

Food for Thought

Professional Development and Learning 2008-2009 Course Catalog

A course catalog of workshop topics, links to resources, information on conferences and workshops is listed online for AgriLife employees – staff and faculty. Included is specific information for employee development and learning related to supervisor development, employee professional development, financial and employment-specific workshops, computer software application training as well as our new Leadership Development Program.

If your unit/department offers a program for AgriLife employees that you would like to have included in the catalog, please contact Beverley Rose in AgriLife Human Resources at 979-458-3279 or barose@ag.tamu.edu before September 26, 2008.

At present, the catalog is available electronically at <http://aghr.tamu.edu> and will be printed and distributed to all AgriLife units and departments during October 2008. The catalog will be updated annually and is designed to be a current employee development and learning resource for all AgriLife employees.

Leadership Development Plan

Texas A&M AgriLife is excited to announce our new Leadership Development Plan (LDP), a three-tiered approach directed to those who lead and execute the organization's strategies. The program is based on the premise that achieving Texas A&M AgriLife goals and delivering outcomes is heavily dependent on investment in current leaders as well as the potential leaders of the future.



The initial tier, **Emerging**, is targeted to new AgriLife Supervisors and employees interested in pursuing steps along a career path leading to supervisory responsibilities. A blended program of online courses, face

Editor:
Pat Onstott

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Be careful of the words you say,
And keep them soft and sweet;
You never know from day to day,
Which ones you'll have to eat.

— Unknown

(continued on page 2, see "Professional Development")

Professional Development (cont'd. from page 1)

to face workshops, as well as a two-day conference designed specifically for AgriLife supervisors with three years or less of experience is scheduled for May 2009 in College Station. We hope to attract a broad audience from around the state, but it is our intent to make the conference an annual event at varied locations in subsequent years.

We are also pleased to bring you a second tier program, **Developing**. This curriculum targets leaders who are well developed in their careers and who would like to enhance their formal understanding of leadership and executive management in order to perform at a higher level in their current jobs and to prepare for greater responsibilities in the future. The program runs for 18 months between January 2009 and June 2010 and is available by nomination only. Successful nominees will participate in a blend of course work utilizing both group and individualized techniques to promote self awareness and professional development. Six seats are available on a fee-per-seat basis; all participants are required to commit to completing the full 18 month program at the onset of the schedule.

The third tier, **Excelling**, is currently under development and will focus on those individuals who have high potential toward candidacy in Texas A&M AgriLife's succession plan, including those administrators who are new or newly promoted into leadership positions. This program will be reflective of the goals and vision of Texas A&M AgriLife and be an identifiable signature of the organization and what it represents. Further information on this program will be available in Spring of 2009 with a planned program launch in Fall 2009.

For additional information and to find out how to access the development opportunities of the Leadership Development Program, please contact Beverley Rose at AgriLife Human Resources, 979-458-3279 or barose@aq.tamu.edu.

New Faculty Orientation

Texas A&M AgriLife is sponsoring an orientation for new faculty holding the title of assistant professor, associate professor and professor, including research professors and extension specialists. This program will be held October 20 and the morning of October 21, 2008, at the Memorial Student Center (MSC) in College Station.

The goal of these sessions is to provide recent appointments/hires the opportunity to interact with more experienced faculty and administrators and to provide a program of information which will assist with their integration into Texas A&M AgriLife.

New faculty/research professors/extension specialists, hired/appointed since October 2007 (the date of our last New Faculty Orientation), are welcome to attend. Please contact Beverley Rose in AgriLife Human Resources for agenda and registration details at 979-458-3279 or barose@aq.tamu.edu.

2009 Texas A&M AgriLife Conference

Preparations are underway for the **2009 Texas A&M AgriLife Conference** with the Planning Team assembled and led by Patricia Gerling, assistant vice chancellor for University and System Relations. The **2009 Support Staff Symposium** will run parallel to the Conference during the week of January 12- 15, 2009. Please contact Beverley Rose, AgriLife Human Resources, to have your say in Symposium topics or scheduling at 979-458-3279 or barose@aq.tamu.edu.

