

# Engage Employees



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## Topics:

- **Vive la difference!**
- **Fear and loathing in the workplace.**
- **Why don't they do what they're supposed to do?**
- **Send reinforcements, we're going to advance.**
- **What cheeses me off.**
- **I'll take 'pleasant' thanks.**
- **My rights are your rights. Right?**
- **Prevention is better than cure.**
- **First impressions stick.**

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## Vive la difference!

**T**he late and great Professor Julius Sumner Miller once liked to ask, “Why is it so?” as he challenged our understanding of some scientific law which we usually took for granted without ever really knowing why. A manager will often ask the same question as he or she ponders the motives and behaviour of their staff when they behave in ways which defy common sense, rational thought or logic. Unfortunately, or probably fortunately, there are no scientific laws which absolutely explain human behaviour.

A manager needs to understand that people behave differently from them for a variety of reasons. The motives of a manager will often be very different to the motives of staff. No two people have exactly the same psychological make-up or experience the world in the same way. Which is why we need managers.

Here’s a simple model of behaviour.

$$B = F (P \times E)$$

(B) Behaviour is a function of the (P) Person and their interaction with their (E) Environment.

That is, a person’s behaviour is dependent on the external situation they are in and their ways of internalising that situation – their ways of thinking and feeling about the situation.

There are two major variables which motivate a person’s work behaviour - one, factors internal to the person and, two, factors external to the person within their work environment.

### What are the factors internal to the person which motivate their behaviour?

- Physical and mental health.
- Intelligence.
- Skills and knowledge.
- Attitudes, values, beliefs.
- Prejudices, biases.
- Perceptions.
- Self-esteem.
- Needs, wants, preferences.
- Temperament.
- Work experience

Each of these factors will be different for you and each one of your staff. No two people will have exactly the same perceptions, the same work experience, the same level of skill or knowledge, the same temperament, the same values, etc.

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**What are the factors external to the person within their work environment, which motivate their behaviour?**

- The culture of the organisation - the way we do things.
- Team dynamics.
- The structure of the organisation.
- Office politics.
- The vision, mission, policy and strategy.
- Systems, procedures and work practices.
- The actions of others - managers and workmates.
- The physical structures, materials and equipment.
- Laws and regulations.
- Customer expectations.
- Community expectations.
- etc.

And again everyone's perceptions and understanding of these factors will differ.

Arguably, the factors which most motivate a person's behaviour are:

- Their perceptions which are based on:
  - Their understanding of the context or background to a situation
  - The information or knowledge they possess about the situation
  - The perspectives they choose in relation to the situation
  - And the interpretations or meanings they apply to the above
- Their values
- The actions of their workmates
- The actions of their manager.



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## Fear and loathing in the workplace

Can you motivate people through fear? Yes you can. Fear of losing their job is a strong motivator for many people whose job does not provide them with achievement opportunities, satisfaction or enjoyment. Will fear create the best attitudes and mindsets within your people? Who are better motivated? The people who do it because they want to do it or the people who do it because they have to do it? You decide.

One of the greatest obstacles to improving profitability and productivity in organisations is fear. Not the fear associated with physical threats, but a much more subtle and even deadlier fear that strangles creativity, creates distrust, blocks improvement, endangers lives, promotes stagnation, reduces quality and kills motivation. People are loathe to be open and honest about issues affecting productivity, quality and safety because they fear the consequences.

In fact, the effectiveness of some of the management strategies described in these tools will be severely reduced if fear is a pervasive force in the organisation. Managers need to be aware of this powerful force which operates as an undercurrent beneath the surface of everyday organisational life. What are some of the things people are fearful of in the workplace?

### Reprisals or repercussions

People fear that if they really do speak their mind when they are encouraged to do so by management they will suffer some negative consequence. Staff know that some bosses, despite what they say, really don't want to hear views which differ from their own. The negative consequences can take many forms from the obvious (being overlooked for promotion) to the subtle (missing out on rewarding jobs or development opportunities).

