

# **Partnership for Improved Communication**

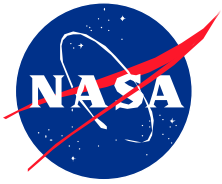
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## **Executive Briefing on Human Resources Management and Policies**

**Pamela F. Richardson  
NHPA Treasurer**



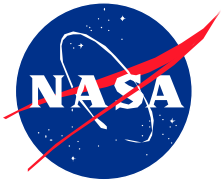
**NASA Headquarters Professional Association  
IFPTE Local 9**



# Overview

- About the NHPA
- NHPA principles
- Communication
- Examples where communications break down
- Summary

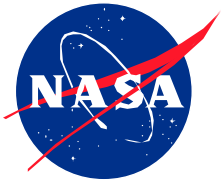




# About the NHPA

- The official NASA Headquarters union representing scientists and engineers, established 1964
- Affiliated with the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers
  - IFPTE affiliated with AFL-CIO
- Elected board
  - Richard C Zwierko, Union President
  - Rhoda S Hornstein, Vice President
  - Ronald W Moyer, Secretary
  - Pamela F Richardson, Treasurer
  - Dr. Paul A Curto, Trustee
  - William D Green, Trustee
  - Odean Serrano, Trustee

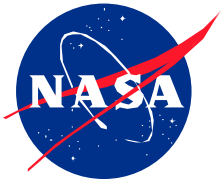




# The NHPA Bargaining Unit

- Approximately 150 scientists and engineers employed at NASA Headquarters
- Current membership, approximately 40 (bargaining unit and non-bargaining unit)
  - Non-bargaining unit employees may join
  - Bargaining unit employees are represented by law (whether or not they are members)

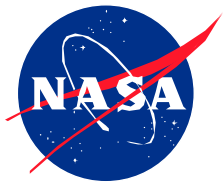




# The NHPA Principles

- Provide help to all NASA Headquarters employees equally
- Do not judge the merits of an issue
- Encourage the use of process and procedures for obtaining just resolution
- Advocate good communication among employees
- Believe that status symbols are a hindrance to working together cooperatively
- Employee cooperative efforts benefit all employees
- All employees can contribute to improving the work environment
- The NHPA provides a forum for employees' input
- Believe honesty and integrity are the basis for all interactions

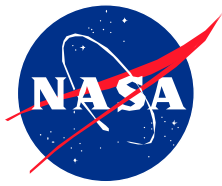




# The NHPA Principles (Concluded)

- Support continual improvement in the work environment and in work processes
- Support employee skills improvement and opportunity for advancement
- Support merit principles in hiring and promotion
- Believe that seniority is a valid metric for use when other metrics are ambiguous or non-existent
- Support changes that benefit our employees and improve productivity
- The NHPA welcomes the participation and support of all employees
  - All employees includes managers and SES

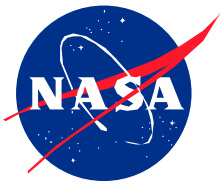




# Positive Elements of Communication

- Sender
  - Clear information and the intent of providing common interpretation of the communicated information
- Receiver
  - Remains open-minded and focused on the information coming his/her way
- Common medium
  - Words must have the same meaning to both
- Confirmation
  - Sender should request feedback; receiver should provide it to ensure equal meaning for both parties

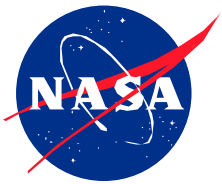




# Positive Elements of Communication (Concluded)

- The Learning Curve:
  - It works when all parties work off the same script
  - It works when all parties understand the game
  - It works when all parties are on the same team
- People are motivated when they are accepted
  - Positive communication and interaction
  - Healthy feedback

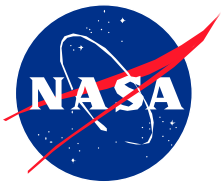




# The Headquarters Performance System

- Has a great potential for following the principles of positive communication
- Can increase the interaction between supervisors and their direct reports
- Can improve the NASA Headquarters team concept both functionally and operationally
- If implemented positively, can improve productivity and morale

