Leading teams to face challenges

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
—MARGARET MEAD

As a manager who leads, you face challenges every day. You have to respond to the needs of your staff and your superiors, deal with supply crises, and respond to outbreaks of contagious diseases, and there is always the worry about money.

But managers who focus only on the immediate issues are unable to put their energy toward their most important responsibility—leading their work groups to face their challenges and create better services for the future.

This chapter focuses on helping your group face challenges in ways that will result in better health care. It is organized around the “Challenge Model,” which provides a systematic way for groups to experience the direct impact of applying management and leadership practices to achieve results.

It helps you work together with your team to:

- create a shared vision and define one measurable result;
- assess the current situation and identify opportunities and obstacles;
- define your challenge and select priority actions;
- develop an action plan;
- implement your plan and monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving your desired result.

The chapter concludes with a section on the importance of supporting, inspiring, and motivating your team members to take on new challenges and work together to make lasting improvements in the health of your clients.
Working as a team

“As . . . leadership is about giving a team or organization the courage to truly commit to extraordinary goals. Well-managed teams understand their capability extremely well and set commitments they know they can meet.”

—TIMM ESQUE
“MANAGING TO LEAD”

As a manager who leads, you are responsible for keeping your team focused on results and finding new ways to address challenges so you can achieve results. By working with a team of people who are committed to achieving the same results, you have more power to change your situation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMS

A team is a group of people who work together cooperatively to achieve a common goal. In health care settings, clinic staff form a group of health care providers, but they don’t necessarily work as a team. As a manager, it is your job to form, support, and inspire your team, so that together you can achieve more than you ever thought possible.

Picture a clinic that has chronic problems with long client waiting times. Each service provider and administrator will have his own understanding of the problem and could respond individually to improve the process. But only when these people form a shared understanding of the causes of the problem and work together in a unified and coordinated way, can they begin to really improve the situation. Then change would happen and clients would see the difference. If they work as a team to put new procedures in place, it is likely that the change will be sustained.

FACING CHALLENGES AS A TEAM

Leading means helping people identify and face challenges. Facing a challenge is fundamentally different than solving problems. A challenge is stated in terms of a question that asks, “How can we achieve the result we want to achieve in the face of the obstacles we have to overcome?” Taking on a challenge requires that you are committed to working together—as a team—and that you stretch to use all your capabilities to reach the result you want to achieve.

Framing a challenge is one of the leadership tasks you will learn about in this chapter. It requires you to scan your environment to understand all the factors that will impact the results. It helps you align and mobilize your stake-
holders to achieve those results. It gives you a broader understanding of what you are up against and what you need to learn and change. Facing a challenge compels you to reflect on your attitudes and behaviors to discover which ones you need to change in order to achieve significantly better results.

The Challenge Model (Figure 4) offers a systematic approach for working together—as a team—to identify and face one challenge at a time and achieve results. The model leads you through a process of forming commitment to a shared vision that contributes to realizing your organization’s mission, defining and owning a challenge, prioritizing actions for implementation, and carrying out the work plan to achieve results.

The Challenge Model helps you create the path to the result by focusing on one challenge at a time: if this is our organization’s mission and this is our vision, then this is one result that will get us closer to the vision. Next, given the current reality, these are the obstacles we need to overcome, and here is how we plan to go about it. Your success in facing each challenge inspires your team to apply the process repeatedly with new challenges to keep moving toward the vision. The process and the experience of applying the Challenge Model strengthen the team and build confidence among its members that they can effect real change in the health care of their clients.

**Figure 4** The Challenge Model

[Diagram showing the Challenge Model with sections for Mission, Vision, Measurable result, Current situation, Challenge, Obstacles and root causes, Priority actions, and How will we achieve our desired result in light of the obstacles we need to overcome?]
How to . . .

Use the Challenge Model

Step 1. Review your organizational mission and strategic priorities
With your team, form a common understanding of your organization’s mission and strategic priorities. This understanding will help you shape your vision and make sure that it contributes to the larger organizational priorities.

Step 2. Create a shared vision
Work with your team to create a shared vision of the future you want and that contributes to accomplishing the organization’s mission and priorities. This shared vision serves to inspire the team to face each new challenge.

Step 3. Agree on one measurable result
Pick an aspect of your shared vision and create one measurable result that you all want to achieve. This measurable result is what will drive your work. Because it is measurable, it allows you to monitor and evaluate your progress toward achieving it.

Note that finalizing the result is an iterative process. As you learn more about the current situation and obstacles you need to overcome, you may need to adjust your stated result so that it is appropriate and realistic.

Step 4. Assess the current situation
Scan your internal and external environments to form an accurate baseline of the realities or conditions that describe the current situation in relation to your stated result.

