

THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPERVISOR

9th December 2005

Author: Michael Brooke

Introduction

Supervising is like parenting. These are two of the most important jobs any one can do, but few people are adequately prepared or trained to do them. Most people learn by trial and error with varying degrees of success. But both jobs are far too important to be left to chance and the good news is that you can learn with some help and guidance how to be successful in them. This article will help you to be a more effective and efficient supervisor.

Supervisor's Role

In one sentence, write down what you think your main role as a supervisor is.
A role is a main activity or two that you are charged with undertaking.

The answers could be:

- Provide leadership and collaborative direction to my staff;
- To be a team leader
- To ensure my staff have the human and physical resources to undertake their work in an efficient manner

Supervisor's Responsibilities

Learning Activity

What are your main supervisory responsibilities in your present job?
List them on a separate piece of paper (you should have 8 to 12).

It is sometimes easier to think of these under two main headings:
(a) job related and (b) people related.

Once you have a list, then rank them in order of importance

When you have completed this activity, look at the examples other examples of supervisory responsibilities provided by the author.

Job Related

- Cost Control
- Equipment
- Goals
- Materials
- Plans
- Procedures
- Productivity
- Quality
- Standards
- Training

People Related

- Coaching
- Communicating
- Delegating
- Disciplining
- Leadership
- Managing yourself
- Motivating
- Supervising others

Learning Activity: Current Obstacles & Challenges

What obstacles do you personally face now that makes it difficult for you to fulfill some of these responsibilities? They may stem:

- (1) from you
- (2) from your unit or
- (3) the organization as a whole.

List them and then rank them in order of importance:

New Ways of Supervising

Over the years, the role of a supervisor has changed significantly from being a top down, autocratic order-giver to a team leader, coach and motivator.

- from ordering to asking; and consulting.
- from telling to listening and asking questions.
- from policing to coaching.
- from each person for himself to teamwork.
- from fear to mutual respect.

This change has come about, not because people are becoming "soft-hearted," but because it is now very clear that people are more productive if they are happy, motivated and upbeat. This takes place in an employee-friendly environment. The change is one of enlightened self-interest on the part of managers who decide what training is appropriate for their supervisors.

Guidelines for Supervisory Behavior

Without having a clear idea of what is acceptable behavior for a supervisory, you are likely to model your behavior after some role model in your life: a parent, a teacher, a boss. This could be good; but it could be disastrous if any of these people is dictatorial and demanding, or weak and indecisive.

A major benefit of this supervisory training program is that it provides you with guidelines about what is acceptable supervisory behavior, and what is not. It also provides you with the skills to bring about this behavioral change. Once you know this, you will be more confident in what you do, as you won't be wondering whether you are taking the right action. Also, if you train with other people, you will all learn the same skill set and you will be able to help each other in the future when challenges arise.

Supervisor's Self-Assessment Survey

The Self-Assessment of Supervisory Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes survey below may look formidable but it effectively outlines the areas that you need to eventually master in order to become an outstanding supervisor. Don't be dismayed, you don't have to master all these areas in a month or two. It will take time and you will need to systematically work away at one or two areas at a time.

Most supervisors get promoted because they are "good on the job." They are hard working, productive. Hopefully, they are also loyal to the company and a good team player. While this is a good start to being a good supervisor, there are other skills they need to develop in terms of leadership: how to inspire, motivate, coach, delegate, discipline, plan, team-build etc. This is what this program is about.

Self-Assessment Survey Directions

Read through the list below without marking it up, then the second time around, Put a YES, NO or MAYBE to record what you think your skill or knowledge level is. This will give you a good idea where your strengths and weaknesses are.

Supervisor's Self-Assessment Survey

Leadership

I have a clear understanding of the Company's goals and objectives
I understand how my role fits into the goals of the Company
I have a clear vision of the objectives of my area
I communicate the Company and area goals to the people under my supervision (my team) on a regular basis
I give frequent feedback to the people in my team to encourage their development and the achievement of their goals and objectives
I recognize and celebrate the successes of those in my team
I feel that the people in the Company are our most important assets
I believe that I treat others as I would like to be treated myself
I consciously work at setting an example of effective leadership
I am actively working on developing a positive self-image
My own enthusiasm is increasing the desire of my team to do better

Goal-setting

I have a written annual plan and personal performance goals which have been agreed upon by me and the person to whom I report
I work with my team regularly to help them set SMART goals that support their workplace development
I break down my annual goals into shorter-term goals
I review the progress of my goals regularly
I have a method for measuring and keeping track of my goal achievement
I ensure that the members of my team know on a regular basis the status of the Company's goal achievement
My goals for myself as a Foreman and for my team tie into the Company's goals
I set goals that stretch and challenge me
I achieve a high proportion of the goals I set
I enjoy challenges, and see them as opportunities for growth

