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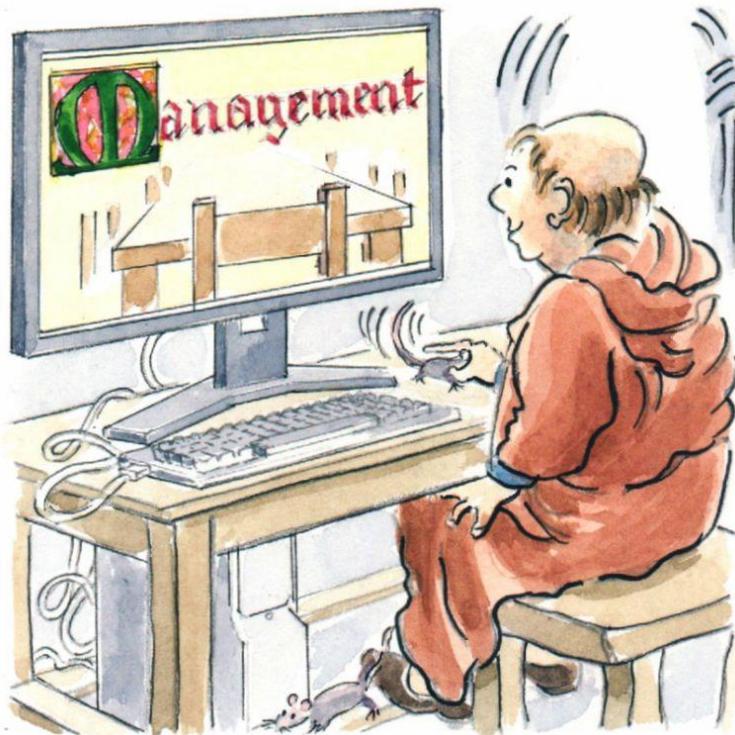
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# Working in partnership

*Front line and support working as one*



**Mission and Ministry Department  
Diocese of Gloucester**

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You may access this set of notes as a pdf today or later at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/News> and then the item for today's date.

# 1: Serving each other

Preparation: What are we trying to achieve and why are we doing it?

In a professional partnership of Officer and Administrator the aim should be to serve the other by developing them in different ways. It is two-way. See it like this:

Where do I want my colleague(s) to 'be' one (or whatever) year from now?

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What do I want them to say at that point about me, their Officer or Administrator?

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What is the impact on this if the Administrator is responsible to more than one Officer?

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## And so: what is work partnership all about?

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## The pairings

Consider your colleague(s). Use the following to consider your similarities and differences.

- Human type (gender, style of working, tidy/messy)
- State today (current concerns / health / relationships)
- Personality (doers, carers, thinkers and planners)
- Experience (of life, of working in an office, of working in church ministry)
- Gifts (natural, not just ones for the job)

We are similar/different in the following ways:

Sim	Dif

## 2: Foundations

Documentation: four key documents

Some feel such things are unimportant, but they set the parameters and enable planning and review to be done well, provided the overall attitude is right. These can be for both Officer and Administrator. It is valuable if each of you knows the requirements of the other.

### A: Job description

See Article A6, *Job descriptions*, in the Resources section of the website.

A job description is not a 'to do' list. Covering no more than one side of A4 it should answer these questions:

- |   |                             |   |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| 1 | <b>Why am I here?</b>       | The big picture of the job (in 'to....so that....' format)  |
| 2 | <b>Whom do I relate to?</b> | Lines of accountability (both ways) / working relationships |
| 3 | <b>What do I do?</b>        | A list of the key responsibilities (or, for some, tasks)    |

Any general actions either of us needs to take

### B: Person profile

We are used to these when we advertise a post – but they should remain current documents. A typical profile should:

- be no more than one side of A4;
- set high, but not impossible, standards;
- be adapted if necessary once a post has been filled;
- differentiate between what is seen as essential, and what is merely desirable;
- be structured under headings such as qualifications, personal qualities, gifting/skills/understanding, work/church experience.

Any general actions either of us needs to take

For ideas about line management, read Article A32, *Be creative as a line manager*, in the Resources section of my website. Also Training Notes TN101, *Working with a No. 2*.

### **C: (Joint) objectives**

A job description provides a frame, but what is the changing picture within? You cannot review anyone's work unless you had first agreed what they were seeking to achieve. But it can be helpful for the Administrator to know the Officer's aims and then to consider a few *joint* aims, not just individual ones. So here is another one-side of A4.

- This will be fixed in time – typically six months or one year and agreed at an appraisal.
- It will be broad-brush, listing five or so achievements during, or by the end of, the period.
- These aims will clearly fit within the job description and person profile and overall vision.
- Some will remain similar year to year, some will be completely different.
- The list should include some task, some relationship, and some personal development objectives.

Any general actions either of us needs to take

### **D: (Joint) targets**

These are stepping stones to the achievement of personal objectives. Each one should be specific in terms of date and/or numbers. There might be three or four for each objective. They enable you to see whether the objective has been achieved or not, by producing a number of measurable parameters as evidence. Or they ensure you remain on timetable to achieve an objective by providing a programme of simpler achievements which enable the objective to be reached.

