

Testing Regulatory Fit in the Context of Performance Feedback.

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(ABSTRACT)

This study extended previous research by applying Higgins (2007) theory of Regulatory Fit to the context of performance feedback. Participants worked on an in-basket task in two 30 minute segments. Following the first 30 minutes segment, they were given recommendations for improving their performance framed in a manner that either did or did not fit their motivational orientation. Hypotheses predicted that compared to instances of non-fit, conditions of regulatory fit between recommendation frame (Eager vs. Vigilant) and motivational orientation (Promotion vs. Prevention) would have a significantly greater, positive impact on the following three outcomes: 1) Variety and Frequency of Feedback Use, 2) Feedback Recall, and 3) Attitudes Following Feedback. Overall results supported this assertion. Participants in a condition of regulatory fit engaged in a significantly greater variety of behaviors and did so more frequently than those assigned to non-fit conditions. And while the effect of regulatory fit on feedback recall was not significant, it did approach significance ( $p = .07$ ) and produced a pattern of results consistent with the predictions of regulatory fit. Counter to previous research, regulatory fit did not have significant impact on Attitudes Following Feedback in the current study. Implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

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## Introduction

The concept of self-regulation is paramount to understanding human behavior. Broadly defined, self-regulation refers to self-processes “involved in attaining and maintaining (i.e., keeping regular) goals, where goals are internally represented (i.e., within the self) desired states” (Vancouver & Day, 2005). Whether consciously or unconsciously, organizational members adopt goals in relation to their assigned roles and responsibilities. As they strive to complete these goals, they utilize a limited amount of personal regulatory resources to engage in job relevant tasks (e.g., creating a power-point presentation for an important meeting with potential clients) and avoid activities that are irrelevant to organizational objectives (e.g., surfing the web). These self-regulatory processes ultimately determine employee effectiveness.

Self-regulation receives a great deal of attention from organizational scholars who have produced a multitude of theories to explain motivational processes in the context of work (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Vancouver & Day, 2005). Much of this research focuses on the role of performance feedback in self-regulatory processes (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Regulatory fit (Higgins, 2000, 2007) is a theory of self-regulation that has not garnered wide attention in organizational science. The theory of regulatory fit has clear implications for delivering task / performance feedback, yet it remains relatively untested outside of basic research on motivation.

### *Regulatory Fit*

Regulatory fit (Higgins, 2000) has three primary assertions. First, people pursue goals in relation to a particular motivational “goal orientation” (Higgins, 2007). Second, in addition to their motivational orientations, people also adopt different strategies of goal pursuit. Finally, people experience or anticipate experiencing either positive or negative consequences that result

from goal pursuit. Higgins argues that self-regulation works best when motivational orientation is congruent with the strategy adopted, or what he labels as regulatory fit. The result of regulatory fit is that the goal-related activity “feels right” and higher levels of engagement occur compared to when regulatory fit does not occur.

Basic research on regulatory fit has examined fit in relation to motivational processes. More specifically, this research examines the interaction between motivational orientation and feedback valence (Forrester, Grant, Idson, & Higgins, 2001; Idson & Higgins, 2000; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). Findings suggest that positive / success feedback is more motivational to people oriented toward seeking opportunities whereas negative / failure feedback is more motivational to people oriented toward avoiding risks (Idson & Higgins, 2000; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). However, this research is based on the use of anagram tasks (Idson & Higgins, 2000) and false feedback (Idson & Higgins, 2000; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). Furthermore, only Idson and Higgins (2000) have tested the effects of regulatory fit on task performance. They found subsequent performance on anagram tasks was better when feedback valence matched the participant’s motivational orientation. Applied research on regulatory fit theory is found mainly in research on attitude change and persuasion, and results have shown that persuasive messages are more effective when individuals are in a state of “fit” as opposed to “non-fit” (Cesario, Higgins, & Scholer, 2008; Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004; Lee & Aaker, 2004; Spiegel, Grant-Pillow, & Higgins, 2004).

### *Regulatory focus theory*

Regulatory fit is a meta-theory in the sense that the deduced hypotheses regarding fit / non-fit are the same regardless the motivational orientation constructs and goal pursuit strategies being studied. For example, goal orientation (Elliot & Dweck, 1988; VandeWalle, 1997) could

be used as the motivational orientation along with goal pursuit strategies related to learning and performance. That being said, Higgins's regulatory fit theory evolved from Higgins's regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 2000), and most of the fit research uses regulatory focus theory to specify the motivational orientation constructs and the goal pursuit strategies (Cesario, Higgins, & Scholer, 2008).

Regulatory focus theory posits that the fundamental issue in self-regulation is that individuals differ in how they approach pleasure and avoid pain. Further, this "pleasure / pain" principle manifests as a *promotion* focus motivational orientation and a *prevention* focus motivational orientation (Higgins, 1999). An individual operating in a promotion focus is concerned with accomplishments, hopes and aspirations (ideals). Success and failure in a promotion focus are experienced as the presence of positive outcomes (gains) and the absence of positive outcomes (non-gains). An individual operating in a prevention focus is concerned with safety, responsibilities, and obligations (oughts). Success and failure in prevention focus are experienced as the absence of negative outcomes (non-losses) and the presence of negative outcomes (losses).

Motivational orientation is associated with preferred goal-pursuit strategies. Striving to attain a goal in a promotion focus is associated with an "eagerness" strategy, whereas striving to attain the same goal in a prevention focus is associated with a "vigilance" strategy (Crowe & Higgins, 1997). An eager strategy promotes the garnering of positive outcomes and the avoidance of missing out on opportunities for garnering positive outcomes. Conversely, a vigilant strategy promotes the absence of negative outcomes occurring and the avoidance of risks that might lead to negative outcomes. Alternatively stated, an eager strategy produces attitudes and behaviors that will maximize the achievement of the desired end state; a vigilant strategy

produces attitudes and behaviors that minimize the extent of the mismatch to the desired end state.

### *Explanatory Mechanisms of Regulatory Fit*

The primary explanatory mechanism of fit is “feeling right” (Higgins, 2000; Avnet & Higgins, 2006), which is associated with “perceptions of ease or fluency and feelings of confidence or correctness” (Koenig, Molden, & Higgins, 2009, p. 1343). It is important to note that feeling right as a result of fit is not synonymous with positive affect. Rather, it is a purely cognitive interpretation independent of any affective reactions. Cesario and Higgins (2008) demonstrated this empirically when they examined the effects of fit on a persuasive message. They found that not only were the effects of fit on message persuasion independent of affect, but that such effects were mediated by feeling right / wrong as a result of fit.

In contexts where personal engagement is not expected / required, feeling right likely limits depth of processing and reduces counter-arguing of message content. That is, individuals are more likely influenced by mere exposure to persuasive messages than the quality of the arguments made in the message content (Koenig et al., 2009). Feeling right signals that goal pursuit is progressing without contradiction to current motivational orientation; therefore, heuristics are used to process persuasive messages rather than engaging in a systematic evaluation of incoming information.

The secondary explanatory mechanism of fit is increased engagement in goal pursuit strategies (Higgins, 2000). In contexts where personal engagement is expected / required, feeling right due to regulatory fit results in increased depth of processing and greater elaboration of

message content (Avnet & Higgins, 2006; Bianco, Higgins, & Kelm, 2003; Cesario et al., 2007; Cesario & Higgins, 2008; Lee & Aaker, 2004). Greater elaboration of message content leads to greater accessibility of message content in memory (Bianco et al., 2003).

The limitation of this body of research is that regulatory fit / focus has not been thoroughly tested as a mechanism of social influence, i.e., compliance to requests to change behavior. Only Idson and Higgins (2000) measured changes in task performance as a function of feedback, and that study used an anagram task and participants were given false feedback. Clearly, tests of regulatory fit theory need to be expanded to more meaningful contexts regarding the effects of feedback on subsequent behavior / performance. Furthermore, basic research on regulatory fit involving feedback has relied on simple tasks (e.g., solving anagrams), feedback information that is artificial, such as providing a false performance score (Idson & Higgins, 2000) or asking recipients to imagine receiving feedback (Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004).

#### *Regulatory Fit / Focus and Task / Performance Feedback Context*

It is well established that feedback often fails to improve task performance (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), and there is both evidence of positive effects (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Podsakoff & Farh, 1989; Pritchard, Jones, Roth, Stuebing, & Ekeberg, 1988; Walker & Smither, 1999), and negative effects (Pearce & Porter, 1986; Reilly, Smither, & Vasilopoulos 1996) of feedback in the performance management literature. Although a variety of theories have been proposed to explain the inconsistent effects of feedback on subsequent performance (see Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), a clear understanding of how and when feedback is likely to improve or decrease performance remains elusive. Regulatory fit / focus may shed light on this issue by specifying conditions wherein feedback will be more likely to change behavior and improve

performance. Fundamentally, performance feedback is an attempt to change behavior. Given that regulatory fit has been shown to influence depth of processing and elaboration of message content (Cesario et al., 2004; Lee & Aaker, 2004), it is likely such processes will also lead to greater utilization of feedback.

The current study tests the validity of regulatory fit / focus by measuring changes in behavior on a complex task attributable to specific, tailored feedback recommendations. Although feeling right is the primary causal explanation of the effects of regulatory fit, I believe the secondary mechanism of task engagement is the primary antecedent in the task / performance feedback context. The final goal of the current study is to demonstrate / argue the potential benefits of using regulatory fit / focus as an additional explanatory mechanism that should be incorporated into models of the effects of task / performance feedback.

## **Literature Review**

### *Regulatory Fit*

Individuals possess a motivational orientation composed of concerns or interests that direct their goal pursuit (Higgins 2007). In addition, they adopt strategies of goal pursuit. As these strategies are applied, individuals experience and / or anticipate experiencing positive or negative consequences resulting from their goal pursuit. Central to regulatory fit is the argument that motivational orientation leads to preferences for certain types of goal-pursuit strategies and that perceptions of goal pursuit vary as a function of whether or not preferred strategies are adopted (Cesario, Higgins, & Scholer, 2008). Higgins (2000; 2007) proposes that regulatory fit occurs when strategies of goal pursuit sustain (vs. disrupt) preferred motivational orientations.

An example often used by Higgins (2007) to illustrate the principle of regulatory fit is that of two students pursuing the same goal of achieving an A in a course, but for different

reasons and using different strategies to do so. For one student, earning an A may be viewed as a hope or aspiration, while for the other student, it may represent a duty or obligation. In addition to differing in their motivational orientation, it is possible for each student to vary in their strategies of goal pursuit. The student who views the goal as a hope or aspiration may adopt what Higgins calls an eager strategy by reading course relevant material that has not been assigned by the instructor or attending non-mandatory study sessions organized outside of class (i.e., going above and beyond what is required). Conversely, the student who views the goal as a duty or obligation may adopt a vigilant strategy wherein he / she reads all assignments on the course syllabus or never missing class (i.e., satisfying requirements). In both of these hypothetical cases, the strategies of goal pursuit are congruent with the motivational orientation of the actor and regulatory fit is achieved. Of course, it is possible for an individual to adopt a strategy of goal pursuit that this is incongruent with their preferred motivational orientation, in which case regulatory fit does not occur.

Regardless of motivational orientation and goal pursuit strategy, obtaining a desired goal (such as an A in a course) has certain outcome(s) associated with it. However, the effects of regulatory fit are independent of the value associated with the outcomes(s). When people adopt a strategy of goal pursuit that fits their motivational orientation, they engage more strongly in the pursuit of the goal and will have more intense evaluative reactions, regardless of the outcomes associated with obtaining the goal (Higgins, 2000).

*Distinguishing between Regulatory Fit and similar concepts.* On first inspection, the principle of regulatory fit may appear redundant with a variety of already well established motivational concepts and theories. It is therefore important to discuss each of these principles briefly and demonstrate how they differ from regulatory fit. Doing so will further demonstrate

how the effects of regulatory fit are separate from the value associated with obtaining a particular goal.

*Instrumentality.* Concepts that fall into this category of fit-like concepts deal with increasing/decreasing the perceived instrumentality of a particular strategy for goal pursuit. An example is the concept of action-goal compatibility, which involves issues related to goal hierarchies and refers to the instrumentality of an action to attaining a goal. For example, a distinction has been made between process goals (i.e., sub-goals) and purpose goals (i.e., higher order goals). Research has documented that people place higher value on process goals (e.g., making conversation) when they are compatible with purpose goals (e.g., achieving interpersonal closeness; Harackiewicz & Sansone, 1991; Sansone & Harackiewicz, 1996; Tauer & Harackiewicz, 1999) than when they are incompatible (e.g., reading a book alone in a room). This is an example of the instrumental value of the manner of goal pursuit (e.g., making conversation) in relation to outcomes (e.g., interpersonal closeness).

Regulatory fit, however, is not a function of the instrumental value associated with whatever strategy an individual happens to adopt during goal pursuit. Instead, it focuses on the relationship between the strategy of goal pursuit and the individual's motivational orientation independent of the effectiveness of that strategy. Stated differently, the actual or perceived effectiveness of a particular goal pursuit strategy has no bearing on regulatory fit; rather, regulatory fit is dependent upon whether or not the strategy matches the actor's motivational orientation (e.g., Higgins, Idson et al., 2003). Cesario et al. (2004) demonstrated this empirically by using fit to successfully persuade message recipients independent of whether or not the strategy advocated by the message was viewed as an effective means of goal pursuit.

*Hedonic outcome experience.* A second category of motivational concepts similar to

regulatory fit deal with the hedonic experience of pleasure and pain. This perspective dates back to the ancient Greeks and states that people are motivated to approach pleasure and avoid pain. It dictates that the value of activities, objects, and choices is determined in large part by the pleasures and pains that people experience as a result of either success or failure to satisfy personal needs or meet socialized standards. For example, when people are asked to imagine how they would feel about making a particular choice, the hedonic value perspective proposes that the hedonic experiences (i.e., pleasure or pain) associated with a particular outcome will determine how they feel about a particular decision. If the expected outcome is pleasant, they will feel good about the decision; if the expected outcome is unpleasant, they should feel bad about the decision (e.g., Kahneman, Deiner, & Schwartz, 1999).

Regulatory fit does not discount this source of value; however, it asserts that hedonic value is not the sole determinant of how people feel about a decision, object, or activity. Regulatory fit is distinct because it proposes that peoples' feelings are also impacted by whether or not the expected outcome sustains vs. disrupts their regulatory state. It proposes that when fit occurs, the motivational intensity to engage in the approach (seek pleasure) or avoidance (avoid pain) process that would facilitate a particular outcome increases (Higgins, 2007). Regulatory fit also strengthens the anticipated feeling associated with an outcome, positive or negative (Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2004). These effects of increased motivation and 'feeling right' (which, as noted above, should not be conflated with 'feeling good') have been demonstrated to be independent of pleasure-pain mood (e.g., Avnet & Higgins, 2003; Camacho, Higgins, & Lugar, 2003; Cesario et al., 2004; Higgins, Idson, Frietas, Spiegel, & Molden, 2003).

*Summary of differences between Regulatory Fit and similar concepts.* In sum, there is substantial evidence that regulatory fit is distinct from other similar concepts in several ways. It

is conceptually distinct from other fit-like concepts related to instrumentality and hedonic outcome experience. Rather than being redundant with these sources of value, it operates independent of and adds value above and beyond these concepts by explicating the relationship between goal pursuit strategy and motivational orientation, independent of the strategy's effectiveness and the feelings associated with a particular outcome.

### *Regulatory Focus Theory and Regulatory Fit*

Regulatory fit is a meta-theory in that it can accommodate any motivational orientation or goal-pursuit strategy (Cesario et al., 2008). Regulatory mode and need for closure are both examples of motivational concerns and strategies for goal pursuit that have been shown to comply with the principle of regulatory fit (Avnet & Higgins, 2003). That said, the majority of research involving regulatory fit, including most of the work done in the realm of persuasive messages, has employed regulatory focus theory (Cesario et al., 2008). Since regulatory focus theory is the primary means for testing assumptions of fit and is the theory of interest in the current study, its basic tenants are discussed below

Regulatory focus theory posits that individuals differ in how they approach pleasure and avoid pain, their way of self-regulation, and distinguishes between adopting a *promotion* focus motivational orientation or a *prevention* focus motivational orientation when determining strategies for goal pursuit (Higgins, 1999). A promotion focus is concerned with accomplishments, hopes and aspirations (ideals). Success and failure in a promotion focus are experienced as the presence of positive outcomes (gains) and the absence of positive outcomes (non-gains). A prevention focus is concerned with safety, responsibilities, and obligations (oughts). Success and failure in prevention focus are experienced as the absence of negative outcomes (non-losses) and the presence of negative outcomes (losses).

Regarding goal pursuit strategies, people vary in their preferred strategies of goal pursuit as a function of whether they are promotion or prevention focused. In other words, different strategic means fit a focus on promotion concerns vs. prevention concerns. Striving to attain a goal in a promotion focus is associated with a strategy of eagerness, whereas striving to attain the same goal in a prevention focus is associated with a strategy of vigilance (Crowe & Higgins, 1997). An eager strategy ensures the presence of positive outcomes (i.e., look for means advancement) while simultaneously ensuring against the absence of negative outcomes (i.e., do not close off possible advancements). Conversely, a vigilant strategy ensures the absence of negative outcomes (i.e., be careful) while also ensuring against the presence of negative outcomes (i.e., avoid mistakes). Alternatively stated, an eager strategy is concerned with procuring matches to the desired end state; a vigilant strategy is concerned with avoiding mismatches to the desired end state.

For example, employees can vary in their orientation to work. Consider two employees who want to do well at their job. One may view a high level of performance as an aspiration and eagerly look for opportunities to satisfy this objective (e.g., pleasing ones superior, working late, etc...), while the other may view a high level of performance as a duty or obligation and vigilantly avoid situations that may prevent him / her from performing well (e.g., missing work, failure to follow proper protocols, etc...). Both employees desire to excel in their positions, but they have different concerns motivating them to do so. It is important to note that the preference for either an eager or a vigilant strategy stems from the ability of one or the other means of goal achievement to sustain (vs. disrupt) a given motivational orientation (i.e., promotion or prevention).

Promotion and prevention focus orientations are not dichotomous; that is, they do not represent the opposite ends of a regulatory focus orientation scale. Rather, promotion and prevention focus orientations are conceptualized as independent of one another (Higgins, 2000). Generally speaking, determining an individual's regulatory focus orientation requires measuring levels of both prevention and promotion focus and determining which level is more accessible at a given moment (Higgins, 2000). Differences in accessibility can be a result of chronic individual differences or situational factors.

