

# Fermilab Focus Groups

All Hands Meeting  
June 19, 2009



## Focus groups

- Follow-up to findings of APS site visit May 2008
- 23 focus groups, November through January
- 187 total participants, employees and users
- Participants enthusiastic, open and constructive in their contributions

## Focus group approach

- 12 categories of employees and users
- Half groups randomly selected from whole lab population, half from women and minorities
- Neutral facilitator, all groups confidential
- Detailed summaries of each group w/o attribution
- All results posted on Web

## Focus group results

- No systemic diversity issues
- Diversity of workforce is key to laboratory life and scientific mission
- For women physicists, despite progress, challenges remain in a male-dominated field

## Focus group results

- Most people like working at Fermilab
- Unique mission, setting, people , atmosphere
- Many positive comments
- Groups focused on what could be improved

## Plenty of management issues

- Uncertain future
- No defined Fermilab culture
- Two-tier system: physicists and non-physicists
- Unskilled managers
- Lack of employee support
- Lack of understanding of performance review, salary management
- Policies, procedures not explained/understood
- Inconsistent application of family-friendly policies

## The future

- Uncertain future and chaotic budgets are a challenge for Fermilab employees.

# Culture

- No defining “Fermilab” culture
  - Idealized past
  - Bureaucratic DOE
  - “Corporate “laboratory administration
- No common “Fermilab way” we do things
  - Engineering
  - IT
  - Management

# Physicists and non-physicists

- Two-tiered workplace
- Perception that physicists “get away with” things that others do not and are not held accountable for poor performance
- Good physicists don’t always make good managers.

# Management

- Managers have great influence on work environment for groups and individuals
- Wide variation in effectiveness
- Many lack skills, training , experience or desire
- Little effort to identify, improve or remove poor managers
- Many other issues point back to this one

## Performance reviews / salary management

- Not being used as designed, with negative effects
- Everyone pushed to the middle
- “Your performance is excellent, but I can only give you commendable.”
- Managers not trained, supported, evaluated in performance review process

## Employee support

- Policies and procedures not well understood, hard to find
- Employee orientation not enough
- Little direct support or career management
- HR not seen as effective in helping employees. Some see stigma in going there, or a bad outcome.

## Family-friendly workplace

- Fermilab is inconsistent in providing flexible benefits, family leave, part-time work, job sharing.
- Policies are unclear, hard to find.
- Supervisors apply policies unevenly.
- Sick leave and paternity leave are issues.

## Addressing the issues

- Focus group findings give us an opportunity to do things better.
- I will meet with supervisors in every division and section to discuss the results and plan how to address them.
- Today's meeting is a start.

## The future

- It is what it is. Uncertainty and chaotic funding are here to stay. We have to live with them.
- We will use every opportunity to build a strong future for particle physics and for Fermilab.

## Fermilab culture

- We have a strong Fermilab culture of pulling together when the chips are down.
- Not so much in other respects: standards, management policies and practices, our own projects (vs others')....
- New common engineering standards, IT policy
- Common management standards?