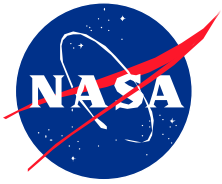




# Potential Barriers to Positive Communication

- Static on the line
  - Emotions
  - Unrealistic time schedules for tasks
    - Causes stresses that hinder our ability to effectively communicate
  - Attitude - all parties can have attitudes that hinder understanding of communication efforts
- Experience has shown that personnel issues arise when there is a breakdown in one or more of the communications elements

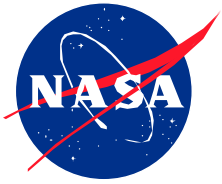




# Different Language - Same Words

- Employee “A” comes to NASA from DoD
  - DoD works on a very hierarchical system: direction from above is followed -- NASA does not work this way
  - “A” follows instructions from above, is conscientious and works hard -- makes matters worse
- Result: Management removes “A” from responsibilities causing “A” greater exertion and frustration
- Where is the understanding of a different (work) culture?

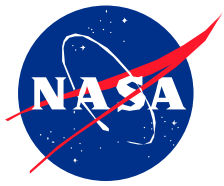




# Same Language - Wrong Game

- Female “B” jokes, make suggestive and outrageous statements, appears to be “one of the boys”
- Outsider male “C,” enters the dialog
- “B” files a sexual harassment allegation/complaint against “C”
- Management response: all employees in that code are trained in sexual harassment

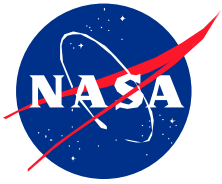




# Communication Difficult - Receiver is Dysfunctional

- Employee substance abuse
- Lots of excuses
- Semi-functional to functional
- Abuse is not obvious
- Sense of something wrong, but not sure what it is/performance is marginal

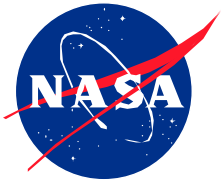




# Does a Tree Falling in the Forest Make a Noise?

- Employee skill expectations assumed at a level to meet the requirements of a position
- Communication of a job to be accomplished without the prerequisite skill and aptitude
  - A Dr. is not a priori a brain surgeon
  - An SES is not a priori a manager
  - A secretary does not necessarily have all the skills required or expected
- Employees and supervisors must recognize when there is a void between the task at hand and the capability to do the task

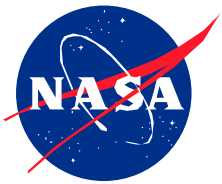




# Priority Communications

- Seldom do employee and supervisor envision the same “priority”
  - Supervisor: “I want you to do 1000 things next week”
  - Employee: “I’ll do what I like to do” or, “Can’t do that so I won’t do anything”
- Neither is clear on what the job is, what it takes to do the job, or what priority to follow
  - Both are unsatisfied with the results

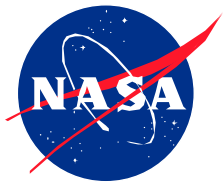




# Tools and Cooperation are Not Available to the Employee

- “Ensure that 10 actions are done per day”
- “Your performance is not good because you did not meet the rate”
- The employee’s task was not addressed, result: the metric is outside the employee’s control
- Grievance time

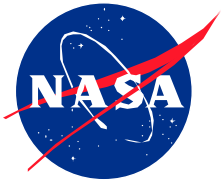




# Sources of Workplace Dissatisfaction

- Bad assumptions
  - Grade - significance of capability
  - Capability to do task
  - Understanding of task
- Lack of:
  - Priority - what is important
  - Dominion and control capability to do task
  - Appropriate behavior
  - Decisions, direction, and support (bring me a rock)

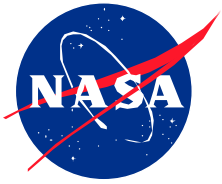




# Summary

- The NHPA is supportive of the Headquarters performance appraisal system since its core goal is better communication
- The NHPA stands ready to assist in improving communications between supervisors and their direct reports
- The NASA Headquarters team of all employees working toward NASA mission goals can strongly benefit from an effective performance appraisal system that promotes communication





# Points of Contact

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