(continued on page 2, see "Professional Development")

Professional Development (cont'd. from page 2)

Employee Development & Learning Calendar September & October, 2008

September 12	Upgrading to MS Office 2007*	Friday Online	9:00 – 10:30 a.m
September 19	Get the Most from GroupWise Calendar	Friday Online	9:00 – 10:30 a.m
September 26	Creating Forms in Acrobat Pro 8 & 9	Friday Online	9:00 – 10:30 a.m
September 30	Public Speaking 101	TTVN	10:00 – 12:00 noon
* to be rescheduled at a later date due to Hurricane Ike			
October 3	Presentations that Pack a Punch	Friday Online	9:00 – 10:30 a.m.
October 10	How to Excel at Excel: Master the Basics of MS Excel	Friday Online	9:00 – 10:30 a.m.
October 17	Capture it with Camtasia!	Friday Online	9:00 – 10:30 a.m
October 17	Business Writing**	College Station	Full Day
October 24	FLSA for Supervisors**	College Station	Full Day
October 24	Centra: A Web Tool for Synchronous eLearning	Friday Online	9:00 – 10:30 a.m.
October 28	Workplace Security & Safety	TTVN	10:00 – 12:00 noon
October 31	Moodle: A Web Tool for Asynchronous eLearning	Friday Online	9:00 – 10:30 a.m.

**These face-to-face workshops are fee based and supervisor approval is required. For further information or, to register, go to <http://agrillifevents.tamu.edu/> and select: *Leadership Development Plan Emerging Supervisor and Professional Development*.

Friday Online Workshops are available via Centra Symposium. To register or enroll, go to <http://webconference.tamus.edu/main/tce/index.jhtml?default=true>

TTVN access can be found at <http://ttvn2.tamu.edu/home/index.php?p=query> Select AGHR Workshop Series for site locations or view online, via streaming media, at <http://ttvn2.tamu.edu/home/index.php?p=streams>, select Channel 6.



The human brain is a wonderful thing. It starts working the moment you are born and never stops unless you stand up to speak in public. — Unknown

PayFlex

PAYFLEX DEBIT CARDS: If you elected to participate in the healthcare flexible spending account program this plan year but did not indicate that you wanted a debit card, you can still get one. Contact Agrilife Human Resources 979-845-2423 for enrollment information. Your account will be reduced by the \$9 fee once you make the election for a debit card, regardless of when in the plan year you make this election. Debit card quick facts can be found at <http://tamus.edu/benefits/ae/debitcardquickfacts.pdf>.

PAYFLEX DIRECT DEPOSIT: If you elected to have your flexible spending account reimbursements deposited into the same account as your payroll deposits and you make a change to your banking information on HRConnect, you will need to notify PayFlex of the change. Changes made in HRConnect in your banking (direct deposit) information are not recognized when transmitted to PayFlex. You will need to notify Payflex directly of the change by going to Payflex's secure website: www.mypayflex.com

— Jan Kyles

Beneficiary Designation System Available

The new beneficiary database, debuted in the HRConnect Annual Enrollment system, is now available through SSO, in HRConnect. Click on the Benefits Data tab and then the button entitled *Go to Beneficiary System*. This button will allow employees and retirees to access their beneficiary information 24/7. Employees can make changes or add beneficiary information at any time. Insurance proceeds are paid to the person(s) designated on the most recently dated form on file.

— Jan Kyles



Nothing is more annoying than having somebody repeat, word for word, what you shouldn't have said in the first place.

— Unknown

National Work and Family Month

*October is
National Work
& Family Month*

Join us in celebrating October as National Work and Family Month recognizing that work-life balance is important for workers to live a full life. National Work and Family Month is the result of the U.S. Senate and the National Work-Life Initiative passed in 2003 to build awareness about the importance of work-life balance. For more information on National Work and Family month, go to <http://www.awlp.org/awlp/nwfm/nwfm-home.jsp>



One good way to keep people from jumping down your throat is to keep your mouth shut.

— Unknown

Helpful Websites

A&M System Online - tamus.edu/systemwide/

Benefits - aghr.tamu.edu/benefits.htm

Dictionary - dictionary.reference.com/

Employment Posters - hrtoolbox.tamu.edu/

GreatJobs - greatjobs.tamu.edu (Applicant site)
greatjobs.tamu.edu/hr (Employee site)