## Two tiers

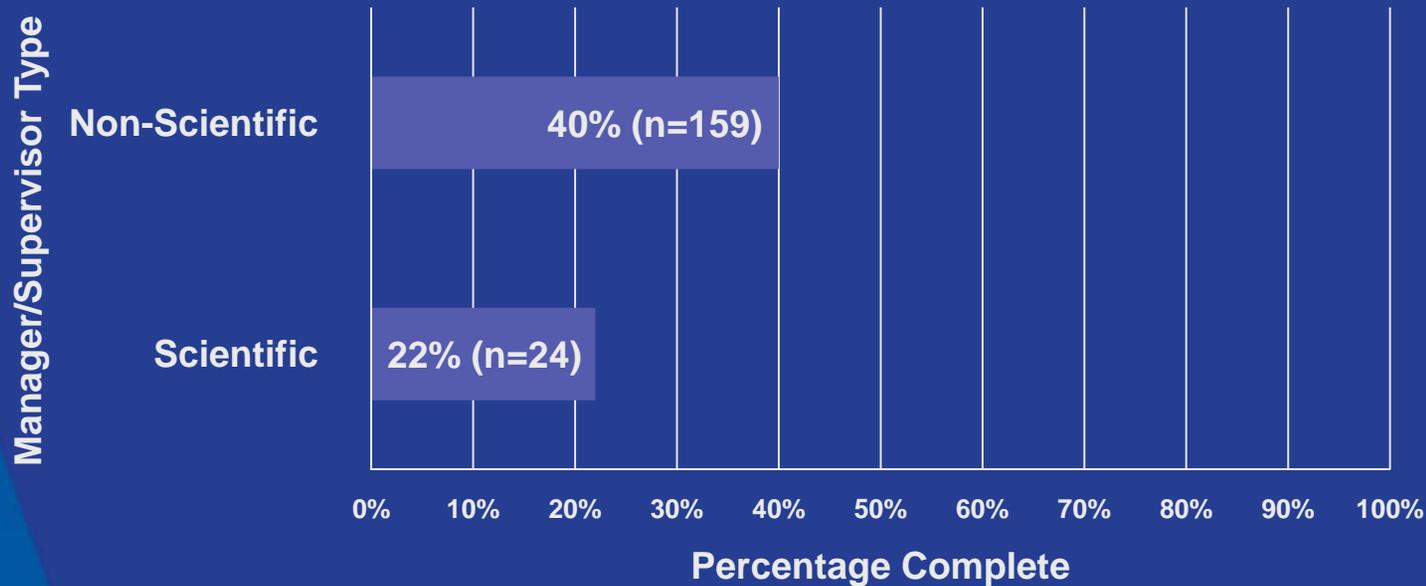
- We're a physics lab. We need the best, most creative and innovative physicists.
- But the same standards of management excellence and civil behavior apply to everyone.

# Management

- We have a problem.
- 43% of Fermilab supervisors have had NO management training. Among scientists, the percentage is much greater.
- Training is only one issue
- Fixing this must be a priority, because it leads to many other problems.

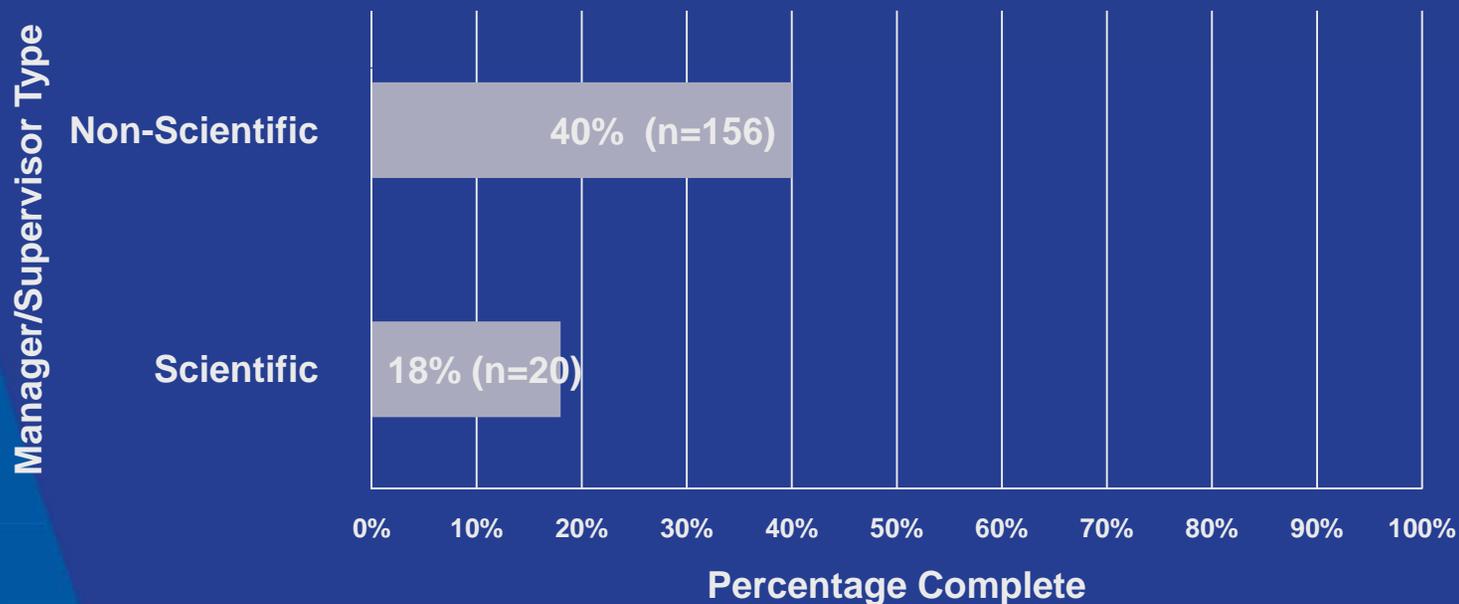
# Training: scientific/nonscientific managers

