**Video Title:** Open Door Policy & Chain of Command

**Video URL:** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWCiKujTPA0**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWCiKujTPA0)

**Run Time/Source:** 3:56, Frontline Leadership/YouTube

**Close Caption Available:** Yes

The open-door policy as a method of upward communication is mentioned on pages 194-195 of the textbook, and also on page 330 as a structural method for resolving conflict. This video about leadership looks at both the open-door policy and respecting the chain of command at the same time. As a frontline leader or a senior manager, you want to encourage people to come and talk to you about a variety of subjects, thereby having an open-door policy. According to this policy, anyone can talk to anyone (really a member of management) at any time and bring up a question or concern.

A big caution in a manager using the open-door policy is to encourage people to talk to you yet not violate the chain of command. (A chain of command is a list of who reports to whom.) When an employee talks to a higher-up about a problem or conflict, the higher-ranking manager should first ask the person if he or she had first talked about the concern with his or her immediate supervisor. The goal is to keep the open-door policy yet not violate the chain of command which is considered important in a hierarchical organization.

When asking the person whether the problem has first been run by the supervisor, you might receive a response such as “He would have shot down my idea.” As a senior leader you should not give the employee a decision. Instead, thank the person and indicate that you will investigate the situation by talking to the person’s immediate manager. When you talk to the employee’s immediate manager, mention that you have heard one side of the story and would like to hear more details. If you meet with the employee again, mention that you talked with his or her supervisor.

It is important to involve an employee’s immediate manager because you want to avoid establishing a mass mob mentality in which employees feel completely free to complain about their supervisor. Being able to maintain an open-door policy without violating the chain of command is an important management skill. Always discuss the problem with the immediate manager of the employees before reaching a decision about the problem or conflict.

*Questions for Thought and Discussion*

1. How might a practice of involving the employee’s immediate manager after a problem is brought to the attention of higher management weaken the open-door policy?

2. Give an example of how a member of an athletic team, amateur or professional, could violate the chain of command in making a complaint.

3. How would conflict stemming from being sexually harassed lend itself to resolution through an open-door policy?

4. Suppose the senior leader discusses an employee complaint with the employee’s immediate manager, and the manager says the complaint is completely unfounded. Now what should the senior leader do?

5. How might letting it be known that the chain of command will be respected cut down on any “mob mentality” surfacing about employee complaints?