# Effective Crew Management

Crew Leader

Learning Objectives

By attending this session, participants will be able to:

* List the basic leadership skills needed to effectively manage a crew.
* Summarize the steps in problem solving and the importance of problem-solving skills.
* Demonstrate how to schedule workdays for effective use of time and resources.
* Discuss tips for motivating a crew to work effectively as a team and enjoy doing it.

Key Terminology

Autonomy

Personal space

SMART

Supplemental Materials

Handouts & Resources

Mentoring Exercise Scenarios.

Mentoring Exercise Scenarios Solutions.

Motivational Skills Quiz.

Gill, Tony. “Sample Work Order.”

Sterner, Tamasin. “On-the-Job Mentoring.” *Home Energy* Sept./Oct. 2009. www.homeenergy.org.

**Online Platform Lessons**

Use these online interactive training modules as prerequisites before students attend the course or as in-class computer lab sessions. Users must first create an account at [www.nterlearning.org](http://www.nterlearning.org) to access the lesson.

i- 7.5 Blower Door Guided Air Sealing [https://www.nterlearning.org/web/guest/course-details?cid=249](https://www.nterlearning.org/web/guest/course-details?cid=248)

Classroom Props & Activities

**Communication Exercise #1: Effective Listening**

Break into pairs. Have students pair with people they don’t know, and allow them two minutes to introduce themselves. The listener has 1–2 minutes to ask follow-up questions (e.g., about their work history, family, hobbies, etc.).

At the end of the exercise, ask pairs to introduce each other to the class and find out how well they listened!

**Communication Exercise #2: Communicating a Message**

Break into groups of four.

1. Give the groups a sample section of a work order, for example:

* Mobile home: Convert belly return system to a central hallway return.
* Site-built home: Seal all ducts to achieve pressure pan readings at or below 1 Pa.

1. In groups, students should describe how they would tell the crew to do this job.
2. In groups, students should describe how they would explain to the homeowner what is being done and the purpose of this job.
3. As a class, discuss the differences in how groups explained the work to crews, versus how they explained the work to a client (who typically has less knowledge of materials and building science).

**Mentoring Exercise #3: Mentor Scenarios**

Break the class into groups of four. Present different scenarios to each group (see “Mentoring Exercise Scenarios” document). Within each group, one member can read the scenario aloud for the others to hear. Discuss various solutions they might have experienced in the past.

Ask students to determine which solution best describes what a good mentor would do in that situation. It should be one that uses the situation as a teachable moment, getting the worker to understand and correct the mistake without embarrassment.

**Problem-Solving Exercise #4**

Hand out paper and pencils. Ask participants to write their names and then write down a problem they’ve encountered on the job site. Examples might include aggressive clients, dangerous working conditions, equipment malfunction, material shortages, and tardy employees. Collect these before a break.

During the break, or at some point during this section, sort through the problems and choose some that will work as class exercises. Good selections will have various possible solutions, not just a straightforward “right” answer, so the class can work through the problem-solving process.

Read out a problem for the class to discuss. The original author can provide more information when asked during the “gather information” part of the process.

Write down the alternative solutions on a chalkboard, overhead, or flip chart. Once the group has decided on the best solution, ask the author if that was what happened. If not, ask him/her to explain what did happen.

**Scheduling Exercise #5**

One of the most important tasks of a crew leader is organization. This involves tools and equipment maintenance and materials ordering (addressed in those lessons of this curriculum) but also organizing job assignments on site that can affect crew morale.

Divide the class into small groups. Distribute the sample work order provided or use one from a local agency. Have students discuss how they would assign the various tasks, in which order, and to how many workers in order to get the job completed in X days. (Set a time limit for them based on the work scope.)

As a class, discuss the various approaches. Do they meet the goals of providing workers with variety, autonomy, and challenge while also ensuring quality and timely completion of work?

Have groups assume that one crew member calls in sick on day two. How does this affect production? Did the schedule allow enough flexibility to get the job done?

**Motivational Skills Quiz Discussion**

Distribute the quiz and have participants answer each question while checking answers against the answer key.

With the quizzes still in front of them, lead a discussion about the various skills a crew leader needs to effectively motivate a crew. These skills, and the quiz questions that align with them, are:

* Providing Productive and Challenging Work (Questions 1, 4, 15)
  + Providing variety, challenge, and autonomy on the job boosts overall performance. Good planning and organization by the crew leader is essential to ensure installers have the right tools for the job, they have safe working conditions, and there is enough time to properly complete the work.
* Setting Effective Goals (Questions 2, 3, 12, 14)
  + Once you have provided an organized, productive work environment, the next step is to set goals for individuals and the crew. Use the acronym, SMART, to remember the defining characteristics of effective goals. SMART = Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound. List some goals and determine if they are SMART.
* Understanding Individual Differences in Motivation (Questions 5, 9, 10, 11)
  + Some people will be motivated by more time off, while others may prefer to gain status and recognition. Question 11 is a trick question, as this method of being “fair” isn’t necessarily the most effective way to motivate your crew. Many of the leadership skills already discussed (listening skills, problem solving, dealing with differences) help a crew leader learn what motivates the crew and to put that knowledge to work by providing individually meaningful rewards for work well done.
* Providing Rewards and Recognition (Questions 6, 7, 8, 13)
  + Once you’ve determined what motivates members of your crew, establish a fair system of reward and recognition. “Fair” does not mean everyone is rewarded in the same way. Some crew members will appreciate more pay, but others will appreciate a flexible work week or additional training, for example. Motivation is about encouragement and appreciation, every day.

**Class Overview**

* Use the presentation as a framework to structure class discussions and exercises illustrating the various skills required to effectively manage a crew. Using the slides as cues, have the class do the following exercises as described in more detail above, using the additional resources provided:
* Effective Listening
* Communicating a Message
* Mentoring
* Problem Solving
* Scheduling
* Motivational Skills Quiz and Discussion
* Work to encourage full participation.