In terms of accessibility, evidence suggests that regulatory focus varies across both persons and situations and that the effects of these two sources of variability are comparable (Higgins, 1999). Accessibility in this context refers to the activation potential of available knowledge related to a particular regulatory focus orientation (Higgins, 1999). In discussing person sources of variability in regulatory focus accessibility, Higgins relates, "there are, unquestionably, stable individual differences in the constructs used to encode or categorize events. These differences can be understood in terms of individual differences in which constructs are available and / or have high chronic accessibility" (p. 84). Indeed, research has shown that individuals do vary in terms of chronic accessibility to either promotion or prevention concerns (Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). These differences have been further linked to individual differences in subjective histories of success in attaining goals related to either promotion or prevention focus concerns (Higgins, Friedman, Harlow, Idson, Ayduk, & Taylor, 2001).

Contextual priming is also considered a source of promotion and prevention accessibility in individuals, meaning that in addition to chronic individual differences, promotion and prevention accessibility also varies as a function of situational factors, an assertion that has also

been validated empirically (Shah & Higgins, 1997; Steeper, Strack, & Higgins, 1997; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). Furthermore, chronic and situational sources of accessibility to promotion and prevention concerns have been shown to interact with each other such that when paired together, the “high activation potential from chronic accessibility can work together with situational priming to produce high levels of construct accessibility.” (p. 84, Higgins, 1999).

### *Empirical Evidence for Regulatory Fit / Focus*

Empirical tests of regulatory fit theory have been intertwined with the empirical tests of regulatory focus theory. As such, it is difficult to make assertions regarding the validity of either theory alone. Instead, I will review the literature that has simultaneously tested regulatory fit theory and regulatory focus theory.

Several studies have looked at how regulatory fit / focus and feedback valence interact to affect motivation (Forrester et al., 2001; Idson & Higgins, 2000; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). Findings suggest that positive feedback (success) motivates promotion focused individuals while negative feedback (failure) motivates prevention focused individuals (Idson & Higgins, 2000; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). This is because the feedback information in these cases fits the inherent regulatory strategy of the individual. Individuals who adopt a prevention focus orientation are more strongly compelled to action by negative feedback because it maintains their strategy of vigilance. Their motives are centered on failure and how not to achieve it; in this case negative feedback contains the most information on how they can avoid failure. Conversely, promotion focused individuals are more strongly motivated by positive feedback because it is congruent with their strategy of eagerness. Their motives are centered on success and how to achieve it; therefore positive feedback provides the most information relevant to this strategy.

Compared to the fit conditions described here, non-fit conditions decrease task engagement and do not 'feel right'. (Higgins, 1997).

Forester et al. (2001) examined the effects of success and failure feedback on motivational expectancies and maintenance. They required participants to solve two sets of anagrams while simultaneously performing one of two different types of arm pressure tasks, depending on which of the two possible conditions they were assigned to. The first condition involved an arm flexion task in which force is directed towards the self. The second condition involved an arm extension task in which force is directed away from the self. Previous work has shown that the arm flexion task is associated with a vigilant strategy, while the arm extension task is associated with an eager strategy (see Cacioppo, Priester, & Berntson, 1993; Forster, 1998; Chen & Bargh, 1999; Forster & Strack, 1997, 1998; Priester, Cacioppo & Petty, 1996). Results from Forester et al. (2001) indicated the promotion concerns associated with positive feedback increased motivation for participants assigned to the arm flexion task condition (eager strategy) and prevention concerns associated with negative feedback increased motivation for participants assigned to the arm extension task condition (vigilant strategy). Thus, regulatory focus was shown to interact with feedback valence in impacting participant's task motivation such that positive feedback maintained or strengthened an eager strategy more than negative feedback, while negative feedback re-enforced or sustained a vigilant strategy more than success feedback.

Idson and Higgins (2000) also tested the interaction of feedback valence and regulatory focus by providing either positive or negative performance feedback for an anagram task based on participant's chronic regulatory focus. They measured participant's chronic level of regulatory focus prior to completing a set of 20 anagram tasks and then provided either positive or negative bogus performance feedback after they had completed 10 of the 20 anagrams. Their

focal measure of motivation was whether participant's performance following feedback either improved or decreased. As expected, their results indicated that participants with a chronic promotion focus orientation increased their performance over time following success more than if they received negative feedback, whereas participants with a chronic prevention focus orientation increased their performance over time following negative feedback more than if they received positive feedback. The authors attributed this to the fact that chronic promotion focused individuals felt they 'had everything to gain' (i.e., eager strategy) while attempting to solve the last 10 anagrams and that positive feedback sustained or strengthened this eager strategy. Conversely, prevention focused individuals felt they 'had everything to lose' (i.e., vigilant strategy) while attempting to solve the last 10 anagrams and that negative feedback sustained or strengthened this vigilant strategy.

Van-Dijk and Kluger (2004) examined the role of regulatory fit in the feedback valence-motivation relationship in two separate studies. In the first study, they manipulated regulatory fit by asking participants to imagine either a scenario in which they worked at a job they desired and wished to advance in (promotion focus and eager strategy) or a job they had to keep because they were afraid of being left without income (prevention focus and vigilant strategy). Feedback valence was manipulated by asking subjects to imagine their boss had just told them they had failed (negative) or that they had excelled (positive) in their job related task performance. Results showed neither feedback sign nor regulatory focus produced main effects; however, there was a strong interaction between the two variables such that when the task performance feedback matched regulatory focus orientation, individuals reported much higher levels of intent to invest more effort than they had previously. In the second study, regulatory focus was measured as an individual difference variable (i.e., chronic regulatory focus). Similar results were found, such

that individuals exhibited higher levels of motivation when feedback valence matched their chronic regulatory focus.

*Regulatory Fit / Focus and persuasive communications.* Two of the first empirical demonstrations of regulatory fit's relevance to persuasive appeals come from Lee and Aaker (2004) and Cesario et al. (2004). The basic methodology employed by these studies was to frame the arguments of a persuasive message in a manner that either fit or did not fit the motivational orientation of the recipient. The hypothesis of this approach was that the content of the message would speak to either promotion or prevention concerns, thereby inciting either a promotion or prevention focus in the recipient. The framing of the message arguments would then sustain or disrupt the recipient's regulatory focus, creating either regulatory fit or non-fit. Based on the tenants of regulatory focus theory, both studies predicted that fit would occur when promotion concerns were framed in an eager manner and prevention concerns were framed in a vigilant manner.

In Cesario et al. (2004), the authors created a message promoting the benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables. One version of the message emphasized accomplishment (i.e. promotion) concerns, such as "increased energy, better moods, and a general sense of happiness and fulfillment", whereas another version emphasized safety (i.e. prevention) concerns, such as protecting one's body "from the physical demands of the world we live in (pollution, daily stress, etc)". Each of these messages was then framed in terms of either ensuring the presence of positive outcomes (eager) or ensuring against negative outcomes (vigilant). To illustrate, the tagline for the message containing content related to promotion concerns was framed in eager terms as follows: "Eat fruits and vegetables and you will feel accomplished!", whereas as the same message was also paired with a vigilant tagline stating: "Neglect to eat fruits and

vegetables and you will not feel accomplished”. Similarly, the message with content related to prevention concerns bore a tagline framed in either an eager (“Eat fruits and vegetables and enjoy the safety of good health”) or a vigilant (“Neglect to eat fruits and vegetables and you will not enjoy the safety of good health”) manner. Results indicated that the message related to promotion concerns was significantly more persuasive when paired with an eagerly framed tagline compared to a vigilantly framed one, whereas the reverse was true for the message related to prevention concerns.

Participants in Lee and Aaker’s (2004) study were presented with an advertisement for grape juice emphasizing either promotion concerns (i.e., the energy enhancing benefits of the juice) or prevention concerns (i.e., the disease-preventing benefits of the juice). The tagline was then manipulated to be framed either in terms of eagerness (“Get Energized!” for promotion concerns; “Prevent Clogged Arteries!” for prevention concerns) or vigilance (“Don’t Miss Out on Getting Energized!” for promotion concerns; “Don’t Miss Out on Preventing Clogged Arteries!” for prevention concerns). Results from this study and several others conducted by Lee and Aaker that used the same basic strategy for achieving regulatory fit showed significantly higher levels of persuasion when the tagline was framed in a manner that fit the regulatory focus concerns of the recipient compared to when it did not fit.

*Incidental vs. Integral Fit.* In the context of persuasive messages, regulatory fit can be manipulated two different ways. Though both approaches have been demonstrated to have similar effects on overall persuasion (Cesario et al., 2004), the manner in which fit is manipulated has shown to have differential effects on how information is processed. Both approaches are described below.

*Incidental Fit.* Incidental fit occurs when regulatory fit is manipulated independent of the persuasive message itself (Cesario et al., 2008). The method most commonly used for inducing incidental fit is based on work done by Freitas and Higgins (2002). This approach manipulates motivational orientation by having participants list either a hope / aspiration (promotion concern) or a duty / obligation (prevention concern) and then instructs them to come up with goal pursuit strategies that either fit (eager for promotion, vigilant for prevention) or do not fit (vigilant for promotion, eager for prevention) the induced motivational orientation. After this fit / non-fit manipulation, participants are then exposed to the persuasive message. Several studies have used this incidental fit technique to demonstrate that a person in a state of “fit” is more influenced by any persuasive message (e.g. Cesario et al., 2004; Freitas & Higgins, 2002; Higgins, Idson, et al., 2003; Koenig et al., 2009) because they ‘feel right’ when the message is presented to them. Consequently, the message is processed more fluently than when they are in a state of “non-fit” (Koenig et al., 2009). It should be noted that the effects of incidental fit on attitudes toward persuasive messages have been postulated to be the result of a misattribution mechanism, such that feeling right in this case is not a result of the message itself; rather, it is a subjective state carried over from the manipulation of fit (which occurred outside of the message context) to the message context (Cesario et al., 2004). In other words, recipients mistakenly attribute feeling right to the message itself, when in fact feeling right is a result of the manipulation of fit that occurred prior to the message being presented to them.

*Integral Fit.* Integral fit occurs when recipients’ motivational orientation and strategic means of goal pursuit (which in the persuasive message literature is generally equated with the ‘frame’ of the message) are manipulated within the persuasive message itself. For example, the content of a message can be manipulated to address promotion or prevention concerns (e.g.,

energy enhancing benefits of the grape juice for promotion vs. the disease-preventing benefits of grape juice). Additionally, the content of the message can be framed in either an eager (e.g., “Get Energized!”) or a vigilant (“Prevent Clogged Arteries!”) manner. Fit is thus the result of a manipulation occurring within the message itself and is labeled as having been induced in an integral manner. When integral fit occurs, recipients feel right about the message itself. This constitutes an important piece of information for recipients to make inferences related to the message (see Schwarz, 1990; Schwarz & Clore, 1983, 1988), such as inferring their attitude towards the topic in question, their confidence in that attitude, and so on. So when recipients question themselves about their attitudes toward a message topic (e.g., ‘What do I think about eating vegetables?’ or ‘How do I feel about grape juice?’), feeling right about the message represents one piece of information to answer such questions—‘I feel right about it’. In support of this idea, Cesario and Higgins (2008) found that not only did participants in fit conditions have more positive attitudes toward message topics and stronger intentions to act in accordance with the message’s recommendations, but that these effects were mediated by their reports of ‘feeling right’. Moreover, they found these effects were independent of the valence of participants’ thoughts in response to the message, a sign that they felt right about the message and not their reaction to it.

Though both approaches to manipulating fit have shown similar effects on persuasion (Cesario et al., 2004), incidental and integral fit have been found to have differential effects on information processing. Koenig et al. (2009) manipulated fit in an incidental manner and discovered that message recipients were more likely to process message information in a superficial manner (e.g., using quantity rather than quality of message arguments) in fit conditions. Conversely, recipients exposed to non-fit conditions via incidental fit were more

likely to process message information in a more elaborative manner (e.g., rely on quality of arguments rather than quantity).

In other persuasive message studies where regulatory fit has been manipulated in an integral manner, results indicated that fit resulted in higher elaboration processing. Cesario and Higgins (2008) found integral fit resulted in participants generating more message relevant thoughts compared to non-fit conditions. Lee and Aaker (2004) produced similar results using integral fit such that participants in fit conditions generated more supportive reasons for a product compared to non-fit conditions, while Bianco, Higgins, and Klem (2003) found integral fit led to better recall of message relevant information than did non-fit.

In regards to which type of manipulation of fit is apt for the context of performance feedback, several factors point to integral fit as being most appropriate. First and foremost, integral manipulations of fit likely produce deeper levels of processing and greater elaboration, thereby making feedback information more accessible i.e., more likely to be recalled (Bianco et al., 2003). When feedback contains recommendations for changing behavior, increased accessibility to such information at a later point in time should increase the likelihood of engagement in recommended behaviors. Secondly, integral fit is more consistent with how feedback recommendations are normally presented. Feedback is 'sold' to recipients as strategies for changing behaviors that will lead to improved performance. Consequently, the strategy of inducing integral fit is more appropriate than incidental fit in the feedback context.

### *Regulatory Fit and Task / Performance Feedback*

Task / performance feedback is a message to an individual containing information about their functioning on a particular task (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979). DeNisi and Kluger (2000)

specify three possible sources of feedback: a) self-generation (internally generated cognitions/emotions regarding performance), b) actual task performance (physical cues), and c) an outside source attempting to influence behavior and performance (supervisor ratings). Though all three sources of feedback are important, the current discussion focuses on feedback provided by an external source.

*Self-regulation theories and the role of goal-feedback discrepancy.* Almost all contemporary theories of self-regulation view goals as the stimulus for behavior and a standard for judging its adequacy (e.g., Bandura, 1991; Carver & Scheier, 1998; Lord & Levy, 1994). Consequently, feedback, conceptualized in the present context as information regarding an individual's progress toward attaining his or her goal(s), is afforded an essential role in theories of self-regulation. The two most prominent theories of self-regulation, goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) and control theory (Podsakoff & Farh, 1989) share similar assumptions regarding the role of feedback in self-regulation. Both theories view behavior as goal directed and emphasize that the achievement of goals is reliant in part on feedback information to evaluate individual performance relative to goal standards held by the individual (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

Despite differences in predicting how people react to and try to eliminate feedback-goal discrepancies, it is important to note that common to both theories is an emphasis on the processing of feedback information and the notion that individuals are more than simple, passive reactants bound to specific outcomes upon receiving feedback. Rather, individuals are conceptualized as active processors of feedback information, with the ability to incorporate and adhere to the feedback message or dismiss it. This suggests feedback serves to enable rather than guarantee change. Understanding why individuals use / fail to use feedback is essential to

understanding self-regulatory processes (Fletcher, Taylor, & Glanfield, 1996; Malmsjo & Ovelius, 2003).

To date, feedback research has focused on characteristics of the feedback message, e.g., feedback specificity (Goodman, Wood, & Hendrickx, 2004) and feedback sign (Vancouver & Tischner, 2004; Zhou, 1998); contextual effects, e.g., feedback source (Brett & Atwater, 2001; Steelman & Rutkowski, 2004); recipient individual differences, e.g., goal orientation (Chen & Mathieu, 2008; Donovan & Hafsteinsston, 2006; Zhou, 1998), self-efficacy (Donovan & Hafsteinsston, 2006; Nease, 1999), organizational commitment (Norris-Watts & Levy, 2004), locus of control (Funderburg & Levy, 1997), and self-esteem (Ilies, DePater, & Judge, 2007); and interactions between feedback characteristics and recipient individual differences (Donovan & Hafsteinsston, 2006; Ilies, DePater, & Judge, 2007; Zhou, 1998).

Although the recent research on interactive effects makes progress toward modeling the dynamic nature of feedback processing and utilization, regulatory fit potentially adds greater understanding. Recommendations for changing behaviors and improving performance are generated in response to prior behaviors / performances. Task / performance feedback recommendations are persuasive communications that attempt to convince recipients to change behaviors to which there is some existing level of commitment. The fundamental proposition of the current study is that achieving regulatory fit in the context of delivering feedback messages will increase task engagement which leads to changes in task behaviors.

*Explaining the effects of Regulatory Fit in the context of performance feedback.* As previously mentioned, the manner in which fit is manipulated influences message processing. Since the argument for preferring integral to incidental manipulations of fit in the context of

performance feedback has already been made, the following explanation of how regulatory fit impacts the processing, recall, and use of performance feedback recommendations refers only to when regulatory fit has been manipulated in an integral manner.

*Processing frame of reference: Feeling right.* In the context of performance feedback, ‘feeling right’ as a result of regulatory fit should induce a processing frame of reference that leads to deeper processing of task / performance relevant information. This is because when fit occurs, feeling right about the message communicates to the recipient that everything is going smoothly and they should not be concerned about the validity of the arguments contained in the message (i.e., recommendations for changing behavior). Consequently, they concentrate on processing and committing to memory the recommendations for improving performance. This increased depth of processing enhances the likelihood an individual will correctly recognize the context where recommended strategies should be implemented and increases the likelihood the “corrected” behavioral strategy will be implemented.

This notion of increased accessibility leading to increased likelihood of behavior is linked to research on prospective memory, i.e., the study of the relationship between retrieval of memories and behavior (for a recent overview, see McDaniel & Einstein, 2007). A focus of prospective memory research has been in the area of memory accessibility or “ease of remembering” (Tobias, 2009, p. 413). The argument is that memories often serve as proximal antecedents of behaviors (Ellis & Kvavilashvili, 2000; McDaniel & Einstein, 2007). In relation to the current argument, the processing frame of reference associated with feeling right as a result of regulatory fit should increase prospective memory for feedback recommendations such that they will be easier to recall.

In addition to increasing accessibility, once recommended behaviors are recalled, the processing frame of references associated with feeling right should increase the likelihood that recipients still feel right about the behavior. If recommended behaviors feel right when they are processed and committed to memory, such behaviors are likely to feel right when recalled at a later point in time. Recipients should therefore be more likely to engage in recalled behaviors recommended to them because they still feel right.