### Nothing will change

"Why bother? Nothing will change." This is the catch cry of the disgruntled worker who has lost all faith in management's will and ability to change the things which, from the worker's perspective, are stupid, obsolete or unnecessary.

### Damage to their reputation

In some organisations, staff know that one mistake is a lifetime sentence. It's safer and better to stay in the comfort zone. Don't make waves. Toe the management line. Tell the bosses what they want to hear.

### Reactions from the boss

The manager invites feedback from team members about things for which the manager is accountable. The manager can't handle criticism and rationalises any feedback into nothingness or becomes vindictive. The relationship with the manager is damaged and work becomes an unpleasant experience. The team member is rejected by the manager. Or the manager reacts badly to bad news or to concerns about the viability of a project the manager is pushing. So staff learn to suppress bad news or perceived negativity and let the manager find out the hard way when it's too late to prevent a catastrophe.

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## Reactions from their workmates

Team members who make suggestions to improve things are often ostracised by their workmates. They are seen as 'sucking up' to management or of attempting to 'feather their own nest'. Peer group pressure is an extremely powerful force in the workplace. The team member is rejected by other team members.

## Being ridiculed.

In the absence of a full understanding about the situation, a team member makes a valid (to them) suggestion which is treated with disdain by the manager or other team members. The team member is embarrassed or hurt and quickly learns to keep their thoughts on ways to make things better to themselves.



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## Why don't they do what they are supposed to do?

People's minds are changed through observation and not through argument.

Will Rogers, 1879-1935.

American actor and humorist. Will Rogers (Hallmark, 1969)

All things are ready, if our minds be so.

William Shakespeare, 1564-1616.

English dramatist and poet. Henry the Fifth.

It is extremely important that I know the other person is extremely receptive to what I'm saying. If he is not, then I will become a cause of the error if something goes wrong. I'm as much to blame as him.

Raymond Miyashiro.

CEO, Trans Hawaiian. Nation's Business, March 1988.

Behaviour is determined by its consequences.

B.F. Skinner

Harvard University. Beyond Freedom and Dignity. (Knopf, 1971)

**M**anaging people becomes very frustrating when they won't do what they're supposed to do. People behave the way they do for a variety of reasons and motives some of which appear irrational and illogical. But to the person, their motive and their behaviour probably makes perfect sense.

Ultimately, people act according to how **they** perceive things not how **you** perceive things. Why don't employees do what they are supposed to do?

- They don't know why they should do it.
- They don't accept your reason for doing it.
- They can't see the bigger picture or the connection with other things.
- They don't place any value on the action.
- They don't perceive it to be important.
- They believe that doing it will make no difference.
- They don't know how to do it.
- They are angry about something and want to sabotage your efforts.
- They are under pressure from their workmates not to do it.
- They believe they will save time by not doing it.
- They believe that they will save effort by not doing it.
- They believe that they will avoid discomfort by not doing it.



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- They don't know what to do.
- They think your way will not work.
- They think their way is better.
- They think something else is more important.
- They have nothing to gain by doing it.
- They think that they are doing it.
- They are rewarded for not doing it.
- They perceive that they are punished for doing what they are supposed to do.
- They anticipate a negative consequence for doing it.
- Nothing happens if they don't do it.
- Others don't do it.
- You don't do it.
- There are obstacles beyond their control.
- They don't have the confidence or competence to do it.
- They think that they will fail trying to do it.
- They fear embarrassment or loss of face if they do it.
- They fear other people's reactions if they do it.
- They find the work boring.
- They prefer to do the things that they like to do.
- They give up when the effort required is too much for them.
- The level of detail required is beyond their awareness of the degree of detail required.
- Their interpretation of what you have asked them to do is different from your interpretation of what you have asked them to do.
- They don't really understand what you want them to do, but to 'save face' they have not owned up to that.

