

# Ten Keys to Morale and Motivation

## The News Manager's Role in Work-Life Balance

Jill Geisler, Group Leader, Leadership and Management Programs  
The Poynter Institute

1. **Aim high in your journalism.** Know enough about your journalists to help them do their best work. Know them as people, not just producers.
2. **You might love your job so much you could live in the newsroom.** Many wonderful journalists do. Just remember that your staff isn't abandoning you – or journalism – when they leave at the end of their shifts.
3. **Journalists expect to work extraordinary hours on big stories – but.** They resent extra work that grows from management's faulty systems, planning or communication around news of the day. Your failure to plan should not create their emergency.
4. **Journalists know that stress and overtime come with the job – but.** They resent enduring it because of chronic understaffing. Be an advocate for realistic resources. Managers have to "manage up" (communicate, not whine) to their bosses to keep them informed about real challenges.
5. **Distribute work equitably.** Don't punish your most skilled staff by asking them to carry additional loads for chronic underachievers. That's where your rigorous work of performance management comes in – and helps everyone.
6. **The manager's praise defines the team's priorities.** Never stop praising good work, sincerely and specifically. Just remember that people read things into your words. Your praise defines the expected "work ethic" of your group. Be specific about what standards you apply when evaluating the work ethic of your staff.
7. **Be your best when people face their worst challenges.** When a your staffers tell stories of a critical moments in their lives – illness, childbirth, divorce, bereavement, how will they describe your role in the saga? Hero? Uninterested bystander? Villain?
8. **Support people's celebrations of life's happiest rites and rituals.** Remember the importance of childbirth, adoption, nuptials, family and academic achievements. Acknowledge that recently acquired black belt, softball trophy, or even the goofy vacation photo. People shouldn't have to check the joys of their personal lives at the newsroom door.
9. **Don't pit the single against the married, or the childless against the parents.** Work-life balance is important to all employees. Don't assume that the young, single or childless on your staff aren't as deserving of work-life consideration. Get to know your staff so well that you can make decisions that are fair for all – and good for your organization.
10. **Create a climate where people look out for each other.** When people know what's expected of them, when they feel people share the work, when they are cross-trained and can cover for each other, and when they believe you trust them – they will solve many of the scheduling issues that often end up on your desk. You can then spend less time managing the process, and more time leading the people – and the journalism.