*Processing frame of reference: Feeling uncertain.* When regulatory non-fit occurs in the context of performance feedback, recipients feel uncertain about the validity of the arguments contained in messages presented to them. They are thus put into a message processing frame of reference that leads to counter-arguing of feedback recommendations. This counter-arguing reduces the accessibility of the behavioral strategies recommended to them as feedback, thereby reducing the likelihood that such strategies will be recalled at an appropriate point in time in the future. Furthermore, even if such strategies are recalled, they will *not* feel right, reducing the likelihood that the recalled feedback will be implemented.

To summarize, in the context of performance feedback, integral regulatory fit will cause recipients to feel right / not right about feedback recommendations. When regulatory fit occurs, feeling right will produce a processing frame of reference that increases accessibility and likelihood of feeling right when performance feedback is implemented. In contrast, not feeling right will produce a processing frame of reference that decreases accessibility, increases the likelihood of feeling uncertain after recall, and decreases the likelihood performance feedback recommendations are used.

*Overview*

The current study tests regulatory fit / focus in the task / performance feedback context. In the parlance of regulatory fit / focus, the task / performance feedback context is one of integral fit, i.e., where assessment of fit is dependent on the manner in which the persuasive message is framed. Furthermore, I argue that to meaningfully test regulatory fit / focus in the task / performance feedback context requires a meaningful task where feedback is tailored to individual participants based on prior performance of the task. To this end, the current study uses an in-basket task similar to that used in managerial assessment centers. Participants were stopped during completion of the in-basket and were given feedback based on their observed behaviors. After receiving their tailored feedback, participants then completed the assessment center task.

Motivational orientation (Promotion vs. Prevention) was manipulated by the instructions given to participants prior to engaging in the in-basket, whereas goal pursuit strategy (Eager vs. Vigilant) was manipulated by the framing of the task / performance feedback. The most important prediction is that fit leads to increased usage of task / performance feedback.

In terms of processing explanations of why fit enhances the use of feedback, my expectation is that fit leads to greater task relevant processing and a more general sense of feeling right. To assess task relevant processing, a free recall measure of the task / performance feedback was included. To assess feeling right, attitudinal items were included, both toward the feedback itself and more general attitudes.

### *Hypotheses*

The following hypotheses will be tested in this study:

Hypothesis 1: Regulatory fit / non-fit will lead to greater / lesser behavioral manifestations of task / performance feedback recommendations.

1a. Promotion-focused participants will utilize feedback more when feedback is framed with an Eager goal-pursuit strategy as opposed to a Vigilant goal-pursuit strategy.

1b. Prevention-focused participants will utilize feedback more when feedback is framed with a Vigilant goal-pursuit strategy as opposed to an Eager goal-pursuit strategy.

Hypothesis 2: Regulatory fit / non-fit will lead to greater / lesser task relevant processing.

2a. Promotion-focused participants will recall more feedback statements when feedback is framed with an Eager goal-pursuit strategy as opposed to a Vigilant goal-pursuit strategy.

2b. Prevention-focused participants will recall more feedback statements when feedback is framed with a vigilant goal-pursuit strategy as opposed to an Eager goal-pursuit strategy.

Hypothesis 3: Regulatory fit / misfit will lead to a greater / lesser sense of “feeling right”.

2a. Promotion-focused participants will express stronger positive attitudes when feedback is framed with an Eager goal-pursuit strategy as opposed to a Vigilant goal-pursuit strategy.

2b. Prevention-focused participants will express stronger positive attitudes when feedback is framed with a Vigilant goal-pursuit strategy as opposed to an Eager goal-pursuit strategy.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The focal participants were 124 students recruited from undergraduate psychology courses at Virginia Tech via the SONA System (the Psychology Department's online Experiment Management System). Three participants failed to comprehend the instructions they were given during the study. As a result, the data from these three participants were not included in the analysis. Participants were required to be 18 or older and proficient in English in order to participate. Participants were told the study would examine personality and task performance. They were informed they would earn 2 points of extra credit for whichever psychology class they were enrolled in for completing the study and the study would require approximately 90 minutes total for them to complete.

### *Design*

The experimental design was a 2 (Goal pursuit: Eager vs. Vigilant) x 2 (Motivational Orientation: Promotion vs. Prevention) between-subjects factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of these four conditions.

### *Procedure*

A flow chart outlining the procedure of the current study is contained in Figure 1.

Participants were brought individually to a lab room and asked to turn off any electronic devices. They were then provided the "Informed Consent Form" (APPENDIX A). After having read and signed the informed consent form, participants were asked to fill out the "Demographics Questionnaire" (APPENDIX B). The research assistant then described the purpose of the research, along with a brief description of the In-basket Task that the participant would complete. This included a brief description of how in-basket tasks are used to assess managerial potential. Participants were informed they would perform an In-basket Task broken into two, 30 minute

sessions, along with two short tests of their recall ability and two short questionnaires (10 minutes). Participants were also told their performance on all of the tasks would be observed and assessed by the administrator and they would receive tailored feedback recommendations (10 minutes) based on their work during the first 30 minutes. After receiving their feedback, participants were told they would complete the second 30 minute session of the In-Basket Task. They were then told the entire study would require approximately 90 minutes to complete and they would receive two extra credit points for participating in the study.

Each participant was then introduced to the In-basket task. After having read the In-basket Task instructions, the participant was allowed to ask the administrator any questions he / she may have had about the task. Once any questions and / or concerns were addressed, each participant was given the In-basket Task items, along with a pen with black ink, a pad of yellow paper, and a yellow highlighter. The administrator informed the participant that he / she had 30 minutes to work on the In-basket Task and that the administrator would remain in the room. Upon completion of an item, each participant was instructed to place the finished item in a basket designated as 'out-basket #1', and that the administrator would remove and score each item in the sequence it is placed in out-basket #1. Upon the completion of scoring each item, the administrator placed the item in 'out-basket #2'. Each participant was instructed that he / she could remove an item from either out-basket #1 or out-basket #2 at anytime, and that it was permissible to change a response to an item. However, any item the participant removed from either out-basket must be returned to out-basket #1. Each participant was also informed that he / she could place any in-basket item into a separate tray, designated as the "ignore basket". Finally, each participant was told the administrator would warn him / her when less than two minutes remained to finish working on the In-Basket task, both at 30 minutes and 60 minutes.

Once the allotted 30 minutes passed for the first In-Basket Test session, the administrator instructed the participant to discontinue working on the task and to place the item he / she was currently working on in out-basket #1. The administrator then collected all of the In-basket Task items (including those the participant had not yet worked on and those placed in the ignore basket) and finished assessing any items from out-basket #1. Regulatory fit was then manipulated.

After regulatory fit was manipulated, the administrator provided feedback recommendations designed to improve performance on the In-Basket Task. Once feedback was delivered and the participant was provided the chance to ask questions regarding the feedback, the written feedback was removed, and the participant was asked to complete an attitudinal questionnaire, followed by a filler task. After completing the filler task, the administrator returned all of the In-basket Task items to the participant in the same order the participant left them at the end of the first 30 minutes of the In-basket Task. The participant was then informed that he / she had 30 minutes to complete his / her work on the In-Basket Task.

For the second 30 minute session, the participant was provided a pen with blue ink, a pad of white paper, and an orange highlighter to distinguish his / her work on the In-basket Task during the last 30 minutes from the first 30 minutes. The participant was reminded that he / she could revisit any item in out-box #2, as well as those placed in the ignore basket, and that the administrator would warn him / her when less than two minutes remained for them to work on the In-basket Task. The participant was informed that the administrator would remain in the room, but he / she would be scoring In-basket Task items from a different subject who participated in a previous session.

Once the allotted 30 minutes passed, the participant was instructed to stop working on the In-basket Task. He / she was then given a blank paper and asked to write down as many of the feedback recommendations as he / she could remember. Once finished, the participant was provided a copy of the “Debriefing Form” (APPENDIX C) and thoroughly debriefed. He / she was given the opportunity to ask the administrator any questions about the study, after which he / she was thanked for his / her participation and dismissed.

### *In-basket Task*

The in-basket assessment is a task commonly used by organizations for both training and assessment purposes. It represents “an individual work sample designed to simulate important aspects of the manager’s position” (Casio & Aguinis, 2005, p. 362). Participants are presented with a hypothetical situation and are asked to assume the role of a manager tasked with addressing a set of items located in an in-basket. They are presented with a stack of items and tasked with addressing each of them in a specified amount of time. They are asked to record their responses and intended actions in relation to each item. Once finished, each participant leaves behind a packet full of notes, memos, letters, etc... that constitutes a record of his / her behavior. The behaviors are rated and the participant is scored on a variety of dimensions pre-determined as relevant to the items in the in-basket. The in-basket task has proven quite popular for assessment and is often used in the context of assessment centers (Turnage & Muchinsky, 1984).

The “In-Basket Task” (APPENDIX D) developed for the current study is based on Jaffee (1968) and presents participants with a hypothetical scenario in which they assume the role of a newly promoted manager at a fictional company.

*Pilot testing the In-Basket Task.* The In-basket Task was pilot tested by having 13

participants complete the In-basket Task. The purpose of the pilot testing was to ensure participants understood the In-Basket Task, and would be able to utilize the feedback they received between sessions. Pilot testing was also used to train research assistants how to assess behavior on the In-basket Task and properly provide feedback recommendations.

Additionally, recipients' reactions to the feedback recommendations were assessed, independent of any manipulation of regulatory fit, using the "Attitudes towards Feedback Recommendations before Second In-basket Task Questionnaire" (APPENDIX E). Results from pilot study participants indicated participants reacted favorably to the feedback recommendations independent of any manipulation of regulatory fit. Average scores and standard deviations for the four questions on the Attitudes Toward Feedback Recommendations before Second In-basket Task Questionnaire were as follows: 1. The recommendations for completing the in-basket task will be helpful,  $M = 6.25$ ,  $S.D. = 0.75$ ; 2. I believe the recommendations provided to me will lead to better performance during the last 30 minutes of the in-basket task,  $M = 6.17$ ,  $S.D. = 0.57$ ; 3. I feel more confident in my ability to improve my performance during the next 30 minutes of the in-basket task because of the recommendations I was given,  $M = 6.00$ ,  $S.D. = 0.74$ ; and 4. I intend to use the recommendations provided to me during the next 30 minutes of the in-basket task,  $M = 6.41$ ,  $S.D. = 0.67$ .

#### *Performance Feedback Recommendations*

The feedback recommendations were created based on the strategies advocated in the scoring guidelines provided by Jaffe (1968), along with my analysis of the content of the items contained in the In-basket Task. The 26 recommendations on the "Performance Feedback Checklist – Eager Frame" (APPENDIX F) and the "Performance Feedback Checklist – Vigilant Frame" (APPENDIX G) were organized by seven common managerial goals: Actively Manage

Information, Prioritize Issues, Resolution of Critical Issues, Resolve Conflicting Requests, Efficient Use of Meetings, and Effective Leadership.

It should be noted that the total number of different behaviors performed by the participant during the first 30 minutes of the In-basket Task was equal to the number of feedback recommendations provided to him / her subtracted from 26, which was the total number of recommendations on both the Eager and the Vigilant version of the Performance Feedback Checklist.

*Tailoring the feedback.* During the first session, the administrator scored items that were placed in out-box #1 using either the Performance Feedback Checklist – Eager Frame or Performance Feedback Checklist – Vigilant Frame. Upon completion of the first session, the administrator collected all materials and completed the first session scoring by placing a check mark beside each behavior the participant engaged in during the first session. Next, each participant was shown his / her scored Performance Feedback Checklist. In this manner, each participant received feedback tailored to his / her behaviors during the first session.

*Delivering the feedback.* The administrator first explained that the Performance Feedback Checklist contained recommendations regarding the In-Basket Task. Furthermore, the administrator told the participant that the checked items referenced behaviors the participant engaged in during the first session. As the participant followed along, the administrator read each managerial goal and only the accompanying behaviors the participant did *not* engage in during the first session. After reading a recommendation, the administrator elaborated briefly by further defining the behavior and why it was important. The participant was encouraged to ask questions if they did not understand the meaning of a particular recommendation and the administrator

provided further explanation as necessary.

*Training administrators to score the In-Basket Task.* Research assistants were trained as follows. First, each research assistant completed the in-basket task to become familiar with it. After completing the In-Basket Task, I met with each research assistant to explain the Performance Feedback Checklist. Each administrator was given a “Scoring Decision Aid” (See APPENDIX H) that identified the relevant feedback statements associated with each in-basket item.

To illustrate how the Scoring Decision Aid works, consider the following example of how the third item from the In-basket Task was scored. There are two feedback recommendations related to the third item in the In-basket Task. The Scoring Decision Aid lists each of these recommendations and provides examples of behaviors related to the item that are consistent with the specified feedback recommendation to help the rater identify behaviors relevant to specific item-recommendation combinations. For example, in the Scoring Decision Aid, the feedback recommendation ‘*Personally praise an employee who does something positive*’ is listed as relevant to the third item in the In-basket Task. This feedback recommendation is accompanied by several examples of behaviors related to the third item in the In-basket task (i.e., ‘Write Sue Martin a personal note commending her excellent work’ and ‘Plan to meet w/ or call Sue Martin personally to commend her’) that are consistent with the feedback recommendation (i.e., ‘*Personally praise an employee who does something positive*’). If the rater observed one of these example behaviors, or a behavior consistent with one of the example behaviors, they knew to mark the accompanying feedback recommendation on the Performance Feedback Checklist.

After completing the In-basket Task and reviewing the Scoring Decision Aid, each research assistant was required to conduct practice runs of the experiment. This involved each administrator first running me through the experiment as they would a normal participant. This was followed by having each administrator running two pilot subjects through the experiment while I observed. For each pilot subject, the administrator and I scored the In-Basket Task separately using the Performance Feedback Checklist for both Session 1 and Session 2. An administrator was not allowed to run actual participants until his / her scores on the In-Basket task reached 90% agreement with my scores.

### *Independent Variables*

*Regulatory fit* was manipulated via two independent variables: Motivational Orientation and Goal Pursuit.

*Motivational Orientation.* Motivational Orientation was manipulated using the “Motivational Orientation Questionnaire” (APPENDIX I). The Motivational Orientation Questionnaire employs a method for priming either promotion or prevention concerns that was originally developed by Frietas & Higgins (2002) and has been proven effective in previous research (Cesario et al., 2004; Frietas & Higgins, 2002, Hong & Lee, 2008). The Motivational Orientation Questionnaire asked participants to list as many “hopes or aspirations” (promotion focus induction) or as many “duties or obligations” (prevention focus induction) regarding their future professional career as they could think of.

After participants finished writing as many hopes or aspirations / duties or obligations as they could think of, they were asked to come to the front of the room and write down their top three hopes or aspirations / duties or obligations (i.e., the three hopes or aspirations / duties or

obligations they thought were most important) on a dry erase board. When feedback recommendations were given, the administrator remained next to the dry erase board where the top three hopes or aspirations / duties or obligations had been written to help ensure the promotion / prevention regulatory concerns manipulated remained salient during the delivery of performance feedback.

*Goal Pursuit.* Goal Pursuit was manipulated in two ways: 1) The manner in which the feedback recommendations were initially presented to the participant by the administrator, and 2) The seven common managerial goals on the behavioral checklist preceding the recommendations given to the participant. Prior to showing the participant his / her feedback recommendations, the administrator informed the participant that all of the recommendations he / she was about to review would help him / her either ensure that everything goes right (Eager Frame) or make sure that nothing goes wrong (Vigilant Frame) on the In-basket Task. Each of the seven common managerial goals was framed in a similar manner, with the administrator placing a subtle emphasis on the fact that the recommendations relevant to a particular managerial goal would either ensure everything goes right (Eager Frame) or make sure nothing goes wrong (Vigilant Frame) in relation to that managerial goal. This manipulation of Goal Pursuit was subtle in sense that it differed from other framing techniques that have been used in previous research (e.g., Lee & Aaker, 2004). For example, a previous effort to frame a persuasive message touting the benefits of group in a vigilant manner produced the following message frame: “Don’t Miss Out on Preventing Clogged Arteries”. To avoid similarly stilted phrases, an effort was made to frame recommendations in the more subtle and less awkward manner than described above.

Regulatory fit was hypothesized to occur when a participant was asked to list as many hopes or aspirations (promotion concerns) as he / she could think and was given feedback

recommendations framed in an eager manner or when he/ she was asked to list as many duties or obligations (prevention concerns) as he / she could think and was given feedback recommendations framed in a vigilant manner. Regulatory misfit was hypothesized to occur when hopes or aspirations were followed by vigilant framed feedback recommendations or duties or obligations were followed by eager framed feedback recommendations.

### *Dependent Variables*

*Use of feedback.* The primary dependent variables related to feedback use were: 1) The number of times feedback behaviors were engaged in by the participant during the second session (Frequency of Feedback Use), and 2) The number of different feedback behaviors the participant engaged in during the second session (Variety of Feedback Use). When a participant completed the experiment, his / her In-Basket Task was set aside to be scored by an administrator different than the one who supervised the experimental session. Participants were randomly assigned to administrators for scoring the second session. The administrator scoring the second session remained blind to both experimental conditions (i.e., Motivational Orientation and Goal Pursuit). The Performance Feedback Checklist was used by the scorer to designate only those behaviors engaged in during the second session. It was possible to differentiate these behaviors because the participant changed the color of ink and highlighter between sessions. Frequency of Feedback Use and Variety of Feedback Use were operationalized as the number of times (frequency) and the number of different behaviors (variety) that a participant engaged in during the second session that were *not* observed in session one.

*Attitudes following feedback delivery.* Participant's attitudes following feedback delivery were assessed using the Attitudes Following Feedback Delivery Questionnaire that was

administered immediately after participants were presented with the performance feedback recommendations. This scale contains four-items rated on a 7-point scale likert scale; 1 – Strongly Disagree, 7 – Strongly Agree. Each item was intended to assess participants’ attitudes toward topics whose relevance to the experiment and the feedback they were given ranged from highly focal (e.g., The recommendations I received for completing the in-basket task will help me during the next 30 minutes of the in-basket task) to more peripheral (e.g., Psychology is a very useful field of study). This was done to explore the extent to which the effect of regulatory fit affected feeling right.

*Feedback recall.* Upon completion of the In-Basket Task, each subject was instructed to write down as many of the feedback statements reviewed with them as they could recall, with no imposed time limit. Two research assistants scored each recall measure by recording the number of statements recalled that were given as feedback prior to the second session. Statements that appeared on the Performance Feedback Checklist not given formally as feedback (i.e., statements that were checked off and were therefore not reviewed by the study administrator) were not counted toward the total number of recommendations recalled.