## Managing within the Law



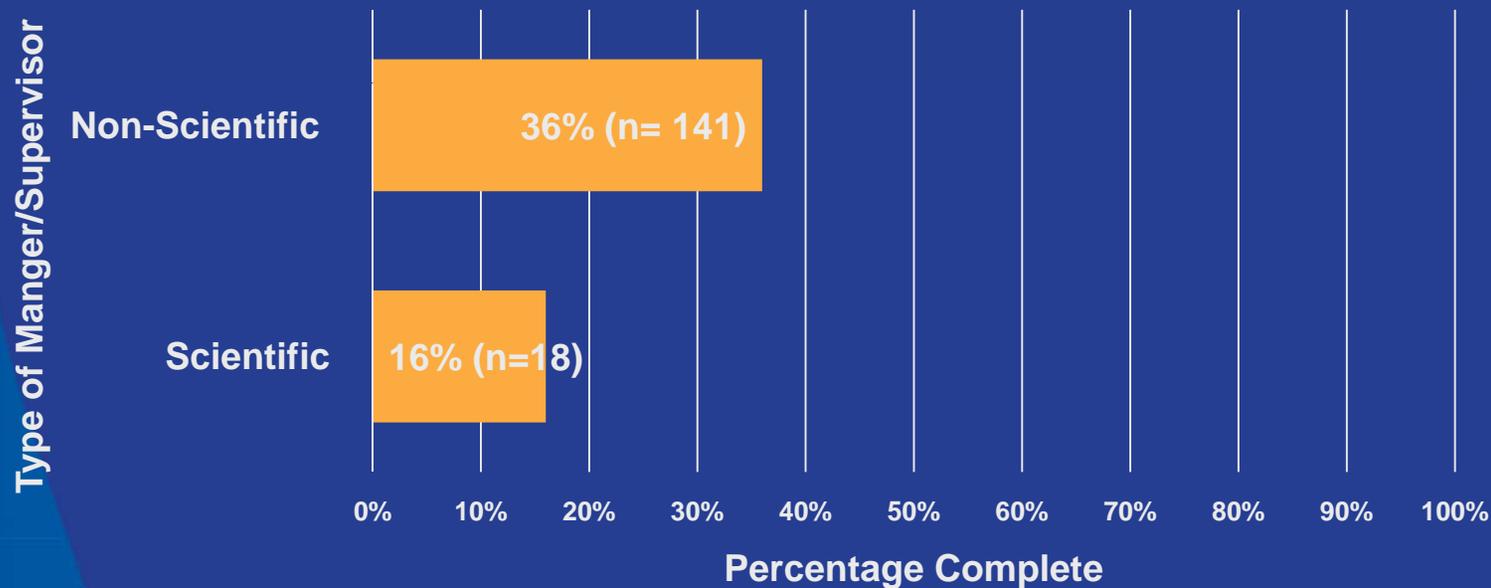
# Training: scientific/nonscientific managers

