

# Managing Complaints

**“Sometimes I have days when I just want to lock myself in my office with a “do not disturb if you value your life” sign on my door. I enjoy working with my team, but their ongoing complaints wear me down. The issues don’t seem that important to me, but they really seem to bother my team members. I just don’t get it.”**

Managing complaints is not on the top of any manager’s list of favorite activities. Many managers follow the “if I ignore it, it will go away” methodology. Of course, that’s a poor approach to any complaint and a very counterproductive way to manage those complaints that really do represent significant concerns. Those concerns, if left unheard and unaddressed, may drag down individual and team performance. Team members need and deserve to be heard. After all, that’s how they know that their manager values their contribution to the team and cares about them as individuals.

## Impact

**Managers and team leaders will be able to:**

**Understand** why all team member complaints must be dealt with rather than ignored or dismissed.

**Be** more sensitive to all the problems-major or trivial, real or imagined-that can lie behind complaints.

**Understand** techniques used to determine underlying problems, which are not always the same as those the team member thinks are responsible for his/her difficulties.

**Use** various techniques to solve such problems while maintaining a positive relationship with the team member.

To manage complaints well requires a proven process that builds on listening and problem-solving skills. That process, and the individual skills that support it, are the basis for the **Managing Complaints** program.

**Managing Complaints** makes clear that when you really listen, you must do so in a way that is non-judgmental. That’s critical because *what appears to be a minor issue to you may appear to the complaining employee to be a major problem*. When you really problem-solve a complaint, you use specific techniques to identify the potentially serious issues, if any, that underlie the complaint. That’s also critical because *many complaints that seem minor actually mask significant issues with broad productivity impact*.

Our experience has proven that the best managers are those that have an open-door policy for complaints. They also follow a specific methodology for getting to the root cause of the issue and then finish their process by applying the appropriate problem-solving technique. Using this approach, these skilled managers handle issues before they snowball and require much more time and effort to resolve.

For over 20 years, Vital Learning’s Supervision Series has helped thousands of organizations equip managers with the tools needed to succeed with their teams. We know that managers who don’t have the skills required to lead or contribute to the leadership of others will have a negative impact well beyond their work teams. In fact, their inability to effectively communicate and problem solve can limit the success of an entire organization.

With its focus on listening and problem solving, **Managing Complaints** can help even experienced managers feel comfortable hanging an “always open” sign on their office door. After all, *it’s up to the manager to stay on top of and manage individual and team issues*.

## Program Description

**Managing Complaints (MC)** provides managers with the tools necessary to approach complaints in a way that is supportive of employee and team goals. Throughout the workshop, managers will review video presentations and case studies, participate in group discussions, practice new skills, and receive immediate feedback. They will leave with implementations tools, troubleshooting guides and additional resources to help them apply the skills they have learned on the job. The 4-5 hour workshop is designed for 6-18 participants and includes the following:

- Why Dealing With Team-Member Complaints Is Important
- How the Effective Team Leader Manages Complaints
- Use Your Listening Skills to Manage Complaints
- Questioning

## Course Materials

### ***Facilitator Guide***

- Complete instructions on how to conduct the workshop.
- Explanatory text for the trainer, sample trainer narrative, transcripts of video segments and facilitation notes.
- Facilitator Resource CD-Rom containing PowerPoint presentation, additional resources, and reproducible pages from the facilitator guide as well as entire participant workbook.

### ***Participant Workbook***

- Exercises, forms, skill practice aids, and a video synopsis.
- Job Aids section with tools and resources for applying the skills learned in the workshop.
- Memory Jogger Card providing a handy reminder of the workshop's skill points.

### ***Video***

- Introduction followed by a scenario displaying positive use of the three skill points discussed in the program.
- Video segments focusing on modeling positive behaviors for skill practices.
- Scenarios in both office and industrial settings.

*\* Available in Classroom, Web-based, and Blended Solutions.*