Step 5. Identify the obstacles and their root causes
Make a list of obstacles that you and your team will have to overcome to reach your stated result. Use root cause analysis tools to analyze the underlying causes of these obstacles to make sure you are addressing the causes and not just the symptoms.

Step 6. Define your key challenge and select priority actions
State what you plan to achieve in light of the root causes of the obstacles you have identified. (It helps to begin your challenge statement with “How will we...?”) Then select priority actions that you will implement to address the root causes of the obstacles.

Step 7. Develop an action plan
Develop an action plan that estimates the human, material, and financial resources needed and the timeline for implementing your actions.

Step 8. Implement your plan and monitor and evaluate your progress
Provide support to your team in implementing the plan, and monitor and evaluate your progress toward achieving your result.

A full-size diagram with these instructions for using the Challenge Model can be found in the handbook toolkit.
Creating your vision and defining a measurable result

“Martin Luther King did not say, ‘I have a strategic plan.’ Instead, he shouted, ‘I have a DREAM!’ and he created a crusade.”

—Anonymous

Leading a team at any level means you need to create a vision together of where you want to go and what you want your team or program to become, or achieve, over the long term. A vision is important not only because it inspires and motivates, but also because leading with a vision helps to remind you why you are doing what you are doing. It provides the big picture and the inspiration to keep a team going in the face of obstacles as it strives to achieve its stated results.

**Vision is different from mission**

Unlike the mission or purpose of the organization, which states why the organization exists, the vision provides a picture of a desired future. It describes where the group or the organization wants to be in the future and creates the field for working toward that vision of the future.

**Example of a vision**

“Our health center is known for consistently producing excellent service results and people come from all around to receive our high-quality services. We have reduced the spread of communicable diseases, and the people in our area are healthier and happier.”

**CREATING A SHARED VISION**

Some think that vision should come from the top level of an organization or program, that the new minister, executive director, or management team establishes it. Experience has shown, however, that a vision is more powerful when more people share it. Thus, a vision created by others for a team to endorse is not very compelling for those who were not part of the effort. Since people usually support what they help create, try to create a shared vision that is developed and owned by those who will need to carry it out.

A team can develop a vision of how it wants to work together to produce products or services or of the role it wants to have in the organization in the future. Depending on the level at which your team operates in the organization or program, you may want to include key stakeholders in developing or...
How to . . .

Create a shared vision

Step 1. Imagine the future

■ Ask the participants to think about a time in the future.

■ Say “Imagine it is two years from now and we are looking back. What picture do you see in your mind that represents that accomplishment?”

■ Ask each participant to write a newspaper headline reporting on your accomplishments in the year 20_ _ (two or more years from now). Each individual writes a few words to describe what has been accomplished.

Step 2. Integrate your vision with another one

■ Have the participants divide into pairs and ask them to share their visions with each other.

■ Ask each pair of participants to create one shared vision combining the best aspects of both visions.

■ In groups of four (composed of two pairs), discuss the combined visions, and further consolidate these visions to arrive at one shared vision for each group of four people.

Step 3. Record the key elements of all the vision statements

■ In plenary, ask each group of four to present its combined vision.

■ Record the key elements or phrases of each vision statement on a flipchart.

■ Review the elements and consolidate them to eliminate overlaps.

Step 4. Prioritize the elements

■ If the list is long, ask each participant to choose the three elements that are most critical. Record them on a flipchart.

■ For each element, ask how many others listed it as one of their top three elements.

■ Choose the three elements of the vision that were listed most often.

■ Check with the entire group to see if these three elements or phrases correspond to their vision.

Step 5. Present the shared vision statement

■ Combine the elements and phrases into one vision statement and write it on a clean flipchart. Put it in the front of the room to guide further discussions.

For other visioning exercises, including an adaptation of this exercise for use with a large group, please refer to the handbook toolkit.

From Managers Who Lead: A Handbook for Improving Health Services
Cambridge, MA: Management Sciences for Health, 2005
reviewing the vision. Stakeholders may include existing and potential clients, community representatives, board members, or other partners.

**Start with the end in mind.** To lead your team to achieve results, start with creating the vision and identifying a future measurable result, then assess the current situation, and develop the priority actions and an action plan. This process helps to link the present to the future. Leading your team with a shared vision provides the power to pull the current situation closer to your vision and desired results, rather than pulling the vision back to the current reality. To prepare for a visioning exercise, you may want to explore a number of questions:

- What are we committed to doing? Who do we serve now and who do we want to serve?
- What kind of work climate do we want, and what values do we want to practice?
- What sort of future do we want to create for our community?