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## Send reinforcements, we're going to advance

**M**anagers need to understand and apply the power of positive reinforcement in the process of motivation. Getting staff to change their behaviour is one of the most difficult jobs for a manager. Although it is usually unintentional, many managers provide more negative reinforcement than positive reinforcement. Comments by managers about things done less well usually far outnumber comments about things done well. So for the recipient of these comments, they can feel that their efforts when they get it right are not acknowledged.

**Here is some food for thought for managers on the subject of positive reinforcement and motivation:**

- Once people start adopting a new behaviour, reinforcement by the manager will turn it into habit. It can take a lot of energy on the part of the manager to get staff to adopt a new way of doing things. But once started, a little regular reinforcement by the manager will help it to become the norm.
- Reinforce the new behaviour as soon as it becomes evident. Don't leave a long gap between the person trying the new ways of doing things and you applying the reinforcement. If a person experiences an immediate positive consequence from you they are more likely to repeat the behaviour.
- Look for opportunities to reinforce 'right efforts' as much as 'right results'. Improvement on past behaviours needs to be acknowledged and reinforced. Continue to reinforce results, but acknowledge that different people will move at their own pace. As long as there is positive movement, it should be reinforced. If you want people to achieve new standards, set goals for those standards and look to reinforce both the attainment of those standards and progress toward them.
- While people are learning and practising the new ways of doing things, keep the reinforcement continuous. Once they have adopted the new ways as standard practice and they do them all the time, reinforcement can be less frequent. As people experience the better consequences of the new ways of doing things, the reinforcers become inherent to the new behaviour. People will become more self-reinforcing.
- Very few job behaviours are mutually exclusive - the same behaviours are used over a wide range of job tasks. By reinforcing new behaviours in one aspect of a person's job performance, you will increase the application of those new behaviours (and the associated learnings for the individual) in other aspects of their job performance. The impact of reinforcement spreads into other areas of job performance.
- Positive reinforcement needs to be specific so that the person knows exactly what it is that they have improved. Saying to somebody, "You are doing a good job", is not as effective as telling them exactly what it is that you have observed. Ask people to tell you where they think they have improved.



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- All people are different to degrees more or less, so you need to be aware that what is reinforcing to you may not be to another. Whatever you say or do by way of a reinforcement has to be perceived as a positive reinforcement by the person. Discuss what you have said or done, explain why and check for their reaction.



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## What cheeses me off

Everyone has noted the astonishing sources of energy that seem available to those who enjoy what they are doing and find meaning in what they are doing.

Charles Garfield

President, Performance Sciences Corp. *Peak Performers* (Avon, 1986).

Whoever would change men must change the conditions of their lives.

Theodore Herzi, 1860-1904.

Austrian journalist and Zionist leader, *Diaries*.

Where there is no hope there can be no endeavour.

Samuel Johnson, 1709-1784.

English lexicographer and critic, *The Rambler*.

Constant labour of one uniform kind destroys the intensity and flow of a man's animal spirits, which find recreation and delight in mere change of activity.

Karl Marx, 1818-1883.

German political philosopher. *Capital*.

**P**eople's perceptions of the environment in which they work have a huge impact on their level of motivation. A manager can discuss this checklist with their group to identify possible actions to ensure that, as far as is possible, they work in a motivating environment.

### Blockages to motivation.

- The physical arrangements at work are unsatisfactory.
- People believe the wages or salaries are unfair.
- I do not feel secure about my job.
- The organisation has not helped my personal development.
- Higher management is not concerned with my views.
- There is little real interest in my job.
- My job is meaningless.
- The work environment is depressing.
- Annual leave arrangements are unsatisfactory.
- I fear for my long term job security.
- People fear repercussions if they are open and honest.
- Most people here have little opportunity to gain new experience.

