manage a crisis created by themselves is proof of how good they are as leaders. In fact, it is the opposite: It is the leader who *appears* to fulfill her responsibilities effortlessly and calmly who is the true winner.

### Priorities Aligned to Vision

How you arrange your activities and use your time should be connected to the mission, vision, and values of the organization—including the priorities and goals you set, or that others establish for you (either your boss, funding authority, etc.). If you can’t clearly link your responsibilities to these elements of your position, reconsider what you are doing (McCampbell, 2016). “Take a minute to look at your goals. Then look at what you’re doing. And see if it matches your goals” (Blanchard & Johnson, 2015).

Also, to be included in this assessment are your personal goals, such as professional development and networking. If you haven’t scheduled time in your day to catch-up on reading, communicate with your mentors, or further your growth and development, are you

advancing your leadership? And—thanks to the life perspectives of Generation Xers and Millennials—remember to balance your work life and prioritize your family and friends.

### Putting People First

The jail leader’s role is to inspire colleagues, peers, and subordinates by providing the tools, training, and direction needed. If there is a choice among tasks, interacting (*not* e-mailing or texting) with staff should be the first decision. Remaining in your office, even though work may need to be done, doesn’t achieve the leader’s goals or accomplish the organization’s vision.

Too often stories are told about staff who visit their supervisor’s office, only to discover their supervisor is more interested in the latest e-mail or text rather than giving his undivided attention to the staff member standing before him. What we know for sure is that your staff want and need your attention, and that they need to be assured that you are listening to them and hearing what they say.

“Executives who do not know how to make themselves effective in their own jobs and work set the wrong example.”

—PETER F. DRUCKER,  
THE EFFECTIVE EXECUTIVE

### Technology

The introduction of technology into the workplace has changed how executives organize their time. E-mail, instant messaging, video chats, tweets, whatever technology you embrace, alters the fabric of your day. The question is: Does technology help you to perform your job, or do you serve as its slave?

Ask yourself how often you look at your cell phone, check your e-mail, or respond to a text message. Then look at whether these diversions are accomplishing your work or distracting you. Although the temptation is great, you don’t need to read and act on an e-mail or text message *right now*. And the faster you respond to that text or e-mail, the more your staff expect that instant response.

One strategy is to set ground rules for yourself and then transmit those guidelines to your colleagues. For example, if there is an emergency, direct your staff to telephone you, instead of sending a text or e-mail. Let your people know that you will respond to e-mails within 24 hours and answer text messages when you are able. Technology has provided us the option of scheduling telephone calls instead of just cold-calling someone. This strategy is respectful of other people’s time, assures the agenda is known in advance, and allows you to be organized as well.

Remember that your actions will set the expectations for your subordinates: If you are always connected digitally, then so will they. As for checking Facebook or other social media sites during work hours, your staff will follow the standard that your behavior sets. (It is recommended that every jail have a policy regarding social media, including what can be posted about the jail, rules on confidentiality, and accessing such sites during the work shift. For more information, visit [www.iacpsocialmedia.org/GettingStarted/PolicyDevelopment.aspx](http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/GettingStarted/PolicyDevelopment.aspx).)

### Delegation and Follow-up

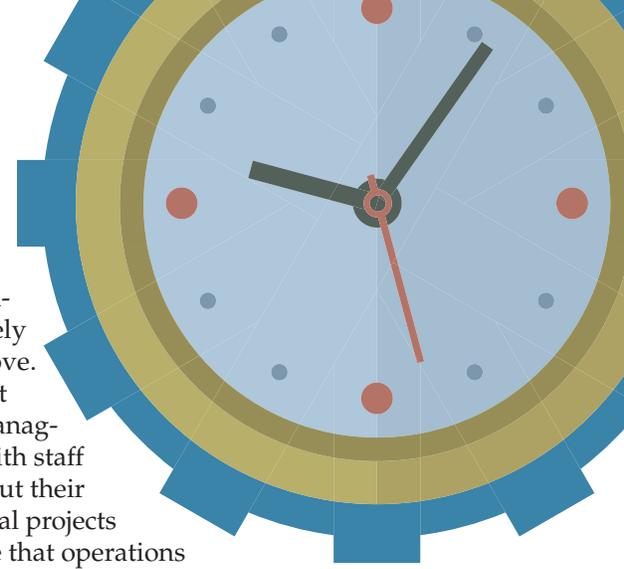
If your staff are contacting you for answers or decisions, consider if you have delegated appropriately. Calculate the amount of the time in your day that is used to review the work of subordinates, address problems, or make decisions that can be made by those staff who bring the questions to you. Then, ask yourself how much of your time could be freed if the staff who ask the questions is given the responsibility to answer their own questions.