Personal Productivity

I clearly understand my priorities
I spend only a small portion of my time in crisis management
I delegate work to others in an effective manner
My area of responsibility runs smoothly when I am not there
I accept personal responsibility when I make a mistake
I ensure that meetings I run have a clear agenda and start and finish on time
I plan my work in advance and work the plan
I rarely procrastinate or leave things to the last minute
I keep others informed, in advance, when I cannot meet their deadlines

Motivating Others

I give feedback on a timely basis
I know the people on my team well enough to understand what is important to them
I believe in the abilities of people on my team and communicate my confidence in them
I provide (or am instrumental in obtaining) training for the people on my team that they need to develop the skills necessary to do their job well
I ensure clear goals and expectations are set with those people who report to me
Morale in my department (team) is high
I always share credit for success
I ensure that people on my team are clear about what their responsibilities are
I ask questions and encourage people to find out answers to their concerns
I listen to the ideas of others
I am flexible in how things get done, providing the results are satisfactory
When things go wrong, I question what I could have done differently. I share responsibility.

Coaching for Success

I coach my people to help them achieve success in what they do
I provide one-on-one sessions with each person who reports to me
I ensure that during coaching sessions the other person(s) talk more than I do
I really listen to understand the concerns of others
I help others to be self-aware of the areas in which they need to improve or develop
I support the goals set by individuals on my team
I help members of my team to be accountable for their goals and performance
I deal openly, constructively and promptly with any negative performance issues
I encourage and ask for feedback on my own performance from my team

Communications and Building Relationships

I listen to understand the other person's perspective before I give mine
I always wait until others have finished talking before I speak; I don't interrupt
I spend time planning important communications, written or oral
I develop strong business relationships with the people on my team as well as with suppliers and customers
When people bring to my attention my own negative performance issues, I respond in a non-defensive manner
I speak calmly to people, not raising my voice, regardless of the issue at hand
If I have an issue with someone, I always deal directly with them, I do not talk behind their back
I observe others' non-verbal communication to assess how they are really feeling
I maintain an open mind in most discussions
I seek and consider other people's opinions

Dealing with Performance Issues

I deal with performance issues on a timely basis
I allow others to explain their viewpoint before coming to a conclusion
I see dealing with negative issues as an opportunity to train and develop people
I make sure that clear expectations are set and agreed upon with the individual after a performance issue discussion
I am willing to accept that my perception of an issue may not always be right
I avoid argument, accusation and sarcasm
I encourage others on my team to be open about their mistakes so that we can make corrections and learn

Team Building and Synergy

I see my position as Foreman as being a team leader and that those I supervise are all members of my team
I ensure that my team and its members have clear goals and expectations
I am willing to delegate responsibility to team members
I give regular feedback to the members of my team; not just about negative issues but I also regularly tell members of my team when they have performed well
Others see me as a team player
I follow through on commitments I make to team members
The results of team efforts are shared with members of the team (e.g. I do not take all the credit for my team's successes)
I actively promote team spirit and positive interpersonal relationships amongst the members of my team
As team leader, I move promptly to discourage behavior by individual(s) in my team when such behavior has a negative impact on team-building (e.g. "turf wars," "inner circles," "behind-back gossip" etc.

Managing Stress

I am aware of what causes me stress on the job and I manage those situations
I notice when team members are under stress and help them to deal with the situation
I discuss my concerns and problems with the person to whom I report
I do not take my work problems home, nor do I bring my home problems to work
I use small amounts of stress as a motivator
I enjoy most of the work I do
I strive to maintain a good balance between my workplace life and my home life
I eat a balanced diet
I exercise regularly

Enhancing Future Results

I am continually upgrading my skills
I am aware of areas I need to improve
I ask advice from people with more experience
I admit when I do not know something
I invest time in training or coaching others
I spend time weekly to study or read
I ask others regularly how they think I could improve

That is the conclusion of this article which I hope you have found helpful and informative.

Do check out my website too although it is not directly related to this subject, you may also find it interesting

<http://www.ehomebiz.org>

Michael Brooke is a retired university senior administrator last employed at the University of Victoria, British Columbia from 1990-96 as Deam of the Division of Continuing Education. He is a professional adult educator, a corporate trainer and recruiter and a published author.

He now spends his time with various hobbies including bee keeping, making stained glass windows, and writing. His Internet businesses keep him busy. Prosperity Automated System is his prime one which you can check out at <http://www.ehomebiz.org>. This is a fully automated marketing system that brings pre-qualified prospects to your site. He may be reached at wmbrooke@telus.net

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