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- My job has no clear targets.
- The colour schemes, lighting and general decor are bad.
- I would like more feedback about my performance.
- Employees know too little about organisation aims and plans.
- I would benefit from being more 'stretched' in my job.
- The organisation does not try to develop jobs to fit individual needs.
- There is little effort made to provide social facilities.
- Organisation decisions don't take into account the needs of employees too.
- My training has rarely been well planned.
- The expectations about how I am supposed to apply training are seldom clarified.
- There is no systematic effort to identify and incorporate employees' views.
- I am not given new responsibilities even though I could handle them.
- The workplace is poorly cleaned and maintained.
- Product competitiveness is poor, affecting the organisation's long term prospects.
- I should like to have a clearer personal development plan.
- Most people feel uninvolved in decision making.
- My job is not challenging enough.
- Food service arrangements and facilities are below standard.
- Our remuneration compares unfavourably with other organisations in our industry sector.
- If I were to leave, I feel that the company would not miss my contribution.
- I don't feel that my contribution is acknowledged or valued.
- Insufficient effort is put into developing people's skills.
- There is a strong 'us and them' attitude among managers and staff.
- I am often bored at work.
- If I express a point of view which differs from my manager, it is effectively ignored.
- It is obvious to us that concern for profit and costs far outweighs concern for people.

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## I'll take 'pleasant' thanks

You can't motivate your people - only they can do that. However, you can remove or add factors which detract or enhance motivation. And keep this simple concept in mind – people act to seek pleasant circumstances and act to avoid unpleasant circumstances.

### Guidelines for Motivating People

What can you do as a manager to enhance motivation?

1. Identify and understand the needs and personal goals of your staff. Ask them. Beware of your assumptions which may be incorrect and misleading.
2. Remember that money is not the only motivator. It might be the primary reason why people come to work, but once they are there, it becomes less of a driver for many people. Many other rewards which you can influence may be more effective than money in getting your staff to work better.
3. Set your staff targets which are realistic and achievable but also stretch ability. If possible involve people in setting their own targets.
4. Always recognise significant achievement by praise or some other reward.
5. Do not alter targets without consulting with the staff concerned. If changes are necessary these should be agreed jointly.
6. Harness the strength of the group. Group pressures can affect motivation positively and negatively. Involving your staff as a group in making decisions and determining implementation strategy will strengthen commitment.
7. Keep your staff informed about what is going on in the organisation.

### Alternative Approach

Focus on somebody whose motivation is low. The reasons for their poor levels of motivation could be:

- They don't believe that they have the skills and knowledge to do the job.
- They believe that the task or outcome is too difficult.
- They believe that they probably won't do it successfully.
- They place no value on doing the task or in achieving the outcome.

Using the table below, list some of the key tasks in which they show least motivation. Using the scale below, rate your perception of how they would rate themselves for PLSK, PESO, etc. This will give you the focus for a counselling session designed to raise their level of motivation.

Better still, involve the person and ask them to rate themselves. Then compare your rating with theirs as the basis for a discussion to identify what needs to happen to lift their level of motivation.

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LEAST MOTIVATED TASKS	PLSK	PESO	PPSO	PVSO	TOTAL
Making sales calls	5	4	4	8	21
ETC					

PLSK – Perceived Level of Skill and Knowledge

PESO – Perceived Ease of Successful Outcome

PPSO – Perceived Probability of Success

PVSO – Perceived Value of Successful Outcome

## RATING SCALE

PLSK	Very low skill and knowledge	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Very high skill and knowledge
PESO	Very difficult	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Very easy
PPSO	Very unlikely	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Very likely
PVSO	No value	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	High value

## SCORES

**34 plus** Extremely high level of motivation

**29 – 33** Good level of motivation

**24 – 28** Adequate, but needs some coaching.

**19 – 23** Just plodding along. Some perception changing/skill development required here.

**14 – 18** Phew. Serious perception changing/major skill development here.

**9 – 13** Oh no. Nearly a basket case.

**4 - 8** If not a new recruit, check for rigor mortis.

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## My rights are your rights. Right?

**N**o one would argue that if the United Nations' Universal Bill of Rights was enacted throughout the world and nations were motivated to ensure them, the world would be a far better place. In an enlightened and humane workplace, people too have certain rights.

Your beliefs about your and other's rights will influence your management style and their motivation – whether you tend to act assertively, aggressively or non-assertively with people.

