

Follow-up

JANE DURANT

MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH PEOPLE SINCE 1987

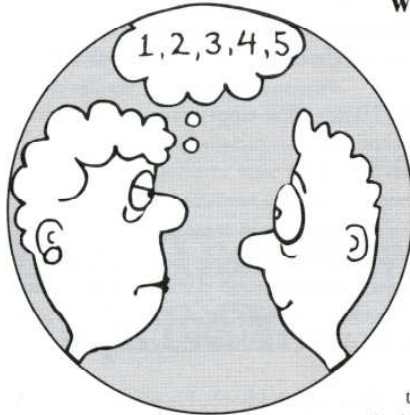


Being a Colorful Supervisor



Traffic lights have three familiar colors in most parts of the planet and 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 and also from the relationships we have with others, then we can use the sequence of traffic light colors to assist us in dealing effectively with others.

What do traffic lights represent to you, other than "STOP" and "GO"?

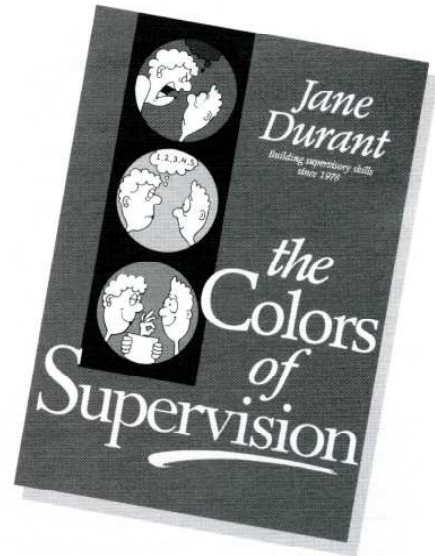


You may have thought restrictions, slow down or nuisance, or you may have thought rules, order, giving way, letting someone else in. Depending on your point of view, any or all of the above can be true when we work with others.

Traffic lights 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 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

Continued on back page . . .

BEING A COLORFUL SUPERVISOR

Continued from front cover



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.

Interestingly, most of the things we need to do to learn to drive a car well and then drive defensively correspond with developing our skills in working with others. By defining the rules of the road, paying attention to the traffic, helping create good traffic conditions, understanding the wide range of different types of drivers, as well as being able to teach someone else to drive, we can make those traffic lights work well for us and for the people who work alongside us.

So the next time you set off, don't forget to STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN, then GO!

This article is adapted from *The Colors of Supervision*, © Jane Durant 1995, published by Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 4050 Westmark Drive, Dubuque, Iowa 52004-1840, U.S.A., 1-800-228-0810.