**DEFINING A MEASURABLE RESULT**

Once you have crafted your vision, identify one measurable result you want to achieve. The result you define needs to come from your vision and relate to the priority health care needs in your area. It may concern just one element of your vision, but if you can achieve that one element, you will move closer to your vision.

To make sure your desired result is clearly defined, follow the SMART rule:

- **Specific.** Clearly written to avoid different interpretations;
- **Measurable.** To allow you to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving the result;
- **Appropriate.** To the scope of your program or work activities, so that you can influence or make changes;
- **Realistic.** Achievable within the time allowed;
- **Time bound.** With a specific time period for completion.

In considering the SMART criteria and whether your desired result is “appropriate,” think about whether the issues and obstacles that you will need to address are sufficiently under your control to allow you to influence changes.

You can explore your team's sphere of influence by using the exercise “Recognizing Your Sphere of Influence” in the handbook toolkit.
Keep in mind that finalizing your desired result is an iterative process. You should adjust the definition of the result after assessing the current situation and identifying your obstacles and root causes, so it takes these factors into account and is a result for which you are willing to be held accountable. The examples shown here reflect the result of this iterative process.

Once you have defined your measurable result, consult with senior management so that they can see how your intended results are aligned with larger program priorities or organizational goals. Communicating your intentions will also help senior managers understand the need for resources when and if you request them, and determine whether the change in client health care warrants the resources needed. This stage also serves to garner commitment to the result by a more senior level, if not the top level.

You will also need to determine what the current situation is with respect to the result you identified. Doing so requires having accurate data and information about key health indicators and national health priorities and objectives as well as baseline information against which you will measure your results. Understanding the current situation will clarify your challenge, help you fine-tune your measurable result, and allow you to develop priority actions for addressing the challenge. The following section guides you through a process of scanning the external and internal environments so that you can understand your situation better.
Assessing the current situation and identifying opportunities and obstacles

“We must accept life for what it actually is—a challenge to our quality without which we should never know of what stuff we are made, or grow to our full stature.”

—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

With a vision of where you want to be in the future, and a measurable result defined, you are ready to look at the current conditions in your external and internal environments in relation to that result. Being aware of the environment in which you work (external) and looking objectively at your capabilities and operational systems (internal) will help your team identify the obstacles and opportunities that will affect your ability to move toward your vision.

Scanning current conditions is an important leadership practice. You and your team need to find out what is going on, look for opportunities that will help you move closer to your desired result, and identify current and potential future obstacles. Think creatively about how to overcome the obstacles and how to capitalize on the opportunities.

There are various factors to consider when scanning your internal and external environments. If you intend to increase the number of clients seeking voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) services, find out what the situation is now, and why it is like that. If potential clients are not seeking services when they need them, find out why. Possible reasons might be that:

- services are not accessible or are not easily accessed by public transportation;
- clients are not aware of your clinic or range of services;
- there are not enough trained providers;
- lack of supplies causes clients to seek services elsewhere;
- so much stigma is attached to HIV/AIDS that many clients are afraid to seek VCT services.

Figure 5 illustrates factors to consider in scanning the current situation and indicates the role each plays in the larger environment. Scan only those aspects that are directly related to your stated result and could either pose significant obstacles to (or open new opportunities for) achieving it.
**Factors to consider in scanning the environment**

Consider how the realities that exist in your internal and external environments will contribute or pose obstacles to achieving the result.

**SCANNING THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

If your team works at the national or organizational level, your scan will be broader than if it works at the local level or is a unit in a larger organization. At any level, be sure to look up and around you, as we all work in interrelated systems.

Think about when your program has set out to do something new, such as coordinating with a local community group or providing a health service that you haven’t provided before. What happens if you move toward a new endeavor without your eyes fully open? By analyzing factors in your external environment, you can be better prepared to respond to identified health and client needs and accomplish what you set out to achieve.

For assistance in understanding the interests of others in the environment, refer to “Analyzing Stakeholder Interests and Concerns” in the handbook toolkit.

When scanning the external environment in relation to a specific service delivery result, you need to find out:
Sources of data

You will need to decide which sources of data are relevant to what you want to accomplish and will adequately inform the scope of issues and questions related to your result. The data sources you need to consult also depend on the level at which you are operating, but they should always include a review of national and local health plans and priorities.

If you are focusing on one particular service-related result, you should review data that you routinely collect, such as service statistics and financial data. In some instances, the data you need will not be readily available and you will need to collect them. This work could include collecting information on client satisfaction with your services through client exit interviews or focus groups. You can also convene community meetings to learn more about how people perceive your services and why they may not be coming to your clinic for services. Gathering this kind of qualitative and quantitative data is critical to a good scan of the external environment because you gain firsthand knowledge of the issues that are important to clients.