In *The New One Minute Manager*, the authors provide the framework for you to assess how you are relating to your staff (Blanchard & Johnson, 2015). Everyone is challenged with doing more with less. Unless you invest in your subordinates and give them the responsibility

and authority to make decisions based on shared goals, your time management is likely never to improve. Follow-up isn't about micromanaging. Talking with staff frequently about their duties or special projects helps to assure that operations stay on track.

### Overcoming Procrastination

Effective time management is defeated by the leader's choice to wait until the last minute to assign work, review work, or provide the direction necessary to successfully do the task. We kid ourselves if we say that the reason we didn't complete an assignment is because of the press of *other* work. This excuse says that we are disorganized, can't appropriately use resources, find more interesting projects to work on, or don't see the value of completing the work—all poor reasons. Knowing yourself helps keep you on track. There are personality types



that relish last minute panics with imminent deadlines to complete work.

So, what's the help for people who find they are struggling by putting things off to the last minute? According to Amy Gallow (2011), writing in the *Harvard Business Review*, here are steps to take:

- Determine why you are putting things off. Do you not know *how* to do the task, or do you just not *like* the task?
- Give yourself realistic deadlines.
- Give yourself a reward. Take a walk outside, a sit-down with colleagues, or eat a sugary treat!
- Involve others. Look to your peers and subordinates to help you navigate through the mire.
- Don't define yourself as a procrastinator. Turn the language around and don't label yourself.

The theme throughout this article is that you are role modeling the behavior for the next generation of leaders. Having a boss who is known as a chronic procrastinator isn't much of a recommendation as a mentor or coach. Consider the power of having a boss who knows the way forward, even for difficult or new tasks.

### **Tips for Improving Your Time Management**

Here are some specific ideas to improve your personal time management:

- Map it out. For one week, keep track of how you generally spend each hour of each day. While this can be a daunting task when you are busy and frequently interrupted, it is hard to plot a correction without knowing how you got there. One strategy is to keep your electronic calendar as updated as possible, with calls, meetings, and work projects.
- Make time for people. Assure that your time includes walking through the facility, attending roll calls, talking to inmates, and working with the community. Budget this time.
- Start your day with a plan on what you want to accomplish (or better yet, set your goals the previous evening). Without knowing your objectives for the day, there is no way to hold yourself accountable for accomplishing those, and no way to measure your procrastination quotient!
- Keep track of the projects you have delegated. Assure that you are checking in (not micromanaging).
- Keep notes on telephone conversations, meetings, and from your walk-through of the facility. Be sure to follow-up with your staff. Scan in your notes to the appropriate file for future reference.
- Evaluate your meeting schedule and keep meetings at a minimum (see sidebar on Meeting Management). Don't be afraid to reorganize, consolidate, or stop meetings that don't reach the goals of the organization or facilitate getting work done.

- Don't give permission for constant interruptions. Although you want your employees to know you are available to them, consider establishing office hours and letting people know when your office door is open.
- Plan for the unexpected or the emergency. Sadly, the jail business has those days when there are emergencies, elected officials who demand time, or bosses who want a new project finished... yesterday. Allow for that flexibility in your day; but if that happens frequently, you should reexamine the sources of those "emergencies."
- Identify the meeting dates and times for community stakeholder groups and organizations and add them as part of your calendar. While this may add more stress to your time management, your presence as leaders in the community is a requirement for the jail's success (McC Campbell, 2015).
- Consider saying "no." Although it is flattering to be asked to work on new projects or engage in new journeys, think about others who might benefit from that exposure. If you take it all on, you will not demonstrate that you are managing yourself well.
- Schedule time for yourself. Whether it is a coffee break, lunch, exercise, your annual physical, catching up on professional publications, or visioning, without setting aside time such activities will not be a priority and it will not get done. One of the messages from experienced administrators is to take care of yourself and your family (Stinchcomb & McC Campbell, 2014).

### Talk to the Person with the Shovel

At the end of the day, managing yourself and your time may require that you need to have a conversation with the person who is heaping work on you. As Benjamin Franklin famously said "If you want something done, ask a busy person." But don't expect a lot of sympathy if that is the pattern that has been in place for a long time. If you consistently get the work done, asking for a reprieve, or complaining about the workload is unlikely to be well received...Solving this dilemma requires you to be even better at delegating, organizing, and continuing to find the way forward. Reaching to achieve the jail's mission, vision and values, and motivating employees, role-modeling behavior, and assuring their work is satisfying is all part of managing yourself well.

### It's About the People

The people in your workplace, the stakeholders in your community, and your family and friends are what it's about. If you manage yourself and manage your time, your reward will be that you get to spend hours with those who matter most, in activities that are most rewarding for you. A good outcome. ■

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