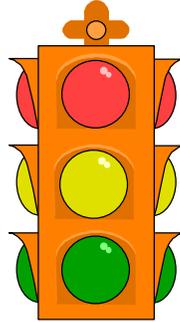


New paradigms – models for the 21st century Teaching supervisors the Rules of the Road"¹



Traffic lights have three familiar colors in most parts of the world. The role they play in the junctions and intersections that we drive through is very significant. If we think of these intersections, both from a driving point of view but also from the relationships we have with others, we can use the sequence of traffic light colors to assist us in dealing effectively with others.

Traffic lights allow us to cooperatively use the "road" in a way that others can use it too. Hopefully, you will feel that taking a more "colorful" approach to maneuvering through people intersections can assist you as you work with others, including the people you live with.

Whether we are responsible for others or not, called a supervisor, team leader or simply known as Fred, the basic premise of STOP, LOOK and LISTEN, GO works well in nearly all interpersonal situations. When I was small, the first two instructions were painted in large letters by the side of the railway tracks we crossed each day. They served us well; GO was the implied result of doing the other two. With lights that tell us to GO, life may be simpler.

So what do traffic lights represent to you? (Other than "stop" and "go")

You may have thought restrictions, slow down, a nuisance, or you may have thought rules, order, giving way, letting someone else in. Depending on your point of view, any or all of the above can be true when we work with others.

Traffic lights tell us when to stop, slow down, go who has the right of way and serve to warn us. They also provide a framework for behaviour, provide rules and give order to junctions. Similarly when we work with others, we need to provide a framework with clear, agreed upon expectations and outcomes.

In order for us to explain these rules of the road to others, we need to know what they are for us. We need to know what we are allowed to do without checking with our boss and what our roles and responsibilities are. What expectations do others have of us?

Too often we end up on differing flight paths with little appreciation for the other person's point of view.

¹This working paper is adapted from "The Colors of Supervision", © Jane Durant 1995, originally published by Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2nd edition 2001 published by Jane Durant.



Red Light

Check our facts, points of view, opinions and let our “emotional” red reaction cool off. Many of the mistakes we make in working with others can be traced back to “jumping the lights”



Yellow Light

Get ready to move. This is the moment we write the script of what we are going to say, practice with colleague to gauge possible reactions and be clear about the purpose of the meeting we plan to hold. Prepare the location of the meeting to make it appropriate for the reason for getting together



Green Light

Take action, go, move.

We are prepared, have all the tools we need to cross the intersection safely and keep driving on the other side. The other people in the car with us will arrive safely and will consider us to be a "good driver". We shall be able to travel along the road without incident until the next set of lights which turn to red and cause us to stop, look and LISTEN, again for working with people is a continuing process and never comes to an end,

Those things we need to understand when we learn to drive a car well and defensively correspond with developing our skills in working with others. When we define the rules of the road; pay attention to the traffic; help create good traffic conditions; understand the wide range of different types of drivers and be able to teach someone else to drive; we make those traffic lights work well for us and for the people who interact with us.

Next time you set off down that road of “Working Effectively with Others”, remember the “Colors of Supervision” and think Red -Stop, Yellow - Look and Listen, then Green - Go!

Presented by Jane, in person, to the 26th IFTDO Conference October 28th-30th1997, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.