For a more comprehensive effort, you may need to access census data; data from the Demographic and Reproductive Health Survey; National Health Accounts; Ministry of Health statistics; data from household surveys; seroprevalence studies; Ministry of Finance data; economic trends data; and knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) studies.

For more information on accessing and using national and local data, please refer to these issues of The Manager: “Using National and Local Data to Guide Reproductive Health Programs” (MSH 1997) and its supplement, “Guide to National and Local Reproductive Health Indicators,” and “Exercising Leadership to Make Decentralization Work” (MSH 2002).

- why the current service is not up to standards;
- how people in the external environment view the services;
- how the service has operated in the past;
- who is being served, which other groups ought to be served, and how clients feel about the services;
- what kinds of services are in greatest demand and in least demand;
- whether the types and quantity of services you offer suit those demands.

What else do you see when you scan? Think about the trends you see and their underlying causes. Look below the surface, below the “tip of the iceberg.”
SCANNING THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

In your external scan you may have begun to identify some opportunities. For example, there may be an opportunity for your organization to expand services to underserved areas. If you work in a nongovernmental organization, perhaps there are opportunities to form partnerships with the public sector to deliver services. You may have identified threats as well, such as reduced client purchasing power due to difficult economic times, greater competition among service providers, or changing donor priorities.

Can your unit, division, or program perform effectively in the external environment? If you have competition, can you stay ahead of the others? Scanning the internal environment will help you answer these questions. Assess those factors that are directly related to your desired result and that may enhance or hinder your ability to achieve it. Factors to examine might include the aspects listed on page 33 as related to your unit, division, or program.

When you have scanned the external and internal factors related to your desired result, summarize your findings to form a set of statements that describe the current situation. The current situation sets a baseline for measuring progress when you begin to implement your plan.

Example of statements about your current situation

- Only 40 clients use our VCT services each month.
- Many more people need VCT services, but they are either afraid to seek the services or do not have easy access to a clinic.

IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES

In your scan of the current situation, you may discover opportunities that you had not seen before that will help you to achieve your result. It is important to be clear about which opportunities you can reasonably take advantage of, given available resources and your team's role or mandate.

Your scan will also reveal problems or obstacles that currently impede your ability to achieve the result. Be sure to talk to key stakeholders outside the organization about their perspectives on the trends that you see. Does what you see happening around you represent an opportunity? Are there trends that represent threats or potential threats?

It is useful to document the opportunities and obstacles (or threats) along with the strengths and weaknesses you have identified in your internal scan. This process is called a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). A SWOT analysis helps to organize the information so that
Factors to consider in scanning the internal environment

**Performance/results.** These include client satisfaction with your services; client access to, and utilization of, the various health services that you provide (number and types of people served across regions, facilities, and services); and your financial situation. Look at current data and at performance three and five years ago.

- Are the program results better or worse than last year?
- Are more or fewer clients using your services?
- Has their health status improved or declined?
- Has the client mix changed?
- Are your donors or other stakeholders satisfied with the program’s performance?
- Is your financial situation stable? Has it improved?

**Staffing.** Questions to consider include:

- Are staff working at full capacity?
- Are they appropriately trained for the jobs they do?
- Are staff distributed appropriately across activities for which your team is responsible?
- Do staff understand what constitutes good performance?
- Is there a system for developing new managers who lead and strengthening existing leaders?

**Management capacity: Planning, organizing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating.** Whether you are leading a team at a lower level within a program or organization, or leading a senior team, how well you and your team manage your work is critical to achieving results and the sustainability of the whole program. Analyzing current management capacity is particularly important if you are working at the organizational level. It is an essential part of a wider organizational scan.

The Management and Organizational Sustainability Tool (MOST), available on the handbook CD-ROM, is one tool you can use to assess the management capacity of your organization.

you can use it to inform decisions about programs, activities, and areas for improvement. (For instructions on conducting a SWOT analysis, please refer to *The Family Planning Manager’s Handbook*, Wolff et al. 1991.)
Once you have identified the obstacles, you and your team need to determine the main cause(s) of the obstacles in order to know how to address them. This process is called root cause analysis. By examining the root causes of the obstacles, you will not only understand the obstacles better but also be able to formulate solutions that address the underlying problem, not just its visible symptoms.

What is root cause analysis?

The goal of root cause analysis is to identify and remove the causes of problems or obstacles by asking why the obstacles are occurring. It is based on the principle that only a few primary factors are responsible for producing most of a problem, and it provides a systematic method for gathering and analyzing evidence about a problem so that you can address it effectively.

