



New County Extension Directors Fact Sheet
Creating a Positive Work Environment

Introduction

Whether you believe it or not, your management and leadership style sets a tone for others in your office. Positive, productive, effective workplaces don't just happen. They are built through interest, effort and commitment. Most of all they require professional respect, communication and support for the program and each other. You are critical in providing support and direction in achieving a positive work environment. It is often helpful to agree together on basic guidelines to live and work by. They are intended to draw people together and ensure success and productivity.

Tools

A few agreements your unit might consider are:

- Operate as colleagues interested and committed to the success of each other. Value and protect each other's reputations.
- Treat people with professional respect.
- Listen generously and speak honestly. Listen for understanding.
- Keep your commitments. Do what you say you'll do.
- Acknowledge and appreciate each other.
- If something does not work for you, speak up. Talk to the person you have the concern with and don't gossip with others.

Basic Principles for Positive Relationships

Here are some basic principles that will help you as a new County Extension Director to create and sustain positive relationships in your office.

1. Communicate openly and honestly with employees. Listen to them; talk with them, not to them.
2. Work **with** your employees. Don't send messages that they work for you.
3. Develop your own positive management style. The manager's attitude sets the tone.
4. Treat everybody fairly and consistently.
5. Challenge people to think. Inspire them to dream and believe in their success. Support their creativity and innovative approaches.
6. Encourage and support development and growth for all employees. They want to grow. **Help them.**
7. Provide fair, competitive compensation.
8. Provide strong, positive leadership and direction.

9. Let employees feel they are an important part of the organization. Involve them in decisions that affect them.
10. Expect only the best from your employees and let them know your expectations.
11. Don't over promise and under deliver.
12. Provide immediate feedback and positive reinforcement. Remember to "compliment in public and criticize in private".
13. Remember that trust is the "emotional glue that holds leaders and followers together". Build trust every day through consistent actions and communications.
14. Model the values and purpose of the organization. Help people see the contribution they make to the people they work with and the organization as a whole system.

Balancing Work/Life Issues

WSU Extension supports employees in meeting their work objectives by using professional scheduling (for WSU Extension Educators) and alternative work arrangements and flexible scheduling (for support staff). Be sure to know and follow county guidelines for county employees. Our purpose is to create an organizational environment which, in the pursuance of our organization's mission, vision, and values, respects and supports quality of life and work issues of our employees. Our ultimate goal is to create a work environment that enhances employee effectiveness in their work and personal life. The [WSU Work/Life](#) website offers assistance in meeting work/life balance goals.

Vision

WSU Extension believes in and offers programs related to improving the quality of life for individuals, families and communities. Employees need to be dynamic examples of people who are successfully integrating their personal and professional lives. To accomplish this mission and vision, Extension employees will:

- Prioritize their educational programs and activities.
- Be responsive to prioritized clientele issues while meeting their own individual and family needs.
- Partner with colleagues, clientele and funding partners in recognizing and respecting the varying work/life issues that individuals face.

Adapted from Ohio State University Extension, Orientation for New County Extension Directors, Guide Sheet #2