Recall data from the pilot participants was used by the research assistants to practice scoring. Assistants were required to meet an acceptable level of agreement (i.e., 90%) prior to scoring recall data from actual subjects.

#### *Filler Task*

The filler task was originally designed to measure participants’ general recall ability and is based on the methods used by Volk, McDermott, Roediger, and Todd (2006). The task consisted of presenting participants with two 30-word lists, each comprised of five words from

six semantic categories taken from the Battig and Montague norms (Battig & Montague, 1969). Each word from the lists was presented at the rate of one word every 2 seconds. Following presentation of the first 30-word list, participants were asked to recall as many of the words as possible in 2 minutes (in any order they wished) but not to guess; that is, they were asked to be certain all the words they recalled had indeed been presented to them. This process was repeated for the second 30-word list. Even if participants finished recalling as many words as possible before the 2-minute time period expired, the administrator waited until the 2-minute time period was finished before proceeding.

## **Results**

### *Coding behaviors during last 30 minutes of the In-basket Task and feedback recall*

During pilot testing of the In-basket Task it became apparent that the recommendation “Highlighting important dates and information on the provided documents” might be problematic with regards to scoring Frequency of Feedback Use. It was noted that compared to the other recommendations on the Performance Feedback Checklist, engaging in this behavior did not require much time or effort on the part of the participant. Consequently, participants given this recommendation often chose to engage in this behavior more frequently than other behaviors they were recommended. It was decided this recommendation had the potential to distort the Frequency of Feedback Use data. Therefore, the “Highlighting important dates and information on the provided documents” recommendation was scored no more than once when calculating Frequency of Feedback Use scores, even if the participant engaged in the behavior more than once while working on the In-basket Task during the final 30 minutes.

To assess the potential impact of Motivational Orientation and Goal Pursuit on the

tendency to use the highlighting recommendation, a logistic regression was conducted wherein use / non-use of the highlighting recommendation was regressed on both independent variables. Results from the logistic regression to test the impact of Motivational Orientation and Goal Pursuit on use / non-use of the highlighting recommendation are reported in Table 1. No significant effects were found, indicating that neither Motivational Orientation ( $p = .98$ ) nor Goal Pursuit ( $p = .73$ ) had a significant main effect or a significant interaction effect ( $p = .13$ ) on use / non-use of the highlighting recommendation.

Frequency of Feedback Use, Variety of Feedback Use, and Feedback Recall were all assessed by having two research assistants score all three variables. Raters were not allowed to score a session they administered. In instances of disagreement between raters regarding Frequency of Feedback Use, Variety of Feedback Use, or Feedback Recall, I determined the final value.

Ratings provided for Frequency of Feedback Use were in perfect agreement 64% of the time (i.e., the two raters provided the same number), resulting in 44 instances of disagreement. Of these, 38 disagreements were of a magnitude  $\leq 2$  (25 of which were of a magnitude = 1), while the remaining 6 disagreements were of a magnitude  $\leq 4$  (4 of which were of a magnitude = 3).

For Variety of Feedback Use, the raters agreed in 80% of all cases, resulting in 24 instances of disagreement. All 24 disagreements related to Variety of Feedback Use were of a magnitude  $\leq 2$ , of which 20 had a magnitude of disagreements = 1.

Feedback Recall ratings were in agreement for 90% of all cases, resulting in 12 instances of disagreement. Of these 12 instances, 9 were of a magnitude = 1, while the remaining 3 were of

a magnitude = 2.

### *Correlations and Descriptive Statistics*

Descriptive statistics appear in Table 2, and Table 3 displays the correlation matrix for all of the dependant variables, collapsed over conditions. Scores among participants on the non-attitudinal dependant variables (attitudes were scored on 5 point likert scale ranging from 1 to 5) ranged as follows (minimum – maximum): Frequency of Feedback Use (3 – 41); Variety of Feedback Use (3 – 17); and Feedback Recall (2 – 12).

### *Baseline analysis*

As a precautionary measure, a 2 (Motivational Orientation) X 2 (Goal Pursuit) ANOVA was conducted to ensure there were no significant differences in the number of feedback recommendations provided among the four possible conditions of the study (descriptive statistics for the number of recommendations given by condition can be found in Table 2). Results from this analysis indicated there were no significant differences in the number of feedback recommendations provided among any of the four conditions ( $F(1,117) = 1.97, MSE = 7.42$ ). There were no significant main effects of Motivational Orientation ( $p = .43, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ) or Goal Pursuit ( $p = .52, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ) on the number of recommendations given, nor was there a significant interaction between Motivational Orientation and Goal Pursuit ( $p = .52, \eta^2 = .01$ ).

### *Hypotheses 1: Behavioral manifestations of feedback use*

To test Hypotheses 1, I conducted separate 2 (Motivational Orientation) X 2 (Goal Pursuit) ANOVAs on each of the two dependant variables related to behavioral manifestations of performance feedback recommendations: 1) The number of times feedback behaviors were engaged in by the participant during the second session (Frequency of Feedback Use), and 2) The number of different feedback behaviors the participant engaged in during the second session

(Variety of Feedback Use). Hypothesis 2 predicted a significant interaction effect for both Frequency of Feedback Use and Variety of Feedback Use. Specifically, I expected conditions of regulatory fit would result in a significantly higher frequency and variety of feedback behaviors engaged in. This would support the hypothesis that regulatory fit impacts the likelihood recipients they will engage in the behaviors recommended to them.

Results from two ANOVAs conducted to test Hypothesis 1 are reported in Table 4. There were no significant main effects of Motivational Orientation ( $F(1,117) = .63, p = .43, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ) or Goal Pursuit ( $F(1,117) = .41, p = .52, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ) on Frequency of Feedback Use, nor were there any significant main effects of either Motivational Orientation ( $F(1,117) = .13, p = .72, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ) or Goal Pursuit ( $F(1,117) = .41, p = .52, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ) on the Variety of Feedback Use. As predicted, there were significant interaction effects for Frequency of Feedback Use ( $F(1,117) = 7.47, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .06$ ) and Variety of Feedback Use ( $F(1,117) = 8.70, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .07$ ). Figure 2 represents the interaction graphically for Frequency of Feedback Use. Figure 3 does the same for Variety of Feedback Use, and both figures are consistent with the predicted interaction specified in Hypothesis 1.

Separate simple effects ANOVAs conducted on both dependant variables indicated the framing effect was significant within the Promotion Concerns condition. For promotion concerns, participants in the eager condition had both a higher frequency ( $M = 17.80, SD = 7.26$ ) and variety ( $M = 8.60, SD = 2.21$ ) of feedback behaviors than participants in the vigilant condition (Frequency:  $M = 15.07, SD = 7.80, F(1,118) = 5.94, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .05$ ; Variety:  $M = 7.53, SD = 2.30, F(1, 118) = 5.23, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .04$ ). Although the pattern of means was in the correct order, simple effects analysis of the framing effect within the Prevention Concerns condition did not reach significance for either frequency (Vigilant:  $M = 17.06, SD = 7.06$ , Eager:

$M = 13.17, SD = 6.55, F(1,118) = 2.03, p = .16, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ) or Variety (Vigilant:  $M = 8.73, SD = 2.63$ , Eager:  $M = 7.07, SD = 2.95, F(1, 118) = 3.59, p = .06, \eta_p^2 = .03$ ).

*Hypothesis 2: Recall of performance feedback recommendations.*

Hypothesis 2 was tested by running a 2 (Motivational Orientation) X 2 (Goal Pursuit) ANOVA on participants' recall of their performance feedback. Hypothesis 2 predicted a significant interaction such that participants assigned to conditions of regulatory fit would recall significantly more recommendations than participants assigned to conditions of non-fit.

Table 5 reports the results from the ANOVA performed to test Hypothesis 2. There were no significant main effects of Motivational Orientation ( $F(1,117) = .124, p = .73, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ) or Goal Pursuit ( $F(1,117) = .08, p = .78, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ) on recall of performance feedback, nor was there a significant interaction effect ( $F(1,117) = 3.24, p = .07, \eta^2 = .03$ ). However, it is worth noting the pattern of differences among the mean number of recommendations recalled for the four possible conditions was consistent with Hypothesis 2, as shown in Figure 4.

*Hypothesis 3: Attitudes following feedback delivery*

To test Hypotheses 3, I ran a 2 (Motivational Orientation) X 2 (Goal Pursuit) MANOVA on participants' attitudes after feedback recommendations. Hypothesis 1 predicted a significant interaction effect. Specifically, I expected that conditions where Motivational Orientation was concordant with Goal Pursuit (i.e., regulatory fit) would produce significantly higher scores on participants' attitudes after feedback. This would support my hypothesis that regulatory fit increases recipient's attitudes towards the feedback, the task, the study, and psychology in general following feedback delivery.

Results from the MANOVA yielded no significant effects. There was no significant main effect for either Motivational Orientation ( $F(1, 117) = 1.48, p = .21, \eta^2 = .05$ ) or Goal Pursuit ( $F$

(1, 117) = 1.10,  $p = .36$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ), nor was there a significant interaction effect ( $F(1, 117) = .53$ ,  $p = .71$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ) for any of the four attitudes assessed. Hypothesis 3 was not supported due to the absence of any significant interactions between Motivational Orientation and Goal Pursuit for any of the four questions that assessed participant's attitudes following the delivery of performance feedback.

## **Discussion**

The current study sought to extend previous research and add clarity to the feedback domain by testing regulatory fit in the context of task / performance feedback. Limitations of previous work in this area were addressed by employing a meaningful task and tailoring feedback to individual participants based on prior performance of the task. Furthermore, the current study went beyond much of the previous persuasion research by measuring behavioral outcomes in relation to regulatory fit, thereby testing the relevance of regulatory fit for social influence. It also provided a partial explanation for the impact of fit on subsequent behavior in the context of task / performance feedback by measuring the accessibility of feedback information in relation to behavioral implementation.

Overall, findings supported regulatory fit in the context of performance feedback. The explanation that integral fit imparts behavioral change via increased task engagement was supported. However, the explanation that task engagement is a function of feeling right was not supported.

### *Interpretation of Results*

*Hypothesis 1: Behavioral manifestations of feedback use.* Hypothesis 1 was strongly supported by the results of the analyses conducted on the two behavioral measures of feedback use. As predicted, the interaction between Motivational Orientation and Goal Pursuit was

significant for both Feedback Frequency and Feedback Variety such that participants assigned to fit conditions engaged more frequently and in a higher variety of behaviors recommended to them compared to those assigned to non-fit conditions (see Figure 2 and 3). This supports the assertion that regulatory fit impacts the probability recipients will use the feedback recommendations they are provided.

*Hypothesis 2: Feedback recall.* While results for Hypothesis 2 failed to reach statistical significance, the interaction accounted for 3% of the variance in recall, and the pattern of recall results mirrored the significant findings for behavioral use of feedback (see Figure 4). Though not statistically significant, the amount of variance in recall explained by the interaction between Motivational Orientation and Goal Pursuit, along with the pattern of the interaction, suggests that regulatory fit improves the accessibility of feedback information in recipients.

*Hypothesis 3: Attitudes Following Feedback Delivery.* The results of the MANOVA conducted to test regulatory fit in relation to attitudes provided no significant effects, thus failing to support Hypothesis 3. This finding stands in contrast to a substantial amount of research (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Cesario & Higgins, 2008; Higgins et al., 2003; Lee & Aaker, 2004) that found regulatory enhanced attitudes regarding persuasive messages. The finding that fit did not apparently affect feeling right in the current study raises issues about the explanatory regulatory fit in the task / performance feedback context. I believe there are three explanations for non-support of the feeling right explanation.

First, perhaps feeling right is not a pre-requisite for increased task engagement. That is, whether recipients feel right about feedback recommendations may not impact their level of task engagement when processing them. This runs counter to the basic tenets of regulatory fit theory (Higgins, 1997, 2000) and seems unlikely, given that increased levels of task engagement as a

result of fit are almost invariably accompanied by increased levels of feeling right (Cesario et al., 2007, Cesario & Higgins, 2008; Lee & Aaker, 2004;).

Second, feeling right was not adequately assessed in the current study, i.e., the questions that best measure feeling right in the feedback context were not asked. Feeling right is a process mechanism separate from specific attitudes; it is an experiential state that results from fit and should not be confused with attitudes towards a particular target (Cesario et al, 2007), such as feedback recommendations. Cesario and Higgins (2008) demonstrated this empirically when they measured feeling right in a persuasion context and found it mediated the effects of regulatory fit on persuasion. In addition to asking participants to rate their general attitudes toward the message presented to them (i.e., how favorably they felt toward it, how good of an idea they thought it was, and their overall attitude toward it), Cesario & Higgins also asked participants to rate “how right “ and “how wrong” they felt about the message. No such attempt to directly measure how right or how wrong recipients felt about feedback was made in the current study; only general attitudes were assessed. In retrospect, a better strategy may have been to ask participants directly about feeling right.

Third, it is possible task / performance feedback is such a “strong” situation that it makes it difficult to detect possible between subject differences in feeling right. Results from the attitude questions indicated participants were uniformly positive in their appraisal of the recommendations. This is not surprising since pilot testing had already established the recommendations had high face validity, making it difficult to construct counterarguments against their utility. By definition the recommendations were helpful. Even if participants in the non-fit conditions exerted more resources towards generating counter arguments because they felt wrong, it is likely they ultimately found it difficult to dismiss the utility of the recommended

behaviors. Consequently, they may have judged the recommendations as useful for the second half of the In-basket Task in spite of the fact they did not feel right.

It may be that attitudes and intentions are not impacted by feeling right as a result of fit in the context of task / performance feedback. In fact, this issue may not be of primary importance in a feedback context. It is likely recommendations for improving performance that typically accompany feedback in most applied settings are logically sound. As such, it is warranted to assume such recommendations typically have high face validity. The issue then is not so much whether recipients think feedback will be helpful; rather, the issue becomes whether or not they remember the recommendations at a later point in time. Based on the results of the current study, this would appear to be a function in part of whether or not fit resulted in increased engagement during the processing of such information, thereby increasing accessibility. However, whether increased engagement is associated with feeling right / wrong needs further testing in the context of task / performance feedback. That said, I believe feeling right does matter in the task / performance feedback context, and I believe the most likely reason that feeling right was not supported is that I did not ask participants directly the extent to which the feedback felt right.

### *Implications*

The findings of the current study have important implications for feedback theories. While regulatory fit did not have a significant effect on attitudes toward feedback, it did influence the likelihood recipients would recall and do what was recommended to them as feedback. Provided recommended behaviors enhance performance, this may help explain the contradictory effects feedback has been shown to have on subsequent performance (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). By focusing on a key aspect of feedback (i.e., recommendations for improving performance) and understanding the dynamics of regulatory fit, individuals responsible for

providing feedback can increase the likelihood recipients will recall and do what is recommended to them, thereby enhancing future performance. This means individuals responsible for providing feedback must be aware of factors within the feedback context that may prime a particular motivational orientation. Once such factors are identified, feedback providers must either control the effects of such factors to ensure a particular motivational orientation occurs, or they must be certain they can identify which motivational orientation is most likely to occur as a result of such factors. Either way, once the motivational orientation of the recipient has been identified, feedback providers need to be alert in framing recommendations to ensure regulatory fit.

This could have important consequences in the workplace, where considerable resources are often dedicated to providing organizational members with feedback regarding their performance. The provision of such feedback is intended not only to communicate to recipients how well they performed in their role within the organization, but also to inform them of how they can alter their behavior to improve subsequent performance (Nalder, 1977). Properly framing recommended changes in behavior to match the recipient's motivational orientation has the potential to increase the likelihood such changes take place.

#### *Future Research*

The results of the current study suggest multiple areas for future research to address. First, feeling right / wrong should be measured in the context of task / performance feedback. Future work is needed to determine whether feeling right as a result of fit does in fact occur in a feedback context. If such an effect is found, then the impact of feeling right on task engagement needs to be assessed as well to help resolve whether feeling right promotes higher levels of task engagement, or if higher levels of task engagement are independent of feeling right. Such

research will help explain the causal mechanisms that underlie the effects of fit on feedback accessibility and subsequent behavior.

Another issue to be addressed by future research is whether regulatory fit impacts acceptance of feedback as accurate. Feedback acceptance has been identified in the literature as a crucial factor in determining subsequent performance (Anseel & Lievens, 2009; Ilgen et al., 1979; Kinicki, Prussia, Wu, & McKee-Ryan, 2004). Given its importance, it would presumably be useful to know whether regulatory fit has any impact in this regard. It is reasonable to assert that recipients who do accept feedback as accurate would be more likely to assign less resources to questioning the validity of feedback information and would instead dedicate more of their time and energy toward memorizing recommendations for improving future performance.

Acceptance of feedback as a result of fit may also reduce the likelihood participants dwell on the implications of feedback information for their self-concept (e.g., I did poorly, therefore I must not be a very competent person) and increase the likelihood they instead focus on behaviors that will help them perform better in the future (e.g., I did poorly, therefore, based on the recommendations given to me, I need to...). This idea is consistent with Kluger & DeNisi's (1996) Feedback Intervention Theory, which predicts that focusing on strategies for improving performance rather than dwelling on the implications of feedback for one's self-concept increases the likelihood of performance improvement following feedback. Since the current study did not formally present or review any information regarding how well participants performed during the first 30 minutes of the In-basket task, nor did it assess the extent to which participants viewed feedback as representative of their performance, no conclusions can be drawn concerning the effect of regulatory fit on feedback acceptance.

Additional work is also needed to determine the potential impact of chronic motivational orientation on accessibility and use of feedback recommendations. As previously mentioned, regulatory focus concerns vary in accessibility within individuals as a function of two major sources: chronic accessibility (i.e., stable individual differences) and situational priming (i.e., environmental conditions). The current study elected to examine only the effects of situational priming in conjunction with regulatory strategies to test the assertions of regulatory fit, independent of chronic motivational orientation. While motivational orientation was manipulated, no attempt was made to measure chronic accessibility of regulatory focus concerns.