In the health care setting, there are often many contributing factors to a problem or obstacle. Analyzing root causes helps to determine the primary underlying causes that are most responsible for creating the problem, so you can focus your efforts (priority actions) on the causes that are most critical to resolving the problem.

Examples of root causes

- People don’t know what VCT is and why it is important.
- People have fears, beliefs, and superstitions about HIV and AIDS.
- Some staff are not adequately trained to provide follow-up counseling to clients who test positive for HIV.
- Clients are not being referred to clinics that provide VCT services.
- The layout of the VCT clinic makes privacy impossible.
- The delivery of test kits is erratic.

There are many methods and tools for determining root causes. Choose which ones to use by considering the nature of the problem or obstacle, the skills of the person leading the analysis, and the people involved in the analysis. Two techniques are the Fishbone Diagram and the Five Whys.
Defining your challenge and selecting priority actions

“You have to teach managers to focus or they will be called away for everything. Managers often get lost in trying to control things that don’t produce results.”

—HUMBERTO DANTAS
CEARÁ, BRAZIL

Once you have assessed the current situation and identified obstacles (and their underlying causes), and made any needed adjustments to your intended result, you are ready to state your specific challenge and develop priority actions to address that challenge.

DEFINING YOUR KEY CHALLENGE

Your main challenge should state what you want to achieve in light of the obstacles you have identified. By clearly identifying both the results you want to achieve and the obstacles you need to overcome, you will lead your team to shift from focusing on problems to focusing on the challenge and the stated result.

For a helpful group exercise, see “Distinguishing Challenges from Problems” in the handbook toolkit.
Let’s suppose that you and your team work in a public-sector program that provides integrated health services through several clinics in your district. As in many areas, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is responsible for an increasing number of deaths and new infections. Your scan of the current situation shows that many more people should be receiving VCT services, and you have the capacity to provide those services to many more people than you do currently.

Based on your desired result—to increase the use of VCT services in your district by 50% by the end of the year (to an average of 80 clients per month)—and considering the obstacles and root causes that have influenced your current situation (only 40 clients per month use VCT services), you can now define your main challenge. If you and your team don’t address this challenge, you will not be able to achieve your intended result and move toward your vision.

### SELECTING PRIORITY ACTIONS

Priority actions are activities or interventions that directly target the root causes of the obstacles you identified and, when implemented, will result in achieving your result. Prioritizing your actions will help focus staff and others on actions that will lead to results. When you work on your priority actions, try to keep the number of actions to a manageable level. Three to five actions are often enough to focus your efforts on a single challenge and on the underlying root causes of the obstacles.

To address your main challenge of increasing the use of VCT services, actions might include:
How to...

Set priorities using the Priority Matrix

The Priority Matrix helps rank actions based on the time it takes to complete them, cost, potential for improving quality, and availability of resources. This tool can be used for prioritizing strategies and actions as part of developing an action plan.

**Step 1. List priority actions**

Choose three actions that address the obstacles that are preventing you from reaching your result. List them in the boxes under “Priority actions.” (It is important to complete a root cause analysis first, so the actions you choose will address the root causes of the problem and not just the symptoms.)

**Step 2. Rank each priority action on a scale of 1 to 3**

On a scale of 1 to 3 (with 1 providing the least benefit and 3 the most benefit), rank each priority action according to the time needed, cost to implement, potential for improving quality, and availability of resources.

**Step 3. Calculate the total points for each priority action**

Add the numbers in each column to see the total score for each action. The higher the score, the higher the priority of the action based on the criteria listed. You may choose to change the criteria depending on the type of challenge you are working on.

### Sample completed Priority Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria rank from 1 to 3</th>
<th>Priority actions</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Train counselors</td>
<td>Conduct community education seminars</td>
<td>Renovate clinics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to implement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = the most time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = the least time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to implement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = the highest cost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = the lowest cost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for improving quality in the long term</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = the least potential</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = the most potential</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of resources</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = the least available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = the most available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This example illustrates that conducting community education seminars should be a priority. It doesn't mean that you don’t carry out the other actions, but you should focus on those that will have the most impact on achieving your result, taking into account time and money.

The complete Priority Matrix tool with a blank worksheet can be found in the handbook toolkit.
■ educating the community about VCT and HIV/AIDS;
■ renovating or relocating clinics so there is privacy for counseling;
■ training more counselors to provide VCT services;
■ creating formal links with other area clinics that do not provide VCT services so they can refer clients to the VCT clinic;
■ improving the supply of test kits.

Using the example of VCT in this chapter, the box on the next page provides an overview of how all the parts fit together and lead to a clear plan of action.