Food For Thought Archives -
aghr.tamu.edu/food4thought.htm

Forms (Alpha List) -
agservices.tamu.edu/Forms/forms-alfa.htm

Holiday Schedules - aghr.tamu.edu/holidays.htm

Human Resources - aghr.tamu.edu/

Maps - www.mapquest.com/

New Employee Processing -
aghr.tamu.edu/processing.htm

Postage Rate Calculator - postcalc.usps.gov/

Payroll - aghr.tamu.edu/pay.htm

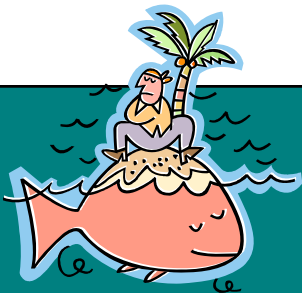
Policies, Procedures & Forms -
aghr.tamu.edu/policies.htm

Selective Service Registration Verification -
<https://www.sss.gov/RegVer/wfVerification.aspx>

SSO (HR Connect, TimeTraq, LeaveTraq) - <https://sso.tamus.edu>

Texas A&M AgriLife Directory -
agdirectory.tamu.edu/

Zip Code Lookup - zip4.usps.com/zip4/welcome.jsp



Did you know...?

Longlining is a type of commercial fishing that uses hundreds of baited hooks on a line that can be many miles long.

In 1984, live fish fell on a London neighborhood after being sucked up in a waterspout.

In 1999 a Heron dropped a live goldfish down the chimney of a London family. The fish survived.

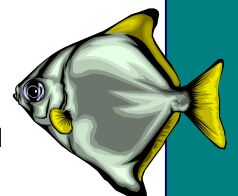


The smallest fish is a 1/3 inch long freshwater goby.

The largest known fish in the sea is the Whale Shark. It weighs up to 20 tons and grows to a length of 40 feet.

Jelly fish, not sharks, are the deadliest killers in oceans and seas. A certain kind of box jelly fish kills more people than all the shark species do put together.

Pearl essence is the silvery substance in the skin of herring and other fishes. It is a lucrative by-product that is essential to the manufacture of lipstick, nail polish, paints, ceramics and costume jewelry.



Focus on 5 Key Strategies to Improve Communication Skills by Joelle Jay

Effective communication is one of the biggest factors in successful leadership. Without good communication skills, managers often fail to gain commitment from employees, achieve business goals and develop rapport with the people on their team. In short, they can fail as leaders—no matter how good their intentions—if they fail to be good communicators.

The good news? Managers can enhance their communication skills by committing to and practicing these five key strategies:

1. Listening.
2. Facilitating.
3. Questioning.
4. Using discretion.
5. Directing.

First and foremost, the most effective leaders know when to stop talking and start listening. This is especially important in three situations: when emotions are high, in team situations and when employees are sharing ideas. Extreme emotions, such as anger, resentment and excitement, warrant attention for both personal and business reasons. On a personal level, people feel acknowledged when others validate their feelings, and when managers ignore feelings, they create distance between themselves and their employees. From a business perspective, emotions can also interfere with clear thinking. Allowing employees to address their emotions helps them move beyond the situation at hand and get back to business. Managers can develop stronger relationships with their employees while enhancing productivity simply by listening to their employees when emotions are high.

Listening also is critical in team situations, which involve multiple personalities, complex dynamics and competing agendas. By listening carefully, managers can ensure that everyone is working toward the same goal. Listening also helps managers identify and address conflicts early, as well as facilitate healthy working relationships among team members. Third, listening is vital when employees are sharing ideas. When managers stop listening to ideas, employees stop offering them, and managers are essentially cut off from the creativity and expertise of the people on their team.

The basic fundamentals of good listening include the following:

- Attending closely to what's being said, instead of focusing on what you want to say next.
- Allowing others to finish speaking before taking a turn.
- Repeating back what you've heard to give the speaker the opportunity to clarify the message.

Continued on page 7—see "Communication Skills"



**Tact is the knack of making a point without making an enemy.
— Unknown**

Communication Skills (continued from page 6)

Facilitating communication goes beyond listening; you're actually leading a conversation. Good facilitation consists of a continuous cycle of three steps: hearing what is said, integrating it into the topic at hand and saying something to move the conversation forward. For example, imagine a manager facilitating a meeting in which she and her team are developing goals for the coming year. The conversation might sound something like this:

Manager: As we develop our goals for next year, it's important that we hear from everyone in the department. What are your ideas?

Employee 1: I think it's important that we get productivity up. I notice we have a pretty relaxed pace around here, and it gets frustrating when some people are working hard and others seem to be contributing less than others.

Manager: OK, so we need improved productivity. What would that look like as a goal?

Employee 2: Actually, I think it's more a matter of setting a higher sales goal than improving productivity in the office. We don't just need to be busier, we need to get better results.