This is notable for several reasons. First, previous research has shown that chronic accessibility of regulatory focus concerns interacts with strategic means of goal pursuit (i.e., eager vs. vigilant) such that when regulatory fit is achieved, people are more likely to be persuaded by a persuasive message, compared to conditions of misfit. In fact, the majority of regulatory fit research in persuasive contexts that uses integral manipulations of fit has relied on measuring chronic motivational orientations, rather than priming them directly (Cesario et al., 2008). It would have been useful to measure chronic regulatory focus in the current study to test whether the effects of regulatory fit on behavior were similar as a function of chronic motivational orientation, independent of situational priming. This issue may be of particular importance in organizational contexts, where it would be practically beneficial to measure the chronic, stable differences in employees' motivational orientation and properly frame feedback to ensure regulatory fit.

A second reason assessing chronic motivational orientation would have been beneficial in the current study relates to the interaction of the two sources of accessibility. Because previous research has found significant interactions between chronic and situational sources of

accessibility to promotion and preventions concerns, resulting in “high levels of construct accessibility” (Higgins, 1999, p. 84), it would have been useful to test whether such effects would have occurred in the context of task / performance feedback. As it stands, whether or not chronic motivational orientation interacts with situational inducement of regulatory focus and strategic means of goal pursuit in a feedback context is unknown. Future research should attempt to assess the interaction between these two sources of accessibility by measuring chronic motivational orientation and manipulating accessibility to regulatory concerns. Doing so would make it possible to assess whether a three-way interaction between chronic motivational orientation, situational inducement of motivational orientation, and strategic means of goal pursuit exists, as well as whether the pattern of this interaction is consistent with the predictions of regulatory fit.

Future research with regulatory fit and performance feedback also needs to be conducted in situations where something important is at stake. The extent to which results involving a novel task in a lab with relatively little pressure to do well apply to employment settings and other real world situations is debatable and in need of empirical examination. More research involving applied populations where something important is at stake (e.g., monetary compensation, promotions, etc...) should be conducted before regulatory fit can be confidently recommended to organizational practitioners for improving the effectiveness of performance feedback.

Work also needs to be done to determine the temporal stability of the effect of regulatory fit on feedback recommendations. In reality, the time lapse between the delivery of recommendations for improving future performance and actual opportunities for engaging in recommended behaviors is typically greater than what occurred in the current study. Participants in the current study were given the opportunity to apply recommendations soon after feedback

was delivered. Whether or not the effect of regulatory fit on accessibility and behavioral outcomes is significant one week or even 24 hours after feedback has been delivered is unknown. From an organization's viewpoint, the issue of whether regulatory fit continues to substantially influence accessibility and behavior over a prolonged period of time is a valid practical concern, given that recipients usually do not have an opportunity to engage in recommended behaviors immediately following the delivery of feedback. Additional research is needed to test the longevity of the effects of fit on accessibility and behavior in feedback contexts.

Other factors common to feedback situations need to be examined in light of regulatory fit as well. For instance, goal setting is an activity common to performance management in organizational settings (London, 2003). After feedback is provided, recipients are frequently encouraged to set goals regarding behaviors recommended to them as part of the feedback process. The positive impact of setting difficult, specific goals on performance (Locke & Latham, 1990) in this context may be moderated by regulatory fit. Specially, this effect may be stronger in conditions of fit vs. misfit between the goal and the strategy committed to for attaining it.

For instance, an individual may be told to make more outgoing sales calls in order to improve his / her sales performance during the next month. Before setting a specific, difficult goal for the number of calls per week he / she will attempt to make (e.g., 100 sales calls per week), if the motivational orientation of the individual is known prior recommending this behavior, then the suggested activity can be framed in a manner that fits his / her motivational orientation (e.g., making 20 sales calls per day will help you ensure that everything goes right / avoid anything that could go wrong in attaining your goal of achieving 30 sales during the next month). Feeling right about the behavior may influence his / her level of commitment to the goal

associated with the behavior. Furthermore, regulatory fit may make him / her feel more engaged in the behavior each time he / she performs it, increasing the likelihood he / she will reach the goal. Research is needed to test this assertion empirically.

Finally, it should be noted that while the current study employed the framework of regulatory focus to test the assertions of regulatory fit in the context of performance feedback, regulatory fit is a general theory of self-regulation. It can purportedly accommodate any motivational orientation or goal pursuit strategy (Cesario et al., 2008), such as regulatory mode and need for closure (Avnet & Higgins, 2003). There may be additional motivational orientations germane to feedback contexts that could benefit from the insights of regulatory fit. Goal orientation (Elliot & Dweck, 1988; Elliot & McGregor, 2001; VandeWalle, 1997), for example, is a theory of individual differences in self-regulation that has been examined in relation to performance feedback (Chen & Mathieu, 2008; Beckmann, Beckmann, & Elliott, 2009). Insights from regulatory fit could help identify the best way to frame feedback in relation to different goal orientations such that achieving fit produces effects similar to those observed in the current study. For example, in accordance with goal orientation theory, to fit a learning motivational orientation, feedback recommendations could be framed as strategies that will help an individual learn and grow. In order to fit a performance orientation, the same recommendations could be framed as strategies that will help an individual perform better than his / her peers.

### *Conclusion*

The current study was a preliminary attempt to test the boundary conditions of regulatory fit in the context of task / performance feedback. There was general support for regulatory fit theory and regulatory focus theory, and specific support for the task engagement explanation of regulatory fit. Although there was no support for the feeling right explanation of regulatory fit, I

believe it to be primarily a methodological issue as opposed to a problem with applying regulatory fit in the feedback context. I believe regulatory fit theory adds clarity to the performance feedback literature by specifying when feedback is more likely to result in behavioral changes and improved performance. That said, there is the standard caveat that the implications of the current study must be qualified by the use of participants who were not highly invested in the task and where no significant outcomes were at stake. Whether regulatory fit will have similar effects on information processing and behavioral outcomes when feedback recommendations are provided in organizational settings remains an empirical question.

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## APPENDIX A

### Informed Consent Form

#### VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

#### **Informed Consent Form for Participants of Investigative Projects**

**Title of Project:** An examination of task performance and performance feedback.

**Investigators:** Dr. Neil M. Hauenstein, Jaron Holmes

#### **I. Purpose of this Research/Project**

The purpose of this study is to examine on several business management simulations. The results of this study will have practical importance for organizations understanding the relationship task performance and performance feedback, and will be made available to those interested in this topic upon request.

#### **II. Procedures**

You will be introduced to a business management simulation task. You will then be asked to complete this simulation task (80 minutes), along with a very brief memory recall test (10 minutes). In all, the total time required to complete this experiment will be approximately 90 minutes.

#### **III. Risks**

There are no more than minimal risks involved in participation in this study.

#### **IV. Benefits of this Project**

The information obtained by this research may be used for scientific and/or educational purposes. The information relating to responses of all participants may be presented at scientific meetings and/or published in professional journals or books. This information may be used for any other purpose, which Virginia Tech's Department of Psychology considers proper in the interest of education, knowledge, or research. If you are interested in obtaining results of this study they will be made available to you upon request. No guarantee of benefits has been made to induce you participate.

#### **V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality**

The results of this study will remain strictly anonymous. At no time will the researcher release the results of this study to anyone, other than those individuals involved with the research project. You will not be required to identify yourself in any manner on the survey instrument, nor will you be required to divulge any of your answers to anyone.

## **VI. Compensation**

Undergraduate students will be compensated for participating in the present study by receiving 2 points of extra credit towards their Introduction to Psychology or other class (insert other classes here) final grade. If you choose not to participate in this study, you have the option of writing essays for extra credit. If you are enrolled in Introduction to Psychology, please see the Introductory Psychology Office (Williams 133) for details. All others should see their instructor for other extra credit options.

## **VII. Freedom to Withdraw**

You may withdraw from participation in this study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw from this experiment you will not be penalized in extra credit points or grade in a course. You are free not to answer any questions without penalty.

## **VIII. Approval of Research**

This research has been approved, as required, by the Human Subjects Committee of the Psychology Department and by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Tech.

## **IX. Subject's Responsibility**

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

## **X. Subject's Permission**

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and the conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent.

If I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

**NAME (PLEASE PRINT):** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct I may contact:

Investigator: Jaron Holmes, 251-5000/ [holmesj@vt.edu](mailto:holmesj@vt.edu)  
Investigator: Dr. Neil M. Hauenstein, 231-5716/ [nhauen@vt.edu](mailto:nhauen@vt.edu)  
Chair, HSC: Dr. David W. Harrison, 231-4422/ [harriso@vt.edu](mailto:harriso@vt.edu)  
Chair, IRB: Dr. David M. Moore, 231-4991/ [moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu)

APPENDIX B

Demographics Questionnaire

Please indicate your:

**Sex**

\_\_\_\_\_ Male

\_\_\_\_\_ Female

**Ethnicity**

\_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian

\_\_\_\_\_ African American

\_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic

\_\_\_\_\_ Asian

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

**Academic Standing**

\_\_\_\_\_ Freshman

\_\_\_\_\_ Sophomore

\_\_\_\_\_ Junior

\_\_\_\_\_ Senior

## APPENDIX C

### Debriefing Form

#### VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Debriefing for study entitled: “An examination of task performance and feedback”.

The study that you have just participated in is meant to examine how performance feedback information and recommendations for improving performance on relevant tasks in the future can most effectively be presented to individuals.

The data from this study do not contain any individuating information and your right to privacy is guaranteed if the results of this study become public. If you are confused about any aspect of this study, or would like to see the results of this study once completed, please feel free to contact either of the investigators listed below.

Thank you again for your participation. You may withdraw your data if you desire.

**WE ASK THAT YOU DO NOT SHARE THE DETAILS OF THIS STUDY WITH ANYONE, AS THIS MIGHT AFFECT OUR DATA.**

#### Contact Information

Investigator: Jaron Holmes, 257-5062/ [holmesj@vt.edu](mailto:holmesj@vt.edu)

Investigator: Dr. Neil M. Hauenstein, 231-5716/ [nhauen@vt.edu](mailto:nhauen@vt.edu)

Chair, HSC: Dr. David W. Harrison, 231-4422/ [harriso@vt.edu](mailto:harriso@vt.edu)

Chair, IRB: Dr. David M. Moore, 231-4991/ [moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu)

## Appendix D

### In-basket Task

#### **Instructions**

For the purposes of this exercise, you are to assume the role of Will Judd, plant supervisor of the Southern Division at the Geometric Manufacturing and Development Company. The Geometric Company has just promoted you to the role plant supervisor. Your company does research and development work in the area of atomic-powered engines and also produces a number of different engines for commercial use. Although you have worked in this new position for some time, you have had a number of other responsibilities that have kept you away from your office for a good deal of the time.

Today is Sunday, July 11<sup>th</sup>. The situation is obviously hypothetical, but you are to work just as you would if you should find yourself in a similar situation in the future. Although the situation is artificial, with some unrealistic restrictions on the time allowed you and the methods and activities you can employ in communicating with others, the problems are real, obtained from actual situations supervisors have encountered on their jobs.

You have to leave your “office” promptly in one hour to catch a plane for an important meeting which you had committed yourself to attend before you learned of your appointment to your present position. You will be very busy during the meeting and *will not be able to take along anything to work on*. This meeting will keep you away both Monday and Tuesday. You are working on Sunday afternoon because you want to take care of anything that might need your attention before Wednesday. You do not have access to Mr. Mason’s computer or his phone, and your cell-phone does not have service in the building.

Now that you have a brief background for your new position, you are ready to go on with the exercise. Remember, the day is Sunday, July 11. You are Mr. Judd. You cannot reach anyone for help. Mr. Mason’s files and computer terminal are locked and you do not have access. You must work with the materials at hand. You have one hour. You will be gone Monday and Tuesday. You cannot take any of these materials with you on your trip.

Your working equipment consists of an organizational chart, a calendar, and an in-basket containing the materials your secretary, Jane Butler, has left on your desk for your attention. These materials include letters, reports, memos, etc. You have an hour to do as much as you can toward taking care of the problems with the materials present. Please indicate on each item why you are taking the steps you have chosen and what you hope to accomplish.

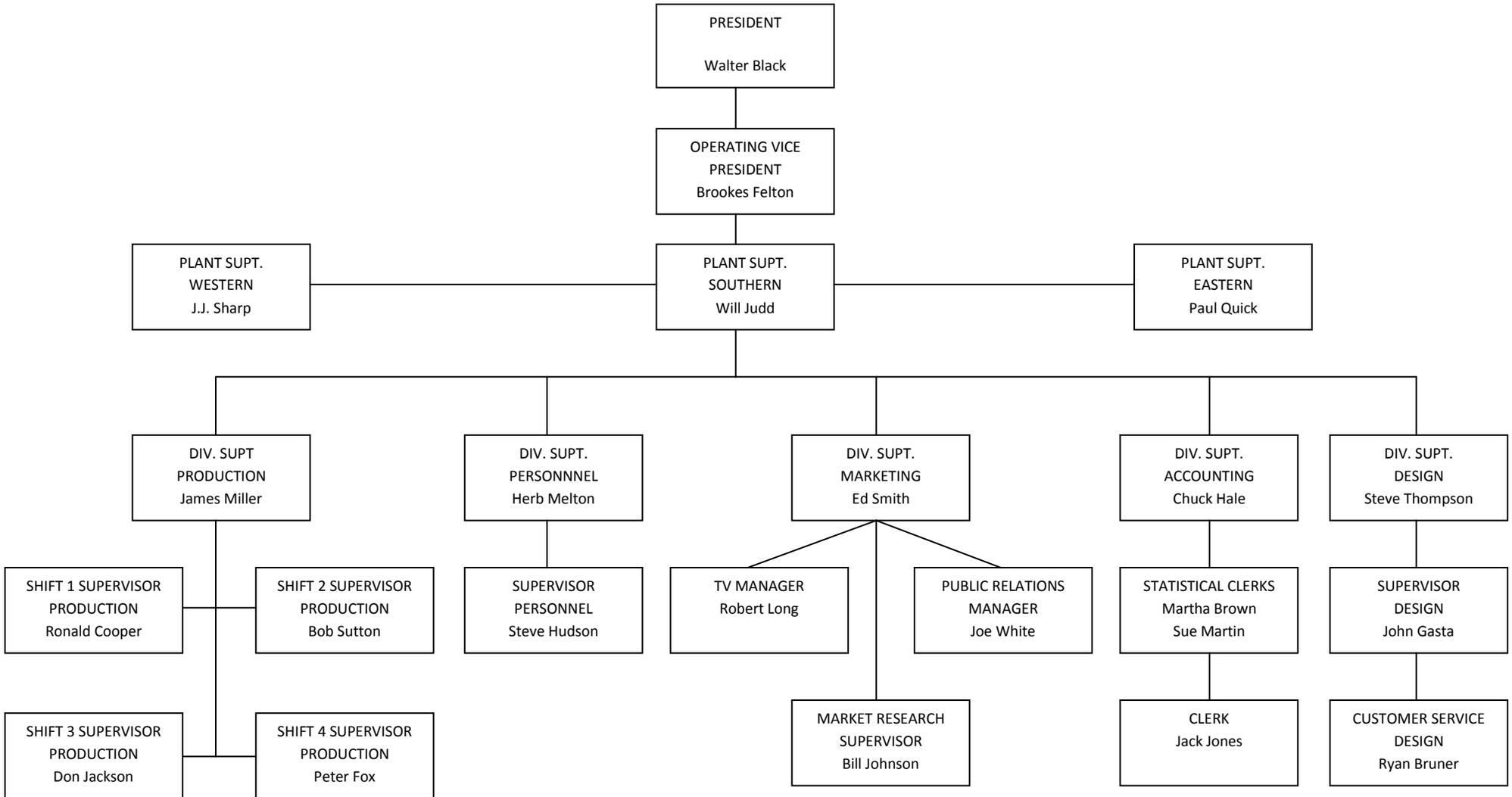
You are requested to write down everything you decide or do. The back of each memo is left blank to provide you with enough room to record this information. Make memos to yourself about things you want to do when you get back. Draft letters or emails, if appropriate, for your secretary to prepare. Record (in the form of notes) what you will say on the phone, and say directly to your secretary and others, and what your intentions are as well as your actions. Note agenda for meetings you may want to call. Sign papers if appropriate. Everything you decide or do should be in writing. Many of things normally would be handled more informally, but it is Sunday, you are new in your job, and you will be out of town for the next two days.

# July

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

ORGANIZATION CHART  
THE GEOMETIC COMPANY

Southern Plant



# The Geometric Company

125 Anderson Street

Allandale, New York

July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Will,

Let me be the first to congratulate on your new promotion. Leadership thinks you have a lot of potential and couldn't agree more.

I think it's imperative that we meet to discuss your new position as soon as possible. I want to give you an overview of what we expect from you and answer any questions you might have regarding your new responsibilities. This is a very important position and there is a lot of work that needs to be done.

I'm very busy this month and the only time I'm available is on July 16<sup>th</sup> from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., so please be sure to stop by my office then.

*Brooks Felton*

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

July 8, 2009

To: Will Judd  
From: Brooks Felton  
Subject: Safety Inspection

I want to give all of the plant supervisors a heads up regarding the state safety inspector who will be visiting the production plant three months from now on October 7th. Please review the state safety guidelines and ensure that all of your employees are in compliance.

*Brooks Felton*

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

July 8, 2009

To: Will Judd  
From: Chuck Hale  
Subject: Employee of the Month

Will,

Just wanted to let you know that our very own Sue Martin was named employee of the month, not just for the Southern plant, bur for the entire company! Sue has done a fantastic job here at Geometric Company for over 10 years and consistently earns 'excellent' performance ratings. Just thought you might like to know.

Sincerely,

Chuck Hale

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

July 8th, 2009

To: All Southern Plant Employees

From: Herb Melton

Just wanted to let everyone know that we will be celebrating August birthdays on August 30<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 p.m. in the plant break room. We will be having cake and ice cream to celebrate, so be sure to come and join us!

Thanks,

Herb Melton

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

### PROFICENCY RATING OF NON-MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Cooper	Poor
White	Excellent
Sutton	Poor
Long	Good
Jackson	Poor
Martin	Excellent
Gasta	Good
Fox	Poor
Bruner	Poor
Melton	Good
Johnson	Good
Hale	Good
Smith	Excellent
Hudson	Poor
Jones	Good
Thompson	Good
Brown	Good

# The Geometric Company

125 Anderson Street

Allandale, New York

July 10, 2009

To: Will Judd  
From: Wes Jones  
Subject: Personnel

Please let me have this form back at your earliest convenience. I've been having a look over your people and I want to promote Joe Sutton to that foreman's opening and I need your signature.