Developing your action plan

“To achieve greatness, start where you are, use what you have, do what you can.” —ARTHUR ASHE

Before you can begin to implement your priority actions, you need to develop an action plan. Developing an action plan is one of the managing practices. The action plan provides you and your team with a clear path for taking action, monitoring progress, and measuring results. At a minimum, an action plan should identify:

■ the actions or activities that will be implemented;
■ who will be responsible for carrying out each action;
■ the human, financial, and material resources needed to implement the actions;
■ a timeline showing when the actions will be carried out.

Plans are much more likely to be implemented and bring results when they:

■ are created and owned by the team and reflect the shared vision of the team;
■ address a well-defined challenge that is based on an observable gap between desired and actual performance;
■ contain measurable indicators that allow you to see that the performance gap is closing;
## Putting it all together: Vision, measurable result, current situation, obstacles and root causes, challenge, priority actions

### Vision
Our health center is known for consistently producing excellent service results and people come from all around to receive our high-quality services. We have reduced the spread of communicable diseases, and the people in our area are healthier and happier.

### Measurable result
Increase the use of VCT services in one district by 50% (to an average of 80 clients per month) by the end of the year.

### Current situation
- Only 40 clients use our VCT services each month.
- Many more people need VCT services, but either are afraid to seek the services or do not have easy access to a clinic.

### Obstacles and root causes
- People don’t know what VCT is and why it is important.
- People have fears, beliefs, and superstitions about HIV and AIDS.
- Some staff are not adequately trained to provide follow-up counseling to clients who test positive for HIV.
- Clients are not being referred to clinics that provide VCT services.
- The layout of the VCT clinic makes privacy impossible.
- The delivery of test kits is erratic.

### Challenge
How will we increase the use of our VCT services when clients who need these services are not coming to our clinics?

### Priority actions to address the challenge
- Sensitize the community about VCT and other HIV/AIDS issues to encourage clients to seek and use VCT services.
- Train counselors in providing high-quality VCT services.
- Create a referral system with other area clinics.
- Renovate clinics that do not allow for adequate privacy.
- Improve the routine supply of test kits.
focus on prioritized actions that were selected after a thorough analysis of root causes;

- contain a clear timeframe for implementing each action and designate specific individuals to carry out each action and be held accountable for results.

The action plan worksheet (Figure 6) will help you organize the components of your action plan and make sure that your priority actions directly address the root causes you have identified.

The next step is to list all your priority actions on a timeline showing when each action and sub-action will be carried out, who is responsible, and what resources are required. Depending on the requirements of your program, you may also need to submit a separate budget that provides more detail on the costs of the resources required. Table 4 is a sample format for developing a timeline for your action plan.

For complete instructions and handouts for group work, see “Developing an Action Plan That Leads to Results” in the handbook toolkit. For assistance in defining resources needed from external sources, see “Mobilizing Stakeholders to Commit Resources,” also in the toolkit.

Implementing your plan and monitoring and evaluating progress

“If you keep on doing what you have always been doing, you will keep on getting what you have always gotten.”

—Anonymous

Great ideas to make improvements and bring about change often come to a halt during implementation. In many cases, the real problem is not inappropriate activities but poor execution. Here again leadership and management are critical. You can’t always use the same old systems and processes when you are approaching your challenges in new ways.

IMPLEMENTING YOUR ACTION PLAN

Planning is one of the four key managing practices presented in chapter 1. Implementing a plan is another. The other six leading and managing practices will help you stay on course:

- Scan continuously so that you can anticipate potential problems or changes in the environment that could impact your work;
### Table 4: Sample action plan format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Root causes</th>
<th>Current situation (baseline data)</th>
<th>Measurable result</th>
<th>Priority actions</th>
<th>Resources needed (human, financial, material)</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

**Figure 6** Sample action plan worksheet
■ Focus on specific challenges and set new priorities as needed;

■ Align your team members to work together to deal with problems as they arise, mobilize new resources, and align new stakeholders as needed;

■ Organize people to do the work in the most efficient and effective way, and re-assign duties or redistribute work or resources as needed;

■ Monitor progress along the way and make sure you have a feasible evaluation plan;

■ Inspire and motivate people to stay engaged.

Often during implementation, the priorities you have set compete with other urgent work that arises. These competing priorities can divert you and your team from what is most important.

The exercise “Putting First Things First: The Important and Urgent Matrix” in the handbook toolkit can help you focus on the right activities to stay on track and achieve your results.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING YOUR PROGRESS

Make sure that you are clear at the outset about what success will look like and how you plan to measure it. If you have formulated your result using the SMART rule and established clear baseline data, you will be able to monitor and evaluate your progress toward achieving the result. The mechanisms to use for monitoring and evaluating your progress will depend on the level at which you are working, the complexity of your stated result, and the resources available. Be sure to budget for the cost of monitoring and evaluation.