Manager: I see. So the idea is that we should set higher sales goals for everyone, which would consequently address the productivity issue. Is that right?

Employees: Yes.

Note that the manager repeated what she heard so that the employees could verify its accuracy. She also integrated each comment into the topic at hand—tying the first employee's frustration with productivity to the task—goal-setting—and connecting the second employee's point about sales to the topic on the table—productivity. Although her employees were providing the input, the manager stayed focused on the task of preparing goals and led all comments in that direction.

Good facilitation skills help managers become leaders because they are able to garner the input of everyone in a group while keeping them focused on the task. It's especially useful when guiding a team toward a desired outcome, such as developing a strategic plan, putting together a joint project or coordinating activities.

Questioning is how we get information, but it's important to remember that different kinds of questions yield different kinds of results. For example:

- **Closed questions** elicit yes/no answers. Use them when you simply need to check the status of an issue. Has the report been completed? Do you know what to do? Can you get that to me by Friday?
- **Open questions** elicit longer responses. Use them almost anytime you want more than a yes/no answer, such as seeking input from others, looking for information about a particular topic or exploring a problem. What do you think would be the best way to go about this? How are you doing on that project? What went wrong? These kinds of questions give others the chance to provide the information they have and to avoid the innumerable consequences that can come when leaders make assumptions without becoming well-informed.
- **Personal questions** have a special role in leadership. Inappropriate personal questions, such as asking direct reports if they are dating anyone, can alienate employees. Appropriate personal questions, however, can create a sense of camaraderie between employee and boss. Ask whether employees had a nice weekend, inquire about their families or follow up on common interests to connect on a personal level.

Continued on page 8 — See "Communication Skills"

Communication Skills (continued from page 7)

Knowing when not to speak as a leader is just as important as speaking. Managers must understand that the moment they don a new title, they become a leader—one who others look to for guidance, direction and even protection. Good leaders adopt a policy of discretion, if not confidentiality, with their employees. Only then can they develop the trust that is so vital to productivity. Confidential situations may arise in a number of areas, personal and professional, including the following:

- An employee involved in a direct conflict with another employee.
- An employee concerned about another employee's conduct.
- An employee's declining performance.
- An employee's health issue or personal problem.
- An employee's desire for advice on how to excel without being seen as cozying up to the boss.

In any of these cases, the employee is facing circumstances that affect him personally and could affect business, if not addressed effectively. By inviting a confidential conversation, you could help your employee discuss a situation openly and develop strategies to handle it well. But if your trustworthiness is questionable, your employee won't believe a candid discussion is possible.

To communicate that you can be trusted, tell employees directly that you are always available for private conversations when needed. This further assures employees that the conversation will be kept confidential. Then keep that promise. Remember, actions speak louder than words. Employees doubt the discretion of managers who talk behind their employees' backs, gossip or show favoritism of any kind, which leads to communication shut down.

Directing comes last on the list of communication strategies because it is the one strategy that should be used less often. Many managers direct their employees because they believe it's the only way to get things done. It's not. The other forms of communication discussed above—listening, facilitating, questioning, using discretion—are better able to get employees working more productively in a spirit of cooperation and in a more friendly environment than directing.

But directing has its place, when you want to give directions clearly and unequivocally so that employees know exactly what to do and when. It's best used in times of confusion or when efficiency is the most important goal. Although it can be effective, directing also can lead to complacency on the part of employees who may adopt an "I just do what they tell me" attitude. Use it sparingly.

Joelle Jay, Ph.D., is the owner and president of Pillar Consulting LLC, a leadership development firm in Reno, Nevada, specializing in leadership and personal effectiveness. She coaches business leaders and executives in achieving success while maintaining a healthy life balance. She can be reached at: Joelle@pillar-consulting.com

Life's journey is not to arrive at the grave safely, in a well preserved body, but rather to skid in side ways, totally worn out shouting... 'Wow, what a Ride!!!' — Unknown



New Employees in Human Resources/Payroll

Edward Romero joined Human Resources on July 15 as director of diversity for Texas A&M AgriLife. He will help develop the AgriLife diversity brand, strategy and platform; develop programming and training for employees; and ensure diversity messages are included in communications. Edward was previously assistant dean for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences since 2003 and had been director of the college's Office of Student Diversity from 2005-2007. He obtained a bachelor's in agricultural economics and business in 1991 and a masters in agricultural and Extension education in 1991, both from New Mexico State University. He earned his doctorate in agricultural education in 2008 from Texas A&M.