Most people thrive under specific challenges. Again it is possible to have *joint* targets.

Any general actions either of us needs to take

## 3: Encouragement / accountability

Support: Making people feel good while not ignoring problems

Under this heading we look at what a really healthy partnership of Officer and Administrator might look like as a two-way relationship.

### **Officers: be a care-taker!**

There are many ways in which you can demonstrate that you care for the person you line manage and so encourage them.

- Be available – for when they need you.
- Take an interest in them as a person (and their family/friends) not just as a worker.
- Meet with them regularly.
- Help them to understand what your work is like: its joys and frustrations.
- Share your big picture vision with them so both of you can work towards it.
- Understand what excites them, remembering birthdays and other key events.
- Send the occasional hand-written card or text, especially to congratulate.
- Thank them in public in appropriate ways.
- Don't avoid the need for reprimand when justified within clear expectations.
- Ensure they have the information they need about your movements.
- Be ready to hear and act on their suggestions for changes in how you work.
- Help them to enjoy and appreciate working with you.

### **Administrators: be accountable**

Your role is to support front-line work so you should be able to understand your Officer's role and see all you do as enabling that.

- Be available – for when they need you.
- Take an interest in them as a person (and their family/friends) not just as an officer.
- Ask for regular meetings if they do not offer them.
- Understand what excites them, remembering birthdays and other key events.
- Take a real interest in what they are doing away from the office.
- Check from time to time that you are providing the work they require.
- Check from time to time that you are providing the level of quality they require.
- Accept criticism from them when necessary.
- Be ready to take initiative to improve the working relationship.
- Be ready to take initiative to improve the operational effectiveness.
- Enjoy releasing them from background tasks so they can work as intended.

## 4: Review

Engagement: There's more to 'appraisal' than most people realise

The word 'appraisal' has negative connotations in many people's minds, usually because it has been handled badly at work or used as a means of inappropriate discipline. The concept, however, is thoroughly Christian. The less emotive word 'review' is used here.

- Review is about **building a person up**, not **pulling them down**.
- Review should be centred on the **future**, not on the **past**.
- Review is a **two-way** process – vulnerability once again.

The word 'review' can cover many different scenarios.

### **A week/month in the life of**

A review of the previous week. How did work-flow end up? Is the computer working properly and have you managed to learn to operate the new software? What about that tricky assignment last weekend?

### **The one-off event**

Together you have organised a special event. A few days later is a good time to assess it. Did it achieve what it set out to achieve? How did the team shape up? What can you learn for next time? What did the feedback forms say?

### **One area of work**

You agree to review diary management. Where has it worked well, and where has it been a mess? What lessons need to be learned and changes made?

### **The whole works** (see below)

This is what is usually known as an annual appraisal (six-monthly may be better).

### **The exit interview** (see Training Notes TN95, *Exit interviews for everyone*, on the website)

More a review of the organisation by the member of staff. Don't avoid these!

### **Tips to make the annual occasion positive – for both of you**

- Plan together and prepare carefully in advance.
- It needs time away from distractions – aim for up to half a day for full time staff
- It's a two-way meeting – both/all of you need to listen to the other.
- Include plenty of time to review the past period.
- Allow even more time to plan the coming period – this is the focus.
- Agree the output together.
- Remember it's confidential.

It does not have to be one-to-one. It can involve a small panel (if not too intimidating). Sample questions: see Training Notes TN17, *Suggested questions for an annual review*, in the Resources section of my website.

## Action plan

**So, what do I need to change myself in the way I work or the way I view my colleague(s) as a result of this morning?**

**What do we need to change together about our partnership?**

**What do I want to see by the end of January 2020 in our working relationship? Write this as a scenario for the two of you.**

Please copy what you have written in that last box onto the slip you will be given, place it inside the envelope, seal the envelope and address it for return to you at the beginning of February. Then leave it behind. This unopened envelope will be given back to you then.

## A follow-up exercise 1: my task

**1: In one or at most two sentences, or up to three bullet points, summarise what your role is as Officer or Administrator in the format: 'My role is to ..... so that .....'.**

**2: In one or at most two sentences, or up to three bullet points, summarise what you believe the role of your colleague to be, in the same format as for No. 1.**

**3: What do you most appreciate about your colleague's work as it impacts your own?**

**4: How do you think your colleague will answer No. 3 above about you?**

**5: What changes/developments would you most like to see in your colleague's contribution to your partnership?**

**6: How do you think your colleague will answer No. 5 above about you?**

## **A follow-up exercise 2: my reaction**

**What I note from how my colleague(s) expresses their role in their Exercise 1 and how I see it in my Exercise 2**

**What I note about how I express my role in my Exercise 1 and how my colleague(s) see it in their Exercise 2**

**What my colleague(s) says about how they appreciate my ministry in their Exercise 3**

**How this differs from what I was expecting in my Exercise 4 if at all**

**What my colleague says about any change/development they would like to see in my scope of ministry or way of working in their Exercise 5**

**How this differs from what I was expecting in my Exercise 6 if at all**