*Herb Melton*

I recommend the promotion of Joe Sutton to Foreman.

---

Shift Supervisor

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

To: J.J. Sharp, Paul Quick, Will Judd  
From: Michael Thompson

Simplex will be testing the fire alarm systems in the following plants during the month of July 2009: Southern, Eastern, Western

The fire alarm horns/speakers will be sounding and the strobe lights will be flashing at times during this testing.

July 6<sup>th</sup> --Southern

July 14<sup>th</sup> -- Eastern

July 16<sup>th</sup> -- Western

Please notify your people accordingly.

*Michael Thompson*

Geometric Company

Facilities Services/Building Systems Coordinator

# The Geometric Company

## TELEPHONE MEMO

July 8, 2009

Mr. Judd, call Dr. Franz regarding the vacuum tube.

*Jane Butler*

Administrative Assistant

July 2, 2009

To: Will Judd  
From: John Pushing

Dear Mr. Judd,

I'm going to be visiting clients in your area on July 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss our newest line of production machinery and I would love to have the opportunity to stop by and talk with you about the advantages that our newest products have to offer.

Would you be available to meet with me on the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.? Please let me know at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

*John Pushing*

Regional Sales Manager

Acme Manufacturing Equipment Company

July 2, 2009

Mr. Will Judd,

We think Mr. Miller is incapable of handling this issue, so we are bypassing him and coming directly to you. We the undersigned are strongly against the policy of giving merit bonuses. We think it is political, and an unfair way to bribe workers. We plan to take this up with the union unless it is stopped.

Sutton

Jackson

Fox

Cooper

To: Will Judd

From: John Simmons

Dear Mr. Judd:

I'm writing to you in regards to Ryan Bruner. Though the quality of the work that your design team has produced for us in the past has always been of the highest quality, my interactions with Mr. Bruner over the past several months have been highly contentious. He has been very curt in his communications with us and becomes very defensive whenever we present him with requests for changes in the design plan. In several cases he even suggested that we don't know what we're talking about and has refused to make the changes we have requested of him.

Our firm has been doing business with The Geometric Company for over 7 years. On the whole we have enjoyed our relationship with your company. However, if this matter is not resolved ASAP I am afraid we will have to consider taking our business elsewhere.

*John Simmons*

John Simmons, President

BARTELSON COMPANY

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

July 2, 2009

To: Will Judd  
From: Joe White  
Subject: Community Relations

Dear Will,

It has come to my attention that some of your people have been seen in some questionable areas of town. You know how important community relations are for us.

I wish you would talk to some of them and straighten this out. Their names are:

Cooper

Sutton

Long

Jackson

Fox

# The Geometric Company

July 8, 2009

To: All Southern Plant Employees

From: Herb Melton

Subject: Flu-shots

Flu-season is fast approaching and the company health care provider will be sending representatives out to each plant to provide flu-immunization shots. Although employees are not required to have the shot, we want to ensure that everyone who would like to get the shot is able to participate. The representatives will be visiting the Southern plant facility on September 10<sup>th</sup>. Please plan accordingly.

Thanks!

*Herb Melton*

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

### ABSENCES DURING THE MONTH OF JULY

<u>Name</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Days</u>
Felton	0	Martin	1
Gasta	2	Jackson	6
Rogers	3	Melton	0
Fox	0	Bruner	3
Hale	1	Johnson	2
Mason	7	Smith	0
Hudson	1	Sutton	8
Jones	0	Brown	1
Thompson	1	Cooper	0
White	1		

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

July 6, 2009

To: Will Judd  
From: Walter Black

Congratulations on your promotion. You are in an important job and we have great faith in your ability to handle it. If there is anything I can do to be of assistance to you while you're getting settled please don't hesitate to ask. Oh, by the way, my wife and I would like you to join us for dinner on Wednesday, July 14, at the country club. We'll expect you around 7 p.m. at the house, 419 West Haven drive.

# WILKERSON COMPANY

1 EAST WAY

WILCOX, VIRGINIA

July 7, 2009

Plant Superintendent

Geometric Company

Wilcox, Virginia

Dear Mr. Judd:

Your handling of the design plans for my job has been very poor in my estimation. Your use of manpower has been especially faulty, and I am of the opinion that you don't use your people very effectively. Unless there is a substantial improvement, we may very well terminate your services and go to another company.

I am sending to you (on Monday) the specifications for the new designs which must be completed and received by Wednesday, 5 p.m.

*Ed Lasting*  
Ed Lasting, President

WILKERSON COMPANY

*Will,*

*Make sure you get your design team on this project right away. This needs to be taken care of immediately.*

*Brookes Felton*

# The Geometric Company

EASTERN DIVISION

INTER-PLANT MEMORANDUM

July 8, 2009

Mr. Will Judd:

Will, I'll need four of your design people from Monday until Thursday for a special work-up on the motor for the drainage system for the township of Allandale.

*Paul Quick*

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

July 7, 2009

To: Will Judd

From: Brookes Felton

Will,

Just wanted to let you know that I met with Walter Black the other day and he mentioned how impressed he is with the performance of your plant, especially in regards to marketing. He has heard nothing but positive comments from members of the community in Wilcox regarding the new plant there. People seem to be genuinely excited and I'm sure our marketing team down there has a lot to do with that. Just thought you should know.

Keep up the good work!

*Brookes Felton*

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

July 8, 2009

To: Will Judd

From: J.J. Sharp

Will, I'll need those two design men on Monday and Tuesday to get the X-5507 engine job completed on time. I appreciate in advance your willingness to help.

*J.J. Sharp*

June 28th, 2009

Will Judd

Plant Superintendent

Qualitech Corporation

Wilcox, Virginia

I was in Washington the other day and I overheard something that may be of interest to you. It seems that as of July 2nd, many of the government offices are planning to switch to small inter-communication systems that will increase the adaptability of their communication networks. The interesting thing from your point of view their possibly using the 4X-Model put out by the Geometric Company. If you could “catch the proper ears” they might hold off on the switch until your company’s system could be installed.

Good luck.

Sincerely,

Carl Ryan

# City of Wilcox, Virginia

July 8, 2009

Plant Manager

Southern Area

The Geometric Company, Wilcox, Virginia

Dear Sir:

It is with great eagerness that we have looked forward to the completion of your plant. It will be a significant factor in the growth of the area. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and invite you to a meeting of the local business committee. Traditionally, we discuss topics of mutual interest, affecting local and national business, and use this as an opportunity to socialize which in your case would afford an opportunity for you to meet with us. Looking forward to seeing you on Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup>, 7 p.m. at the Elks Club.

Cordially,

*W.W. Weston*

Mayor

Wilcox, Virginia

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Mr. Will Judd:

Below is the requisition form for that special drawing layout. It's expensive, but it's really a beauty.

*Steve Thompson*

I approve the special drawing layout.

---

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

July 6, 2009

To: Will Judd

From: Steve Hudson

Please add the following names and numbers to you phone lists:

- Carla Epperly, our new Personnel secretary – 261-8874
- Sam Jones, a new employee in market research – 261-7741

Thanks,

*Herb Melton*

Personnel Supervisor

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

July 9, 2009

To: Will Judd  
From: Steve Thompson

Mr. Judd:

I'm planning to release three of my men on a temporary loan to the Eastern Plant. You've been away and Quick's request came to me and we can spare the men now, far as I know. I'll see you next week.

*Steve*

# **Allied Sheet Metal**

---

1204 EASTERN LAKE ROAD

BEAUMONT, KANSAS

July 9, 2009

Plant Superintendent

Geometric Company

Wilcox, Virginia

Dear Sir:

The supplies promised for July 12 cannot be delivered. I sincerely regret the delay but a power breakdown has about paralyzed my operation. I will get the material to you just as soon as possible. Please bear with me.

Sincerely,

*Ed Hunter*  
President, Allied Sheet Metal

P.S. If you could contact me on Monday I could let you know about some material being stored by the AAMCO Co. in Sanford, Virginia. If you need it very badly they might be able to loan you some, as the union strike has temporarily shut down their operation.

July 2, 2009

Mr. Mason,

My wife and I have a garden at home and we seem to have more squash and zucchini than we know what to do with. I've left a grocery bag full of the extra squash and zucchini on the table in the break room. Could you please let the rest of the employees know that they are free to help themselves?

Thanks,

*Simpson*

July 1, 2009

To: Mr. Will Judd  
From: Ronald Cooper, Don Jackson, Peter Fox  
Subject: Promotions

It seems as if those employees past 50 years of age are being bypassed for promotion in favor of so-called “potential management” but yet untried college people of about 30. Doesn’t experience and years of faithful service deserve some consideration? We plan to take this up with the union unless we hear from you shortly about this policy.

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

June 2, 2009

To: All Geometric Company Employees  
From: Walter Black  
Subject: Company Picnic

Greetings,

Just a reminder that the annual company sponsored Barbeque picnic will be taking place on June 12<sup>st</sup> at Regal Park here in Wilcox. All Geometric Company employees and their families are invited to attend.

Festivities will begin at 12:30 p.m. Hotdogs, Hamburgers, and all the fixin's (ketchup, mustard, tomatoes, etc...) will be provided, along with an assortment of non-alcoholic beverages. Please be sure to bring your favorite side dish to share.

We look forward to seeing everybody there!

*Walter Black*

Geometric Company President

**WILCOX, VIRGINIA**

Wilcox Times

July5, 2009

Mr. Judd

Geometric Company

Wilcox, Virginia Tech

Dear Mr. Judd:

As Chairman of the highway beautification committee, I wish to thank you for making Don Jackson available to work on the committee. He has been an important factor in the success of the drives so far by his untiring and enthusiastic efforts.

The committee was especially pleased last week when Mr. Jackson assured us that the Geometric Company would make a \$1,500 contribution to this worthy project. It is nice to know that your company recognizes the value of community projects.

We plan to print an article in the Journal on July 19th, announcing the corporate gifts to date.

Thank you again for your community spirit.

Sincerely,

E.E. West

Editor, Wilcox Journal

July 8th, 2009

To: Will Judd

From: Peter Fox

I want to lodge a formal complaint regarding the vacation policy of this company. As a loyal employee of 15 years plus, I deserve more than two weeks of paid vacation, especially when you consider the fact that other employees with less than ten years of experience at Geometric are given just as much vacation time as I am! This is unfair and I plan to take the matter up with union if it's not addressed soon.

Peter Fox

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Mr. Will Judd:

I need your signature for our new T.V. ad campaign. Please provide your approval as soon as possible so that we can start up our need marketing push.

*Bill Johnson*

I approve the new T.V. ad campaign.

---

Southern Plant Supervisor

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

July 2, 2009

Mr. Will Judd,

We have gotten air time on Channel 5 for a five minute interview with the typical assembly line worker. I must have the name of the man in my office by July 15<sup>th</sup>. Let's have a pleasant looking, personable, and above all, upstanding individual. Somebody suggested Joe Sutton and unless I hear otherwise, I'll use him.

*Robert Long*

T.V. Manager

July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Mr. Judd,

I hate to be the one to have to do this, but I'm afraid I don't know what else to do. I'm concerned that one of the employees in the accounting department may be stealing company money. I can't be absolutely sure, but I have a strong suspicion that this individual is dishonest and has been taking company money for the past several months. What should I do?

Sincerely concerned,

Martha Brown

# The Geometric Company

## INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

July 7th, 2009

The vacation of Jane Butler will commence July 13<sup>th</sup> through the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

Plant Supervisor

APPENDIX E

Attitudes Following Feedback Delivery Questionnaire

Please answer the following regarding the performance feedback recommendations:

1. The recommendations I received for completing the in-basket task will help me during the next 30 minutes.

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

2. The in-basket task is a very useful exercise for measuring managerial potential.

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

3. By the end of this study, I will have benefited personally from participating in the study.

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

4. Psychology is very useful field of study.

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

## APPENDIX F

### Performance Feedback Checklist – Eager Frame

**Actively Manage Information**-Adopt tactics that allow you to distill and organize the large amount of information presented. Tactics that will help you make sure everything goes right when managing information include:

- Taking notes,
- Highlighting important dates and information on the provided documents
- Documenting meeting dates and times on the calendar

**Prioritize issues**-Recognize that not all issues are of equal importance. To make sure everything goes right when prioritizing information include:

- Prioritizing legitimate customer requests
- Prioritizing requests from superiors
- Ignore issues that are non-time sensitive

**Resolution of critical issues**- To make sure everything goes right in resolving critical issues, do the following:

- Specify what action(s) will be taken
- Designate who is responsible for success of the action
- Specify date(s) that you will personally revisit this issue with those involved
- If issue involves a customer, specify what will be done to ensure customer satisfaction
- Making requests for further information.
- Delay taking action if you need more information

**Resolve conflicting requests**-There will be instances in which one or more requests conflict with another request. You need to be sensitive to these instances and make sure everything goes right in dealing with conflicting requests by:

- Communicating to affected parties that there is a conflict
- Providing a rationale regarding how the conflict will be resolved

**Efficient use of meetings**-Meetings are time consuming, but can be one of the most effective ways to solve problems. Tactics for making sure that everything goes right in using meetings effectively include:

- Specifying all employees who will attend each meeting
- Disseminating a meeting agenda to all attendees
- Meeting with supervisors to discuss issues that exist at the divisional level
- Using one-on-one meetings to address and individual employee issue
- If meeting with a problem employee, be sure the employee's supervisor attends the meeting

**Effective Leadership**-A supervisor must be an effective leader. To make sure everything goes right in relation to leadership, make sure you:

- Inform subordinates that they should follow the chain of command
- Solicit strategic advice from your boss
- Solicit operational advice from other plant managers
- Personally praise an employee who does something positive
- Publicly recognize an employee or a team who does something outstanding
- Hold employees accountable for poor performance
- Are willing to say “no” if a request does not provide a tangible benefit

## APPENDIX G

### Performance Feedback Checklist – Vigilant Frame

**Actively Manage Information**-Adopt tactics that allow you to distill and organize the large amount of information presented. Tactics that will help you avoid anything that could go wrong when managing information include:

- Taking notes,
- Highlighting important dates and information on the provided documents
- Documenting meeting dates and times on the calendar

**Prioritize issues**-Recognize that not all issues are of equal importance. To avoid anything that could go wrong when prioritizing information include:

- Prioritizing legitimate customer requests
- Prioritizing requests from superiors
- Ignore issues that are non-time sensitive

**Resolution of critical issues**- To avoid anything that could go wrong in resolving critical issues, do the following:

- Specify what action(s) will be taken
- Designate who is responsible for success of the action
- Specify date(s) that you will personally revisit this issue with those involved
- If issue involves a customer, specify what will be done to ensure customer satisfaction
- Making requests for further information.
- Delay taking action if you need more information

**Resolve conflicting requests**-There will be instances in which one or more requests conflict with another request. You need to be sensitive to these instances and avoid anything that could go wrong in dealing with conflicting requests by:

- Communicating to affected parties that there is a conflict
- Providing a rationale regarding how the conflict will be resolved

**Efficient use of meetings**-Meetings are time consuming, but can be one of the most effective ways to solve problems. Tactics for ensuring that nothing goes wrong in using meetings effectively include:

- Specifying all employees who will attend each meeting
- Disseminating a meeting agenda to all attendees
- Meeting with supervisors to discuss issues that exist at the divisional level
- Using one-on-one meetings to address and individual employee issue
- If meeting with a problem employee, be sure the employee's supervisor attends the meeting

**Effective Leadership**-A supervisor must be an effective leader. To avoid anything that could go wrong in relation to leadership, make sure you:

- Inform subordinates that they should follow the chain of command

- Solicit strategic advice from your boss
- Solicit operational advice from other plant managers
- Personally praise an employee who does something positive
- Publicly recognize an employee or a team who does something outstanding
- Hold employees accountable for poor performance
- Are willing to say “no” if a request does not provide a tangible benefit

## APPNEDIX H

### Scoring Decision Aid

#### Item #1 (Related to Item 8)

- **Resolve Conflicting Requests**
  - *Communicate to affected parties that there is a conflict*
    - i. Brookes Felton's request conflicts w/ sales rep. request to meet on the same date and time (item 8). Should let whomever they decide to turn down the reason for being unable to meet.
  - *Provided rationale for regarding how conflict will be resolved. (4)*
    - i. Should say why they either chose to meet with Brooks Felton or with sales rep.
- **Prioritize Issues**
  - *Prioritize requests from superiors*
    - i. Should choose to meet with Brookes Felton rather than sales rep.

#### Item #2

- **Prioritize Issues**
  - *Ignore issues that are non-time sensitive*
    - i. This item should be placed aside as the deadline is too far away to be dealt with right now.

#### Item #3

- **Effective Leadership**
  - *Personally praise an employee who does something positive.*
    - i. Write Sue Martin a personal note commending her excellent work or
    - ii. Plan to meet w/ or call Sue Martin personally to commend her
  - *Public recognition of an employee or a team who does something outstanding.*
    - i. Send a note out to everyone in the plant or her area recognizing her outstanding performance.

#### Item #4 (Related to items: 9, 11, 13, 26, 28)

- **Resolution of critical issues**
  - *Specify what action(s) will be taken*
    - i. This is a serious problem that needs to be followed up on. Should plan to meet with production personnel in the near future to see how things are going and if issues have been resolved.
  - *Designate who is responsible for the success of the action*
    - i. Should note that production supervisor needs to take care of issues in his division
  - *Specified date(s) that you will personally revisit this issue with those involved.*
    - i. Should set a specific date in the near future to meet with production personnel

see how things are going and if issues have been resolved.

□ **Efficient use of meetings**

- *Meeting with supervisors to discuss issues that exist at the divisional level*
  - i. There are some serious performance issues in the production area that need to be addressed. Should meet with production supervisors to find out what is going on and get things sorted out.
- *Disseminating a meeting agenda to all attendees.*
  - i. If meetings are scheduled, should plan an agenda, such as:
    1. Why is chain of command being broken?
    2. Why is performance low and absences high in production?
    3. What are we going to do about this?
- *Specifying all employees who will attend each meeting*
  - i. If meeting is scheduled, should make a list of who all they would like to attend the meeting.