While there are exceptions, in most situations, managers are most effective when they act assertively.

One definition of acting assertively is to act in a way which recognises your rights while at the same time not violating the rights of others. Likewise, aggressive behaviour can be defined as acting in a way which recognises your rights but not the rights of others. And non-assertive behaviour can be defined as acting in a way which denies your rights while allowing the rights of others.

Here is a list of rights that you might accord to yourself and to others in the workplace which can enhance their level of motivation:

### THE RIGHT TO:

- A safe work environment.
- Have and express my own opinions and feelings.
- Question policies and procedures which appear counter-productive, inefficient or dangerous.
- Open and honest communication.
- Work in an environment free of the fear of repercussions.
- Honest feedback on my performance, both reinforcing and developing.
- Be listened to and taken seriously.
- Ask for information which affects how I do my job.
- Be involved in decisions which affect how I do my job.
- Be given opportunities to develop skills.
- Be rewarded fairly for my efforts.
- Be given direction and support as the situation requires.
- Be given clearly defined context, space and boundaries in which I am expected to operate.
- A clear, accurate and concise job description.
- Know by what criteria my performance is evaluated.
- Know how my performance is viewed.
- Know how the company is performing.



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- Challenge unfair industrial relations practices.
- Challenge unethical practices.
- Express incidents of bullying or intimidation.
- Be treated as a person who is doing the best I can according to my beliefs.

You might disagree with some of these rights or believe in other rights not listed here. But whatever you believe about people's rights in the workplace will dictate your management style.

Some people will read these 'rights' and think, 'No way. If we treated people this way, they would just abuse it.' And guess what? They are probably right, because their response is probably indicative of their view of people's rights in the workplace.

The scary thing for them is that, although not in the majority, there are very successful organisations who understand the consequences on the motivation and performance of their workforce when these rights are exercised.

It would be a useful exercise to discuss this list of rights with your staff or even develop your own 'Bill of Rights' for your workplace using input from the whole team.

There are some people who argue that people don't have rights as such and that they have to create their own circumstances. Whatever, all would probably agree that the workplace would be a better place with higher levels of motivation if the above rights were achieved.



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## Prevention is better than cure

When men of talents are punished, authority is strengthened....Every...example of punishment has in it some injustice, but the suffering individual is compensated by the public good.

Tacitus, c.55 117

Roman orator, politician, and historian. Annals of the Julian Emperors.

**E**very manager has to deal with unmotivated staff. That's why we have managers. It goes with the territory. Avoiding the problem won't make it go away and will seriously undermine your credibility in the eyes of others. Initiating the person's removal to another area can sometimes be a solution if the problem is caused by bad chemistry between the two of you. Usually, however, transferring the 'problem' person to another area is weak management.

Here are some points to consider to prevent or address this situation:

