

Manager as Disturbance Handler

Managers, as disturbance handlers, have to tactfully handle both positive and negative interruptions.

Amelia Blanquera, a New York city attorney and writer was beset for months by a co-worker who wanted to talk about his family problems, dating issues and experiments with new yoga styles. She tried to discourage him by moving to a desk at the center of their open office, making their conversations more awkward. She also donned headphones, if he popped up by her desk. As per a survey, more than 3 in 5 workers say they have at least one co-worker who overshares.

One of the important roles of a manager is to act as a disturbance handler. Many people face interruptions at work because of which they are unable to perform well. There are certain people who indulge in excessive sharing of their personal problems with the colleagues causing damage not only to their careers but also to that of their colleagues. Such disturbances are to be curbed by managers. Managers have to handle such situations by giving them timely feedback, as this is a more of a psychological problem. Sue Shellenbarger says employees need to be counseled against excessive personal talks during office hours. Managers should openly say how uncomfortable and disturbed they are at work without hurting the employees who indulge in over-sharing. Quality of work life improves if organizations provide a conducive environment for work without distractions.

Henry Mintzberg classifies management roles into three categories depending upon the extent of the interpersonal relationships, transfer of information and decision-making involved. One of the important decision roles of a manager is that of a **disturbance handler**. Managers need to effectively handle situations arising out of unforeseen circumstances.

Discussion Questions

1. Explain how manager, as a disturbance handler, should perform?
(**Hints:** handling difficult and unexpected situations- handling positive and negative interruptions- providing conducive environment for work)
2. Discuss how to handle the common interruptions that take place at workplaces
(**Hints:** excessive sharing of personal and family problems- counseling- giving feedback- providing conducive environment)

Source: Sue Shellenbarger, How to Curb Office Oversharing, Wall Street Journal, June 24, 2014