If you focus on one particular service delivery result, then routinely collecting and analyzing monthly or quarterly service statistics will allow you to see whether you are making progress. The bottom line is that you will never know whether you’ve arrived at where you want to be if you don’t measure where you were in the beginning and where you are now. And remember to talk with your staff about the changes you see resulting from your work, because seeing real change is more inspiring than motivational speeches.

The following example shows how one health team increased the use of family planning by applying the Challenge Model.

As this example from Egypt illustrates, MSH’s Leadership Development Program is a simple process that organizations can implement with their own resources to build leadership capabilities at all levels of an organization. Based on the Challenge Model process and the practices of the Leading and Managing Framework, participants work together in teams to learn how to face their challenges and achieve organizational results.
Leading with a vision to achieve results—Example from Egypt

In 2002, Aswan Governorate, a rural area in the underdeveloped region of Upper Egypt, launched a process to improve the quality and accessibility of health services in three districts. The health units in this area were faced with a considerable challenge: how could they improve health indicators for their population? To face this challenge, they would have to increase client use of and satisfaction with their services, and make a commitment to serve their clients better. Staff from six health facilities and three districts participated in the year-long Leadership Development Program sponsored by the Ministry of Health and Population and MSH. The program focused on increasing the capacity of managers to lead others to achieve results.

The teams and process. Forty-one doctors, nurses, and midwives from five health centers, one rural hospital, and three districts were grouped into ten working teams. Through a series of one-day workshops held every two months, participants learned the leading and managing practices and worked in their teams to create a shared vision. They used the Challenge Model to frame their specific challenges and develop and implement action plans. Between workshops they continued their work together in district and team meetings in their health centers. Many of these teams also continued on their own to expand the program to other health units in their areas.

El Khor Health Unit challenge. The experience of the rural health unit El Khor, which was trained by the teams in the original program, illustrates the application of the Challenge Model. Faced with low use of family planning in the village, the team first created a shared vision: that all the women in their area could have access to family planning services. When the team scanned the current situation, they learned that current use of family planning by women of reproductive age was 21.5%. They agreed to focus on achieving a measurable result, increasing use of family planning to 25% within six months, from January 2004 to June 2004.

The team members’ analysis of the obstacles they needed to overcome to reach this result focused on several root causes that were preventing more women from seeking services and practicing family planning. Many people had misconceptions about injections, oral contraceptives, and especially IUDs. There were widespread rumors that their religion prohibited practicing family planning. The team then identified its challenge as how to raise the use rate for different family planning methods for women of reproductive age in the face of public misinformation.

(cont. next page)
Leading with a vision to achieve results—Example from Egypt (cont.)

The action plan. The El Khor Health Unit’s action plan focused on creating an alliance between the clinic and the community to address rumors and misunderstandings about family planning. Staff made it a priority to work with local religious leaders and hold seminars on religious views about family planning. They also trained two women volunteers from the village to help the team communicate correct information about the use and benefits of different family planning methods through public meetings and other events. Small teams went door to door, offering information, resupplying users, and encouraging nonusers to visit the health unit.

Results. At the end of the six months, family planning use among married women of reproductive age in El Khor Health Unit had increased to 34.3%. The total number of new family planning clients had more than doubled, from 96 clients during the six-month period before the Leadership Development Program to 222 clients during the period January through June 2004. Other teams in the leadership program increased the number of new family planning clients, doubled the number of postpartum visits per client, and improved vaccination rates and infection control.

Transfer of approach. Using this simple process, doctors and nurses in Aswan Governorate now know that they can make significant improvements in the health of their people by facing their challenges and working together as a team. They have become deeply committed to producing their intended results, and their approach to their work is now centered on the needs of their clients. The Aswan teams continue to expand the program by training new teams and including new districts. Other governorates across Egypt have recognized Aswan’s improvements in health indicators and have invited facilitators from the Leadership Development Program to transfer the Challenge Model and leadership approach to support health unit teams in improving their service results.

For more information on how these teams are scaling up this program, please see the country example in chapter 6.
Implementing a leadership development program

The Leadership Development Program follows the principles of developing managers who lead. It takes place over several months; participants work in teams on real organizational challenges; they develop leadership competencies through a process of facing challenges and receiving feedback and support. The participating organization owns the process and takes responsibility for championing its success.

The process. Designed to be adapted to fit local organizational needs, the Leadership Development Program includes a series of one- to two-day workshops spaced over several months, during which local facilitators introduce the Challenge Model and leading and managing practices and competencies. Between workshops, local work teams apply what they have learned. They scan their environment to understand their challenges and the root causes of their obstacles. They focus on priority actions and plan for implementing their actions. They align people and mobilize resources to support their efforts, and monitor and evaluate their progress. They apply the leadership competencies to inspire others to achieve results.