Karisa Cherry started on July 21 as a financial accountant in the Payroll office in the position vacated by Joy Leighman. Karisa will be responsible for retirement and tax reporting, including TRS, ORP, and federal tax. She will work under the direction of Jessy Chen. Karisa comes to us from Midland, Texas, where she worked as an accountant at Glenn, Prather, and Company, Certified Public Accountants. She has a B.S. from Sam Houston State University in Accounting, 2005.

Anna Sprouse started employment in Payroll on July 28 as a financial specialist I in the position vacated by Margaret Dow. Anna transferred from the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) where she was a senior customer service assistant. She will be responsible for approving all Texas AgriLife Extension EPAs and processing the Extension monthly payroll.

Missy Arevalo began employment in Human Resources on August 25 as a financial specialist III in the position vacated when Betty O'Quinn retired. She transferred from Texas A&M University where she was a business associate II; she has worked for the TAMU System since June, 1999.

Karen Bryan began employment in Human Resources on September 1 as information technology associate. She is transferring to Human Resources from the office of the director of AgriLife Extension. Karen brings to Human Resources 23 years of Agency experience.

Listening to what isn't said is often more important than hearing what is said. — Unknown

New Procedures

Following our recent audits by the System for Human Resources and Safety, a number of AgriLife Research and Extension Procedures have been rewritten. The procedures for faculty evaluation and promotion for AgriLife Research has been separated into two separate procedures and the due date for evaluations has been established as May 31st. In addition, the new procedure outlines the incorporation of GreatJobs into the evaluation process.

Additionally, the Official Personnel File procedure has been updated to reflect the incorporation of Laserfiche and the personnel file checklist located in the <http://hrtoolbox.tamu.edu>.

In the area of safety, many of the procedures were consolidated and the procedures were renumbered. Also, a new procedure, Restrictions on Candles, has been added.

All of these recently updated procedures are displayed and linked at <http://aghr.tamu.edu/policies.htm>. This is also linked through the main AGHR website at <http://aghr.tamu.edu>.

— Bob Hensz

How to Claim Victory Over a Defeatist Attitude

by Gladys Edmunds

Hi, Gladys,

I have finally received an MBA. Although the focus of my education was on entrepreneurship and I have good business sense, I somehow don't feel that I have enough of a positive outlook to run my own company. What do you suggest I do to start feeling more confident?

Jan T

Self-confidence is an inner quality that is not a steady state. It comes and goes depending on the environment we find ourselves in. The main objective is to be able to recall self-confidence when we need it.

Often when this type of question is raised, the person doubting himself or herself is in an uncertain state of mind about a new or important decision.

Here are a few ideas to help you recall your self-confidence.

Pay attention to your thoughts. You may not be able to control all of the many thoughts constantly running through your mind, but you can control which ones you choose to hold on to. Pay particular attention to the importance you give to thoughts that are self-sabotaging, i.e., "I know this is not going to work." Or, just re-read your e-mail to me when you wrote, "I somehow don't feel that I have enough of a positive outlook..." These thoughts and words are self-defeating. When you catch yourself thinking and talking like this, take a real close look into where these ideas are coming from. It might serve you best to track such negative thoughts back to the sources from where they originate to that you can get beyond it and change your thinking to something more positive.

Pictures are powerful. Mentally picture yourself in a situation as a strong and powerful person. Make this a regular practice. Plus, it feels good to think of yourself as already successful.

Have reachable and measurable goals. This is great fuel for self-confidence. Reaching a goal denotes a victory. Break your large goals into small, bite-size, manageable pieces that you can achieve more easily and with fewer struggles.

The key to achieving a high sense of self-confidence is to experience having many small successes. As the old cliché goes, success breeds success. By earning an MBA, you have already achieved significant success. With your current knowledge and education, you will be able to take your business idea and go beyond your wildest dreams.

As a single, teen-age mom, Gladys Edmunds made money doing laundry, cooking dinners for taxi drivers and selling fire extinguishers and Bibles door-to-door. Today, Edmunds is founder of Edmunds Travel Consultants in Pittsburgh and author of There's No Business Like Your Own Business, a six-step guide to success published by Viking. Her website is www.gladysedmunds.com. You can e-mail her at gladys@gladysedmunds.com.



A good test for conversation: If you wouldn't write it and sign your name to it, don't say it.
— Unknown