□ **Effective Leadership**

- *Soliciting strategic advice from your boss*
  - i. Should try to meet with Brookes Felton to discuss production issues and get advice from him.
- *Soliciting operational advice from other plant managers*
  - i. Should try to meet with other plant managers to discuss your issues and get suggestions from them on how to address this issue.

**Item #5 (Related to item 4)**

□ **Resolve Conflicting Requests**

- *Communicate to affected parties that there is a conflict*
  - i. Need to be assertive in letting Herb Melton know that he has:
    1. Made a bad decision
    2. Violated the chain of command
    3. Let him know that this is unacceptable.
- *Provided rationale for regarding how conflict will be resolved. (4)*
  - i. Joe Sutton is a poor performer and somewhat of a trouble maker. The evidence from items 4, 9 and 11 suggest that this promotion should not be approved.
  - ii. Should provide rationale to Herb Melton explaining why Joe Sutton should not be approved for promotion.

□ **Effective Leadership**

- *Informing subordinates that they should follow the chain of command.*
  - i. Need to let Herb Melton that he has violated chain of command by going above the production supervisors head to request a promotion for Joe Sutton.
- *Being willing to say “no” if a request does not provide a tangible benefit.*

- i. The evidence from items 4, 9 and 11 suggest that this promotion should not be approved. Joe Sutton is a poor performer and somewhat of a trouble maker.

#### Item #6

- Prioritize Issues**
  - *Ignore issues that are non-time sensitive*
    - i. This item is out-dated and should be tossed in the ignore basket.

#### Item #7

- Prioritize Issues**
  - *Delay taking action if you need more information*
    - i. Don't know who Dr. Franz is, how to contact him, or why the vacuum tube is important.
- Actively Manage Information.**
  - *Making requests for further information.*
    - i. Should ask Jane Butler who Dr. Franz is, how to contact him, and why vacuum tube is important

#### Item #8 (Related to item 1)

- Prioritize Issues**
  - *Prioritize requests from superiors*
    - i. This request conflicts with Brookes Felton's request to meet (item 1). Should turn down this request and meet with Felton instead.
- Resolve Conflicting Requests**
  - *Communicate to affected parties that there is a conflict.*
    - i. Need to let sales rep know of conflict and explain that is why they must decline offer to meet with him.
  - *Provided rationale regarding how the conflict will be resolved.*
    - i. Should indicate that meeting w/Brookes Felton is more important and that is why this request will be turned down.

#### Item #9 (Related to items: 4, 11, 13, 26, 28)

- Resolution of critical issues**
  - *Specify what action(s) will be taken*
    - i. This is a serious problem that needs to followed up on. Should plan to meet with production personnel in the near future to see how things are going and if issues have been resolved.
  - *Designate who is responsible for the success of the action*
    - i. Should note that production supervisor needs to take care of issues in his division

- *Specified date(s) that you will personally revisit this issue with those involved.*
    - i. Should set a specific date in the near future to meet with production personnel see how things are going and if issues have been resolved.
- **Efficient use of meetings**
- *Meeting with supervisors to discuss issues that exist at the divisional level*
    - i. There are some serious performance issues in the production area that need to be addressed. Should meet with production supervisors to find out what is going on and get things sorted out. For this item, should find out why subordinates are breaking chain of command and why they are dissatisfied.
  - *Disseminating a meeting agenda to all attendees.*
    - i. If meetings are scheduled, should plan an agenda, such as:
      1. Why is chain of command being broken?
      2. Why is performance low and absences high in production?
      3. What are we going to do about this?
  - *Specifying all employees who will attend each meeting*
    - i. If meeting is scheduled, should make a list of who all they would like to attend the meeting.
- **Effective Leadership**
- *Informing subordinates that they should follow chain of command.*
    - i. These employees should not have come to you directly; they should have taken these issues up with production area supervisor James Miller. Need to communicate to these employees that breaking chain of command is unacceptable.
  - *Soliciting strategic advice from your boss*
    - i. Should try to meet with Brookes Felton to discuss production issues and get advice from him.
  - *Soliciting operational advice from other plant managers*
    - i. Should try to meet with other plant managers to discuss your issues and get suggestions from them on how to address this issue.
  - *Holding employees accountable for poor performance.*
    - i. Need to let production supervisors know that poor performance ratings are unacceptable.
  - *Being willing to say “no” if a request does not provide a tangible benefit.*
    - i. Need to contact or plan to contact each of the individuals who wrote this letter know that letter was inappropriate (e.g., broke chain of command, merit raises are company policy, etc...) and that the merit raise policy will not be changing anytime soon.

**Item #10**

- **Resolution of Critical Issues.**

- *Specify what action(s) will be taken*
    - i. This is a crucial issue. Need to specify what will be done to address it.
  - *Designate who is responsible for success of the action.*
    - i. Need to indicate that John Gasta and Ryan Bruner will be held responsible for ensuring that this doesn't happen in the future.
  - *Specify date(s) that you will personally revisit this issue with those involved*
    - i. Should specify a date to follow-up with design team supervisor in the future to make sure that this issue has been resolved.
  - *If issue involves a customer, specify what will be done to ensure customer satisfaction.*
    - i. Should either write or plan to write an apology to Johns Simmons for what happened, or direct John Gasta and/or Ryan Bruner to write a direct apology for what happened.
- **Effective Use of Meetings**
- *Meeting with supervisors to discuss issues that exist at the divisional level.*
    - i. Could call a meeting with John Gasta or Steve Thompson or both to discuss this issue and find out if they are aware of what's going on.
  - *Using one-on-one meetings to address an individual employee issue.*
    - i. Should call a meeting with Ryan Bruner to address this issue.
  - *Disseminating a meeting agenda to all attendees.*
    - i. Should come up with agenda to address problematic behavior such as (but not limited to):
      1. Go over problem
      2. Seek Ryan Bruner's perspective
      3. Let Ryan Bruner know that this kind of incident is unacceptable
  - *Specifying all employees who will attend each meeting.*
    - i. If they scheduled a meeting to deal with this issue, should include a list of who to invite.
- Included area supervisor in meeting with problem employee. (22)
- *If meeting with a problem employee, be sure to employee's supervisor attends.*
    - i. Should schedule a meeting between Ryan Bruner, John Gasta, and yourself to discuss this issue.

**Item #11 (Related to items: 4, 9, 13, 26, 28)**

- **Resolution of critical issues**
- *Specify what action(s) will be taken*
    - i. This is a serious problem that needs to be followed up on. Should plan to meet with production personnel in the near future to see how things are going and if issues have been resolved.
  - *Designate who is responsible for the success of the action*
    - i. Should note that production supervisor needs to take care of issues in his division

- *Specified date(s) that you will personally revisit this issue with those involved.*
  - i. Should set a specific date in the near future to meet with production personnel see how things are going and if issues have been resolved.
- **Efficient use of meetings**
  - *Meeting with supervisors to discuss issues that exist at the divisional level*
    - i. There are some serious performance issues in the production area that need to be addressed. Should meet with production supervisors to find out what is going on and get things sorted out.
  - *Disseminating a meeting agenda to all attendees.*
    - i. If meetings are scheduled, should plan an agenda, such as:
      4. Why is chain of command being broken?
      5. Why is performance low and absences high in production?
      6. What are we going to do about this?
  - *Specifying all employees who will attend each meeting*
    - i. If meeting is scheduled, should make a list of who all they would like to attend the meeting.
- **Effective Leadership**
  - *Soliciting strategic advice from your boss*
    - i. Should try to meet with Brookes Felton to discuss production issues and get advice from him.
  - *Soliciting operational advice from other plant managers*
    - i. Should try to meet with other plant managers to discuss your issues and get suggestions from them on how to address this issue.

## Item #12

- **Resolution of Critical Issues**
  - *Ignore issues that are non-time sensitive.*
    - i. The flu-shots are more than 2 months away and nothing to be done at this point about it.

## Item #13 (Related to items 4, 9, 11, 26, 28)

- **Resolution of critical issues**
  - *Specify what action(s) will be taken*
    - i. This is a serious problem that needs to be followed up on. Should plan to meet with production personnel in the near future to see how things are going and if issues have been resolved.
  - *Designate who is responsible for the success of the action*
    - i. Should note that production supervisor needs to take care of issues in his division
  - *Specified date(s) that you will personally revisit this issue with those involved.*
    - i. Should set a specific date in the near future to meet with production personnel see

how things are going and if issues have been resolved.

□ **Efficient use of meetings**

- *Meeting with supervisors to discuss issues that exist at the divisional level*
  - i. There are some serious performance issues in the production area that need to be addressed. Should meet with production supervisors to find out what is going on and get things sorted out.
- *Disseminating a meeting agenda to all attendees.*
  - i. If meetings are scheduled, should plan an agenda, such as:
    1. Why is chain of command being broken?
    2. Why is performance low and absences high in production?
    3. What are we going to do about this?
- *Specifying all employees who will attend each meeting*
  - i. If meeting is scheduled, should make a list of who all they would like to attend the meeting.

□ **Effective Leadership**

- *Soliciting strategic advice from your boss*
  - i. Should try to meet with Brookes Felton to discuss production issues and get advice from him.
- *Soliciting operational advice from other plant managers*
  - i. Should try to meet with other plant managers to discuss your issues and get suggestions from them on how to address this issue.

**Item #14 (Related to item 20)**

□ **Resolve Conflicting Requests**

- *Communicate to affected parties that there is a conflict*
  - i. This request directly conflicts with invitation from the mayor (item 20) and should be identified as such. Should let whomever they decide to turn down the reason for being unable to meet.
- *Provided rationale for regarding how conflict will be resolved. (4)*
  - ii. Should say why they chose to either have dinner with President of company or attend city business meeting.

□ **Prioritize Issues**

- *Prioritize requests from superiors*
  - i. Should choose to have dinner with Walter Black.

**Item #15 (Related to items: 16, 18, 23)**

□ **Prioritize Issues**

- *Prioritize legitimate customer requests*
  - i. Should choose not to loan design team members out to other supervisors so that this issue receives all of the manpower you have.

□ **Resolution of critical issues**

- *Specify what action(s) will be taken*
  - i. This is a critical issue. Need to specify how it will be addressed.
- *Designate who is responsible for success of the action.*
  - i. Design area supervisor should be designated as responsible for success of this action.
- *Specify date(s) that you will personally revisit this issue with those involved*
  - i. Should write a reminder to follow-up with design area supervisor on the 14<sup>th</sup> to make sure this issue has been resolved.
- *If issue involves a customer, specify what will be done to ensure customer satisfaction.*
  - i. Need to apologize to Ed Lastings and let him know that situation will be resolved.

□ **Efficient Use of Meetings**

- *Meeting with supervisor to discuss issues that exist at the divisional level.*
  - i. Should schedule a meeting with design team supervisor to discuss this issue and find out what happened.
  - ii. Could also set up a meeting with design area supervisor to address communication problems in area.
- *Specifying all employees who will attend each meeting.*
  - i. If they decide to call a meeting about this issue, should include a list of invitees, such as design supervisors.
- *Disseminating a meeting agenda to all attendees.*
  - i. If they set up a meeting with design area, should have an agenda such as:
    1. Why did this happen?
    2. What can we do in the future to prevent this from happening?

**Item #16 (Related to items: 15, 18, 23)**

□ **Resolve Conflicting Requests**

- *Communicate to afflicted parties that there is a conflict*
  - i. Apologize to Paul Quick for confusion and let him know why request cannot be accommodated
- *Provide rationale regarding how conflict will be resolved.*
  - i. Should recognize that conflict will not allow them to loan people to Quick and resolve issue with Ed Lastings; should provide rationale for how Ed Lasting issue will be addressed.

□ **Prioritize Issues**

- *Prioritize legitimate customer requests*
  - i. This request directly conflicts with item need to resolve Wilkerson Company issue (item 15).

### Item #17

#### **Effective Leadership**

- *Personally praising an employee who does something positive.*
  - i. Could do any of the following:
    - 1. Write Ed Smith a personal note commending his excellent work.
    - 2. Plan to meet w/ Ed Smith personally to commend him.
- *Public recognition of an employee or a team who does something outstanding.*
  - i. Send a note out to entire marketing department recognizing their outstanding performance and commending them as a group.
  - ii. Send a note out to everyone in the plant area recognizing the marketing department's outstanding performance.

### Item #18 (Related to items: 15, 16, 23)

#### **Resolve Conflicting Requests**

- *Communicate to afflicted parties that there is a conflict*
  - i. Apologize to Paul Quick for confusion and let him know why request cannot be accommodated
- *Provide rationale regarding how conflict will be resolved.*
  - i. Should recognize that conflict will not allow them to loan people to J.J. Sharp and resolve issue with Ed Lastings; should provide rationale for how Ed Lasting issue will be addressed.

#### **Prioritize Issues**

- *Prioritize legitimate customer requests*
  - i. This request directly conflicts with item need to resolve Wilkerson Company issue (item 15).

### Item #19

#### **Prioritize Issues**

- *Ignore issues that are not important.*
  - i. Too late to do anything about this item, so should just toss it in recycling bin.

### Item #20 (Related to item 14)

#### **Resolve Conflicting Requests**

- *Communicate to affected parties that there is a conflict*
  - i. This request directly conflicts with invitation from the mayor (item 20) and should be identified as such. Should let whomever they decide to turn down the reason for being unable to meet.
- *Provided rationale for regarding how conflict will be resolved. (4)*
  - i. Should say why the those to either have dinner with President of company or attend city business meeting.

#### **Prioritize Issues**

- *Prioritize requests from superiors*
  - i. Should choose to have dinner with Walter Black.

#### **Item #21**

- Prioritize Issues**
  - *Delay taking action if you need more information*
    - i. Don't know what this drawing is for, why it's important, or why you're being asked to approve it.
- Actively Manage Information.**
  - *Making requests for further information.*
    - i. Could do any number of things, such as contacting design supervisor to find out what this drawing is for and to ask his opinion of it.
- Effective Leadership**
  - *Informing subordinates that they should follow the chain of command.*
    - i. Should contact design supervisor to find out why this request was sent to you and not him.

#### **Item #22**

- Prioritize Issues.**
  - *Ignore unimportant issues.*
    - i. This information should be kept for future reference, but is not related to any pressing issues and should be ignored.

#### **Item #23 (Related to items: 15, 16, 18)**

- Resolve Conflicting Requests**
  - *Communicate to afflicted parties that there is a conflict*
    - i. Apologize to Steve Thompson for confusion and let him know why request cannot be accommodated
  - *Provide rationale regarding how conflict will be resolved.*
    - i. Should recognize that conflict will not allow them to loan people Steve Thompson and resolve issue with Ed Lastings; should provide rationale for how Ed Lasting issue will be addressed. (i.e., not loaning members of design team because they are needed to address Wilkerson Company issue).
- Prioritize Issues**
  - *Prioritize legitimate customer requests*
    - i. This request directly conflicts with item need to resolve Wilkerson Company issue (item 15).

#### **Item #24**

- Prioritize Issues**
  - *Delay taking action if you need more information*

i. Don't know how vital supplies in letter are.

☐ **Actively Manage Information.**

- *Making requests for further information.*
  - i. Should talk to either production or design team or both to find out how vital these supplies are before contacting AAMCO.

**Item #25**

☐ **Prioritize Issues.**

- *Ignore unimportant issues.*
  - i. This item is trivial and should be ignored.

**Item #26 (Related to items: 4, 9, 11, 13, 28)**

☐ **Resolution of critical issues**

- *Specify what action(s) will be taken*
  - i. This is a serious problem that needs to be followed up on. Should plan to meet with production personnel in the near future to see how things are going and if issues have been resolved.
- *Designate who is responsible for the success of the action*
  - i. Should note that production supervisor needs to take care of issues in his division
- *Specified date(s) that you will personally revisit this issue with those involved.*
  - i. Should set a specific date in the near future to meet with production personnel see how things are going and if issues have been resolved.

☐ **Efficient use of meetings**

- *Meeting with supervisors to discuss issues that exist at the divisional level*
  - i. There are some serious performance issues in the production area that need to be addressed. Should meet with production supervisors to find out what is going on and get things sorted out.
- *Disseminating a meeting agenda to all attendees.*
  - i. If meetings are scheduled, should plan an agenda, such as:
    1. Why is chain of command being broken?
    2. Why is performance low and absences high in production?
    3. What are we going to do about this?
- *Specifying all employees who will attend each meeting*
  - i. If meeting is scheduled, should make a list of who all they would like to attend the meeting.

☐ **Effective Leadership**

- *Soliciting strategic advice from your boss*
  - i. Should try to meet with Brookes Felton to discuss production issues and get advice from him.

- *Soliciting operational advice from other plant managers*
  - i. Should try to meet with other plant managers to discuss your issues and get suggestions from them on how to address this issue.

□ **Effective Leadership**

- *Informing subordinates that they should follow the chain of command.*
  - i. These employees should not have come to you directly; they should have taken these issues up with production area supervisor James Miller. Need to communicate to these employees that breaking chain of command is unacceptable.
- *Holding employees accountable for poor performance.*
  - i. Need to let production supervisors know that poor performance ratings are unacceptable.
- *Being willing to say “no” if a request does not provide a tangible benefit.*
  - i. Need to contact or plan to contact each of the individuals who wrote this letter know that you don’t appreciate threat that the promotions are based on performance and managerial potential, not how long someone has been on the job.

**Item #27**

□ **Prioritize Issues.**

- *Ignore unimportant issues.*
  - i. This item is trivial and should be ignored.

**Item #28 (Related to items: 4, 9, 11, 13, 26)**

**i. Efficient Use of Meetings**

- *Using one-on-one meetings to address and individual employee issue*
  - i. Don Jackson needs to be straightened out with regards to a number of issues, including why he chose to committee company money to highway beautification committee without prior permission.
- *Disseminating a meeting agenda to all attendees*
  - i. Could be:
    1. Highway beautification commitment
    2. Following chain of command
    3. Performance issues
- *If meeting with a problem employee, be sure the employee’s supervisor attends the meeting.*
  - i. If they plan meeting with Don Jackson, should include his direct supervisor.

**ii. Actively Managing Information**

- *Making requests for further information.*
  - i. Hold off on committing money to highway beautification committee until you can find out more about it. Could contact committee to find out more about

and/or find out if Brookes Felton approves

**ii. Effective Leadership**

- *Informing subordinates that they should follow the chain of command.*
  - i. Don Jackson needs to be reprimanded, either by you or his direct supervisor, for going outside his authority to commit company money to non-work related project without permission.