## Behavioral Interviewing

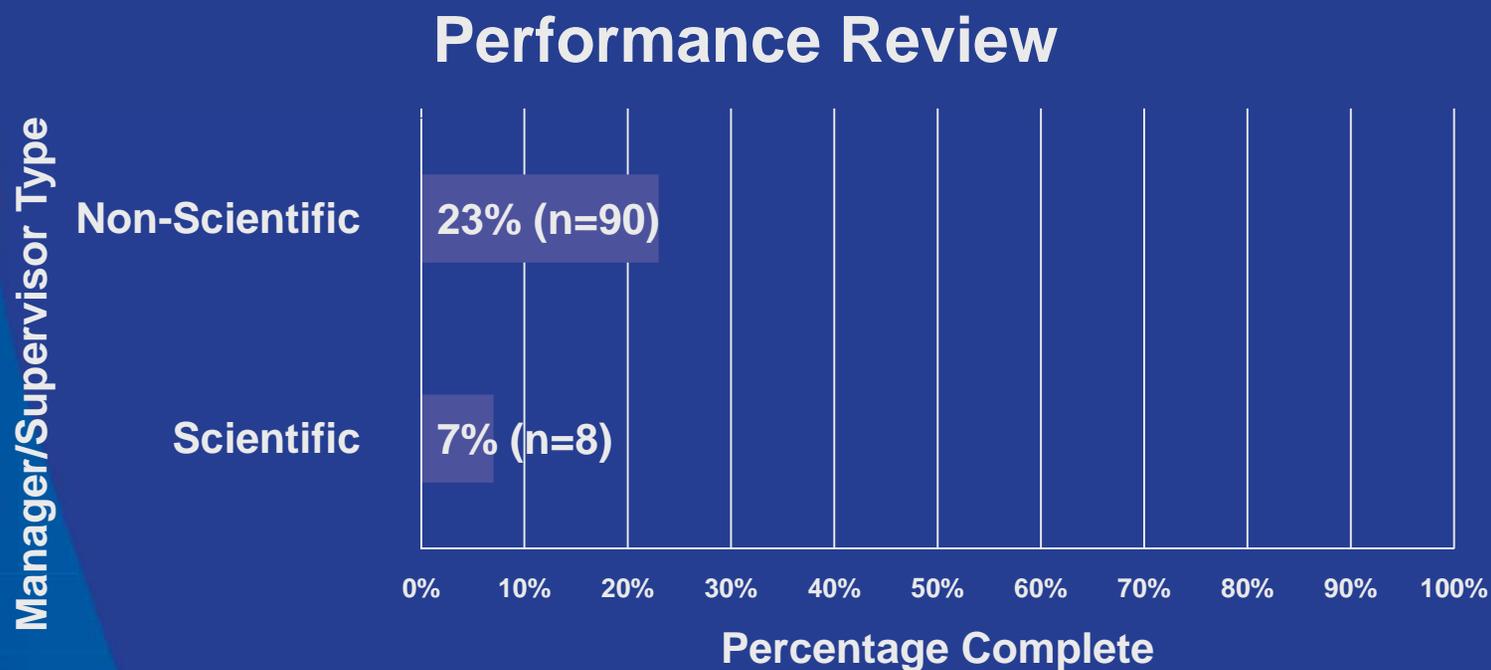


# Training: scientific/nonscientific managers

## Interaction Management

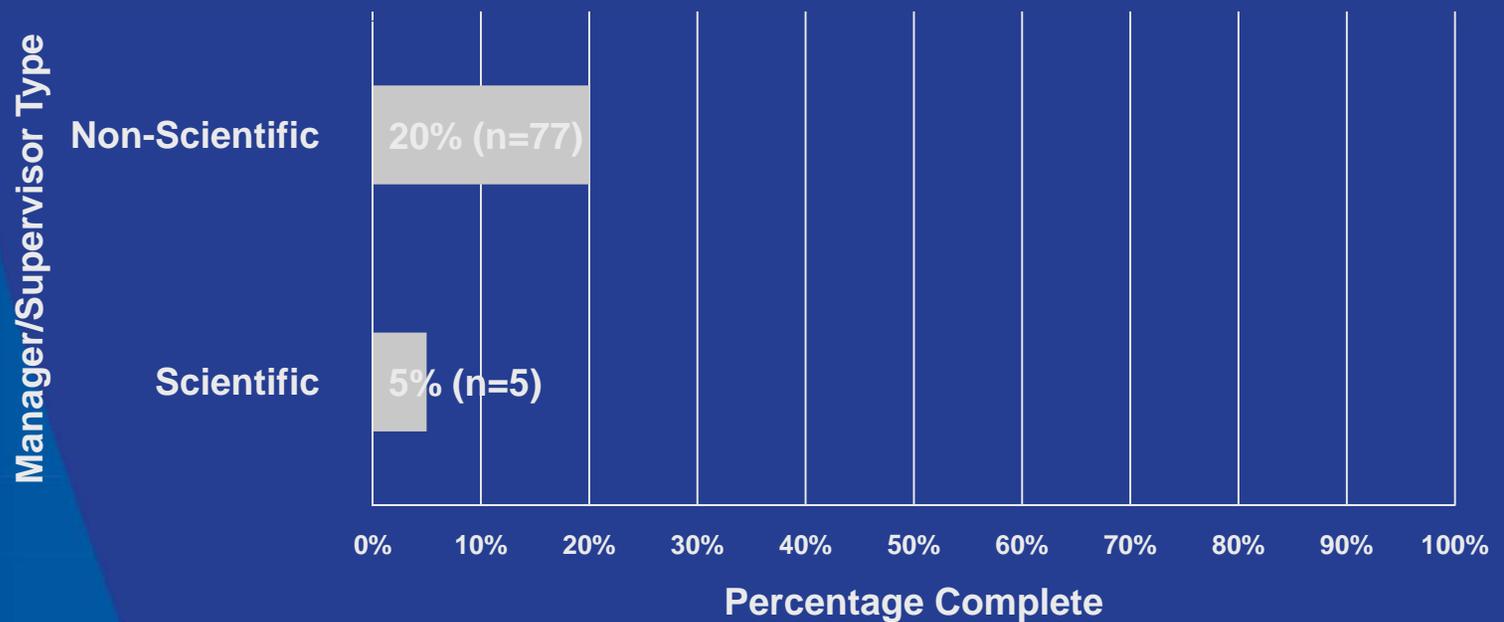


# Training: scientific/nonscientific managers



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## Fermilab Functions



## Direct reports/manager

Direct Reports	Percentage
1	15.6
2	15.6
3	15.4
4	13.3
5	9.6
6	9.4
7	4.7
8	2.9
9	3.1
10	2.6
Over 10	8.1

# Performance reviews/salary management

- To fix the performance review problem requires fixing the management problem.
- The best system in the world will only work when managers know how and why to implement it.

# Performance and Salary Review Matrix 2008/09

Zone	0 Does not Meet Expec	1 Meets Minimal Expect- ations	2 Competent	3 Commend- able	4 Excellent	5 Outstanding						
Zone 1	0	0	1.89	1.90	3.79	3.80	5.69	5.70	7.59	7.60	11.40	
Zone 2	0	0	0.94	0.95	2.84	2.85	4.74	4.75	6.64	6.65	9.50	
Zone 3	0	0	0.56	0.57	0.94	0.95	2.84	2.85	4.75	3.80	7.60	

## Employee support

- All-new ground-up WDRS Web site will make policies clear and accessible
- What do employees need post-orientation? Survey employees a month after starting work.
- HR is examining practices and will seek employee input on improvement.

# Family-friendly workplace

- Flex-time
  - Fair and consistent practices across organizations with different schedules and responsibilities.
  - Labwide principles, local implementation plans
- Sick leave and vacation policies
  - Managers must follow laboratory policy
- Investigate other family-friendly policies such as paternity leave.

## Going forward

- Internal laboratory “Citizens Task Force”
  - Represents all sectors and levels of the laboratory
  - ~15 people
  - Addresses focus-group issues
  - Provides guidance and recommendations to laboratory management
  - Open meetings—all can attend