Challenge, feedback, and support. When the teams implement their action plans they achieve measurable results, which, in turn, motivate them to take on a new challenge. Managers in the organization serve as facilitators and coaches to provide support and feedback during planning and implementation. In addition to providing an effective way to improve organizational performance and health outcomes, the program enables shared learning of best practices across units and regions.

Sustained improvements. The program requires an organization’s commitment over time and is intended to become part of an organization’s ongoing management and supervision system. The Leadership Development Program builds confidence in the organization’s abilities to make continuous and sustained improvements in health.

For an introduction to the Leadership Development Program, please refer to the handbook CD-ROM.
Supporting your team

“The morale of team members plays a crucial role in any program’s success. If the self-confidence of the team members is low and the leader does nothing to build it up, the team is very sure to break down.”

—SAMSONRAJ PANDIAN
WORLD VISION INDIA

In implementing a new action plan, particularly when it involves changing how things have been done before, you should expect to encounter obstacles. Even though you and your team are fully committed to the plan, you are still learning as you go and finding out what you need to achieve your results. Sometimes people outside the team (and maybe even some of your team members) may need explanations to understand the reasons for doing things differently and encouragement to try the new way. Other times you may need to work harder on aligning your outside stakeholders around the challenge so you can get their cooperation. When you run into a sizable issue, it can lead to a breakdown. How you handle the breakdown is what matters.

LEADING YOUR TEAM THROUGH BREAKDOWNS

One of the differences between a group of individuals and a high-performing team is that, in a team approach, difficulties and breakdowns are expected and embraced, and the team addresses the breakdowns together. Help your team identify breakdowns and see them as catalysts for understanding what is missing or what stands in the way of achieving the results you desire.

What is a breakdown?

A breakdown is any situation that:

- threatens progress toward a commitment
- violates an explicit agreement
- presents uncertainty or difficulty
- stops effective action
- presents obstacles to fulfilling your commitments.
When they are not handled well, breakdowns lead to minimizing or ignoring problems, blaming each other, or eroding teamwork, trust, and effectiveness. When handled well, breakdowns can be a major source of breakthroughs or finding new ways to approach your work and achieve results. To change how you think about and approach breakdowns, remember that:

- all large commitments will have breakdowns;
- the greater your commitment, the more and greater the breakdowns will be;
- when there is no commitment, there will be no breakdowns.

It is your job to help your team’s members understand how to respond to breakdowns and to work with them to approach problems together and find a way through that will result in new and better ways of doing things.

For ways to lead your team through breakdowns, see the exercise in the handbook toolkit called “Coaching Your Team through Breakdowns.”

**ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR TEAM**

To keep the members of your team inspired and motivated, point out and celebrate incremental results, and link those results to specific actions they have taken. Above all, acknowledge and praise both individuals and the team on a regular basis, and be there to support them.

As you team works to face its challenges and implement the action plan, be sure to:

- show appreciation regularly to individuals and the team for their work;
- acknowledge the challenges they are facing;
- praise them whenever their work is well done, even if it is not at a major milestone;
- thank them for their commitment and their daily efforts;
- recognize them for their accomplishments and show how their work has made a difference.
“The adaptive demands of our time require leaders who take responsibility without waiting for revelation or request. One can lead with no more than a question in hand.”

—RONALD HEIFETZ AND DONALD LAURIE
“THE WORK OF LEADERSHIP”

Challenges and change are two constants in life. They are part of nature and part of our work life. This chapter has pointed out the critical role that managers have in leading their teams to face important challenges in complex situations.

By applying the Challenge Model and working with your team to follow the process, one step at a time, you will give your team direct experience in applying the leading and managing practices and see the results. At the same time, the members of the group will gain the confidence to tackle problems in the future, the skills to inspire mutual commitment, experience in practicing effective teamwork, and above all, an opportunity to see how they can make a difference in people’s lives.
Questions to consider on . . .

**Leading your team to face challenges**

**Vision.** What is it that your team would like to create in the future?

**Results.** What specific result will move you closer to your vision within the next year?

**Current situation.** What is the current situation with respect to this result?

**Root causes.** Why are things this way? Ask why, why, and why.

**Challenge.** What is the main obstacle you need to overcome to achieve your stated result? (How do we...?)

**Priority actions.** What are the key approaches you should take to address this challenge? What should you be focusing on right now?

**Monitoring and evaluation.** How will you know if you have been successful?

**Supporting your team.** How will you use breakdowns to improve how you face your challenges? How will you acknowledge people for their efforts?