## APPENDIX I

### Motivational Orientation Questionnaire

#### **Duties and Obligations**

Please think about some things you think you ought to do in regards to your professional career. In other words, please think about the professional duties or obligations you feel you have in relation to your future career. Please list as many of these duties or obligations as you can think of below.

#### **Hopes and Aspirations**

*Regulatory fit (promotion focus and eager strategy):*

Please think about some things you would ideally like to do in regards to your professional career. In other words, please think about the professional hopes or aspirations you have in relation to your future career. Please list as many of these hopes or aspirations as you can think of below.

Table 1

Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Use / Non-use of Highlighter (n = 121)

Included	B	S.E.
Constant	0.56	0.36
Motivational Orientation	-0.01	0.52
Goal Pursuit	0.19	0.54
Motivational Orientation X Goal Pursuit	-1.14	0.76

Note:  $R^2 = .05$  (Cox & Snell),  $.06$  (Nagelkerke). Model  $\chi^2(3) = 5.84, p = .12$ .

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for each Condition with Frequency of Engagement in Feedback Behavior, Variety of Engagement in Feedback Behavior, Feedback Recall, and Attitudes Following Feedback (N = 121)*

Variable	<u>Promotion Concerns</u>				<u>Prevention Concerns</u>			
	<u>Eager Frame</u>		<u>Vigilant Frame</u>		<u>Eager Frame</u>		<u>Vigilant Frame</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Behavior								
Frequency	17.8	7.26	15.07	7.8	13.18	6.56	17.61	7.06
Variety	8.60	2.21	7.53	2.30	7.07	2.96	8.73	2.63
Recall	5.90	1.71	5.13	2.01	5.11	1.73	5.67	2.47
Attitude								
Feedback	6.2	1.10	6.07	0.74	6.29	0.71	5.85	0.97
In-basket Task	5.73	0.82	5.57	1.22	6.07	0.81	5.94	1.17
Study	6.03	0.85	5.77	0.97	5.82	0.98	5.88	1.24
Psychology	6.23	0.90	6.33	1.24	6.25	0.89	6.33	0.92
Recommendations Given	12.97	2.54	13.80	2.51	14.14	3.01	14.09	2.81

*Note.*  $n = 30$  for Promotion Concerns – Eager Frame; 30 for Promotion Concerns – Vigilant Frame; 33 for Prevention Concerns – Vigilant Frame; 28 for Prevention Concerns – Eager Frame.

Table 3

*Intercorrelations, Overall Mean, and Standard Deviations for Dependant Variables for All Participants*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Attitude - Feedback	6.09	0.9	-						
2. Attitude - In-basket Task	5.83	1.04	0.23*	-					
3. Attitude – Study	5.88	1.02	0.24*	0.48**	-				
4. Attitude – Psychology	6.29	0.99	0.32*	0.08	0.23*	-			
5. Behavior – Frequency	16	7.34	0.14	-0.03	0.06	0.1	-		
6. Behavior – Variety	8.02	2.6	0.11	-0.06	0.05	0.12	0.80**	-	
7. Feedback Recall	5.46	2.03	0.20*	0.03	0.09	0.16	0.50**	0.52**	-

*Note.*  $N = 121$ . \*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Table 4

Summary of ANOVAs for Frequency of Feedback Use and Variety of Feedback Use (N=121)

Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Partial $\eta^2$
Frequency of Feedback Use					
Motivational Orientation	32.67	1	32.67	0.63	0.01
Goal Pursuit	21.63	1	21.63	0.42	0
Motivational Orientation x Goal Pursuit	386.46	1	386.46	7.47**	0.06
Error	6050.65	117	51.71		
Variety of Feedback Use					
Motivational Orientation	0.84	1	0.84	0.13	0
Goal Pursuit	2.62	1	2.62	0.41	0
Motivational Orientation x Goal Pursuit	55.86	1	55.86	8.10**	0.07
Error	751.07	117	6.42		

Note. \*  $p < 0.01$ .

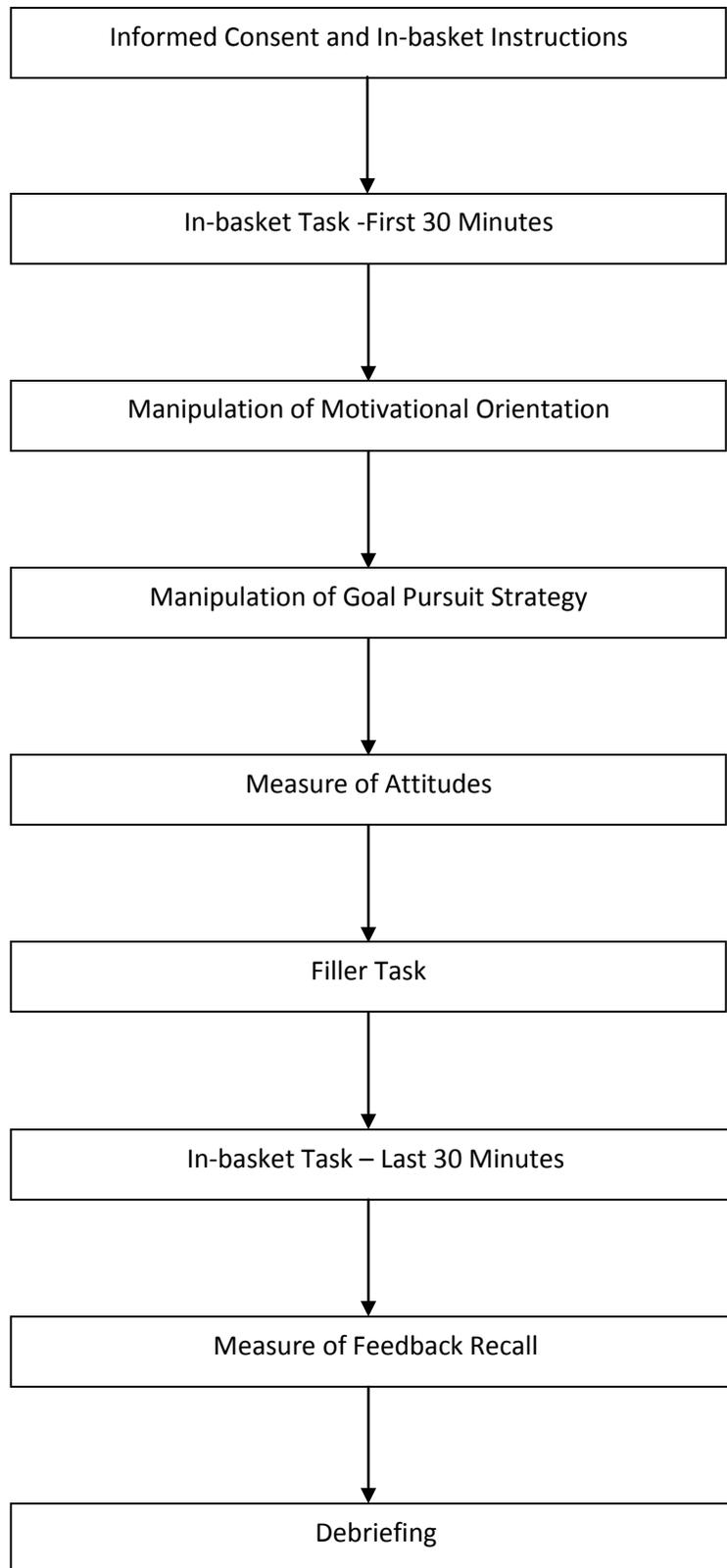
Table 5

*Summary of ANOVA for Feedback Recall (N=121)*

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Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Partial</i> $\eta^2$
Motivational Orientation	0.51	1	0.51	0.12	0.00
Goal Pursuit	0.32	1	0.32	0.08	0.00
Motivational Orientation x Goal Pursuit	13.26	1	13.26	3.24	0.03
Error	478.18	117	4.09		
Corrected Total	492.08	120			

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*Figure 1.* Flow-chart representing methodology.

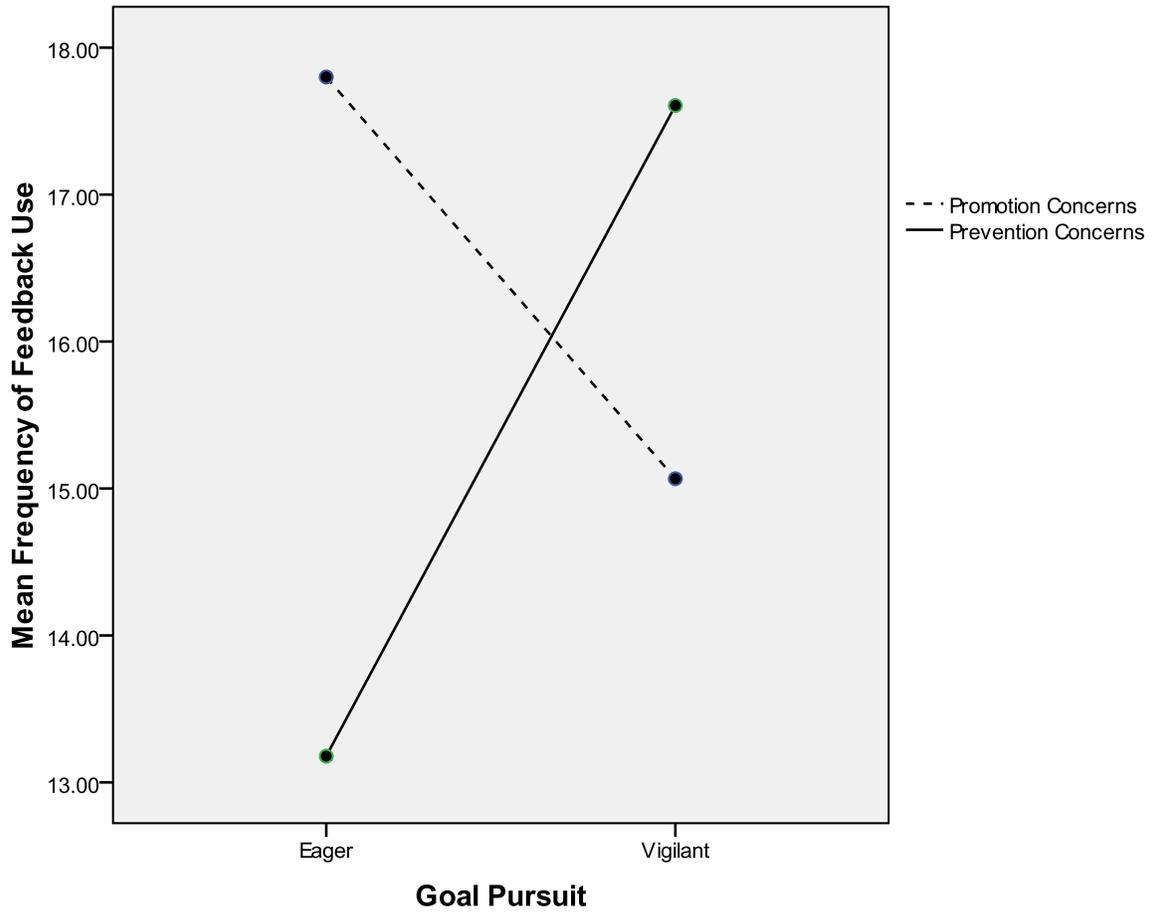


Figure 2. Feedback Use as a Function of Motivational Orientation and Goal Pursuit.

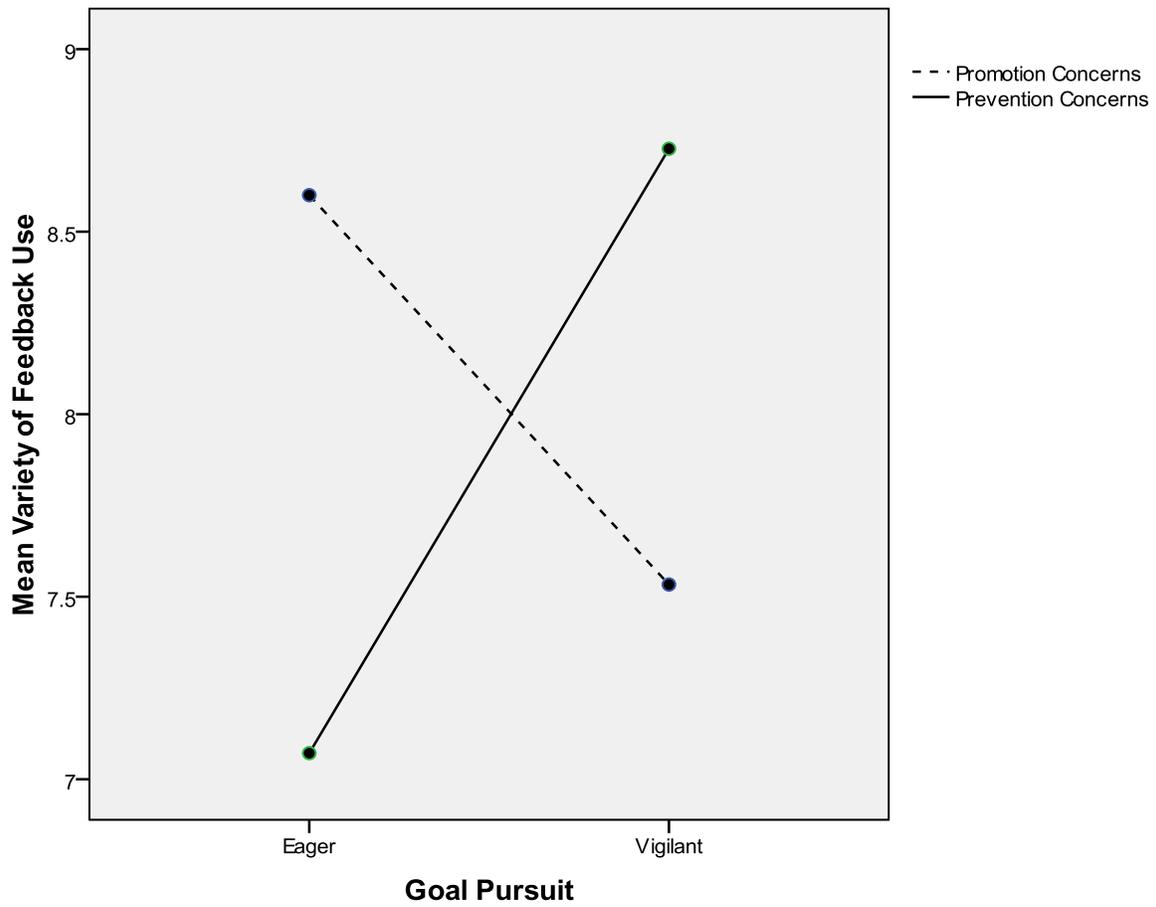


Figure 3. Variety of Feedback Use as a Function of Motivational Orientation and Goal Pursuit.

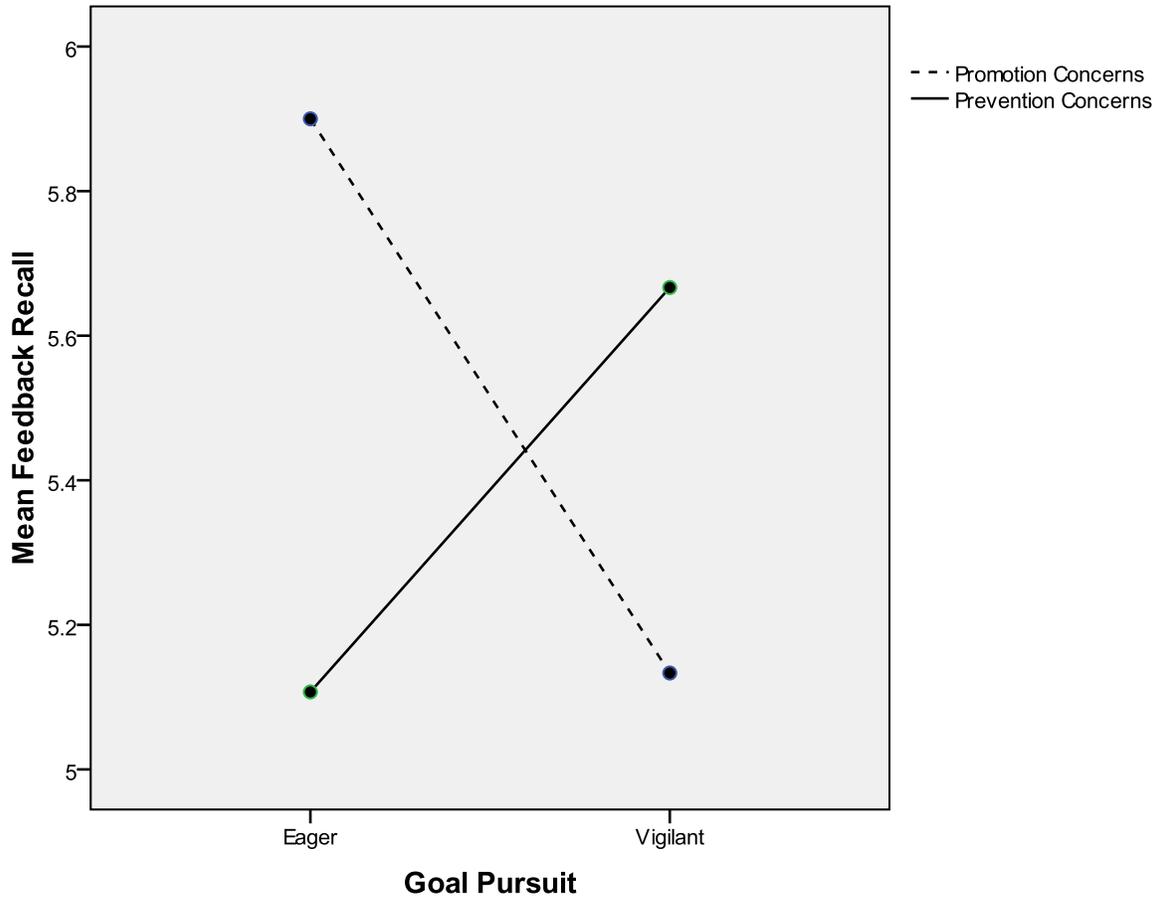


Figure 4. Feedback Recall as a Function of Motivational Orientation and Goal Pursuit.