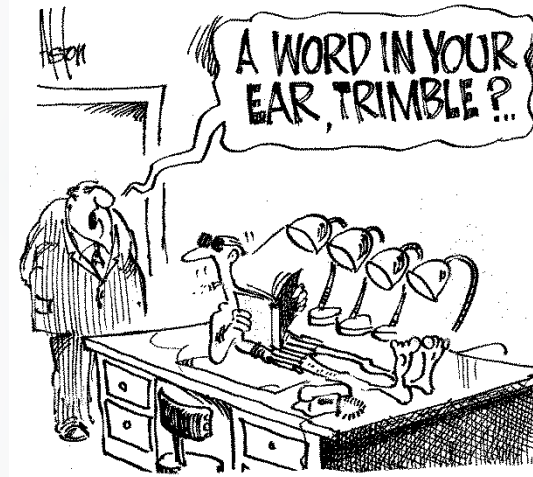
- Lead by example. Set the standard. Be a model of the same behaviours expected of staff. Observe company values, rules, safety standards, etc. and maintain high standards of job performance. Remember that your staff will take their cue from you. They will judge you more by what you do not only what you say.
- Act immediately. Unresolved problems will fester away and erupt more seriously at some later point. Many a serious problem could have been prevented if it had been nipped in the bud. One person with a poor level of motivation can have serious repercussions on the motivation levels of other people.
- Be seen to attempt something positive. No action on your part will weaken your effectiveness to maintain or enhance the motivation of others. Other staff will wonder why they should comply when so and so gets away with it and this can then affect their level of motivation.
- Be consistent. Avoid personal biases. Direct and support people differently according to their level of competence, performance and motivation, but give opportunities to all people to learn, develop and achieve to prevent being accused of victimisation or favouritism.
- Clarify expected standards of performance. Ensure all people are fully aware of what is expected and your perceptions of how they are meeting those expectations. Allow people to take responsibility for setting standards of performance for the team. Discuss and explain changes to policy and procedures before they come into effect.
- Discipline in private. Avoid the humiliation and hostility caused by a public dressing down. The one thing we all have in common is our sense of self-worth and dignity. Do nothing which abuses them.
- Act on complaints and grievances immediately. Regard complaints or grievances as early warnings of worse situations that could follow. Respond to all valid complaints or grievances through action where you can or through explanation where you can't.
- Deal with the problem yourself. Accept that the motivation and performance of your people is your major responsibility. Passing the problem on to another area will be seen as weak management on your part.

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- Keep calm. If disciplinary action is needed, plan your approach. Gather all the facts about the situation before acting.
- View it as an opportunity. Somebody will be hurting in this situation - consciously or otherwise. This is an opportunity to change something for the better. It can be an opportunity for people to learn something, to grow and develop, and to improve their level of motivation.





## First impressions stick

Sweating palms, sweaty under arms, rapid pulse, butterflies in the stomach, nervous laughter.... all symptoms of the first day at work.

Can you remember your first day at work? I can. No. Not your first day. Mine. Can you remember your first day in your current job? How motivating was that first day? What were you thinking? How did you feel? How long did it take you to find out vital information about the organisation and what your job entailed?

What were your first impressions of your induction? Welcoming? Planned and well thought out? Informing? Impressive? Motivating?

Why do we induct new staff? Some of the key benefits in inducting new staff properly are greater productivity earlier, enhanced workplace satisfaction and it enables them to fit into the team more quickly and easily. And, importantly, helps create an initial impression that is more motivating than demotivating. We also want to make sure that they get the right information from the right source right at the beginning.

Someone needs to assume responsibility for the induction of new staff into the organisation. Usually this rests with the line manager.

**The new staff member will be more motivated by their first days at work if the person carrying out the induction follows these tips.**

- Prepare an induction plan.
- Introduce the new staff member to other staff with whom they will be working near or with.
- Prime other staff to be welcoming and enthusiastic.
- Introduce them to all management with whom they will come into contact.
- Provide a list of names, titles, numbers and locations of colleagues to help the new person remember who's who.
- Welcome the new staff member publicly.
- Arrange for a guided tour of the organisation.
- Explain the basic, vital ways things are done at your organisation, e.g. messages, leave, security, stationery, parking, safety requirements, emergency evacuation procedures, etc.
- Provide a 'minder' for the new staff member. Someone who is competent and has a positive attitude.
- Demonstrate how to use organisation equipment, e.g. phone, photocopier, binding machine, e-mail, etc.
- Show them where all required equipment is kept.
- Ensure that their work station is clean, tidy and prepared.
- Clarify your expectations of them for the first month.
- Discuss what support you will provide in this first month.

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- Provide a key to their work area.
- Discuss organisational strategic priorities.
- Explain our key products and services.
- Explain how our organisation is structured.
- Discuss issues unique to the organisation environment and customers.
- Provide them with important contact numbers - yours, security.
- Provide them with a schedule of organisation 'events' which occur on a regular basis.
- Provide time for the inductee to absorb the information they have been given.
- Set aside time for the staff member to ask questions after they've been at the organisation for two weeks
- Inform them of the normal communication procedures.

