

No longer one of the “Boys”

Basics of Supervision

Upon becoming a supervisor you have three choices;

- Remain being one of the boys
- I’m in charge now boys, so be on your toes!
- I continue to respect you and value your opinion as always, but my responsibilities have now changed.

In the first instance, you will end up being an irrelevance to your subordinates, your colleagues and your supervisor. In the second instance, your subordinates will find ways to cut you down to your previous status.

In the third instance it will be hard work.

In moving from being “one of the boys” to a good supervisor, you will struggle with some relationships. People will take time to work out how to deal with you and find out what your new role means for them.

To become a good supervisor, you must retain or gain equally the respect of your supervisor and subordinates and to a lesser extent your colleagues.

Getting Respect

To get respect, a supervisor must:

- Be honest – If you do something wrong, admit it and communicate with your team what you intend to do to correct the consequences of the mistake
- Be positive – Don’t dwell on personal or organisational negatives; take each problem as an opportunity to do better
- Be trusting – Let your subordinates make choices and take responsibility, learn how to delegate
- Be fair – Listen to everyone’s side of a story before reaching a conclusion
- Be assertive – Recognise your own rights as well as your subordinates rights; do not be aggressive or passive
- Be polite – Use “please” and “thank you”
- Be reliable – Keep promises. Show that you mean what you say
- Be a good listener – Give everybody your full attention And learn to listen reflectively, paraphrasing and summarising as you go
- Be accessible – Keep the door open even there is no physical door
- Show concern for individuals – Keep up-to-date with what is going in on their lives; it is the key to building rapport.

Eliminating Bias

A supervisor acts as a conduit between a manager and front line staff.

A supervisor will receive information from subordinates, colleagues, managers and suppliers about tasks to be done, about issues of importance and about the actions of other people.

A supervisor has to decide what to do, if anything, about all of this information.

To make an error in deciding what to do about an issue or about an individual when the information is not true causes great embarrassment for the supervisor and the other people involved and the loss of respect by others and potential accusations of bias.

Basing decisions on fact is the simplest way to eliminate suggestions of bias.

It is very important to be able to determine the difference between fact and opinion.

- **FACT** - something that is known to be true and can not be questioned. Expressing a fact involves stating the truth or saying what is real.
- **OPINION** - a personal view about what someone thinks of something. It is a view based on belief rather than evidence.

Focus on the goal and the task

It is easier for a supervisor to be seen to be consistent if they focus on a goal.

It is easier to maintain a position of authority and respect if supervisors focus on the tasks to achieve the goal whilst maintaining relationships than to focus on maintaining relationships.

People at work need a purpose. It is the purpose and its fulfilment that creates a feeling of wellbeing. For frontline people especially, the tasks they are required to complete form their purpose.

It is not that supervisors should not take care of their people, they should, however concentrating on the task as the first priority creates certainty and consistency.

	Low task	High task
High person	Low performance Low turnover Low grievance rate	High performance Low turnover Low grievance rate
Low person	Low performance High turnover High grievance rate	High performance High turnover High grievance rate

Managing your time

Time management is a misnomer.

The issue is about managing ourselves and the priorities we give to different activities.

The simplest means of organising yourself is a “To-do” list.

- “To-do” lists can be as simple as paper based lists or as complex as software such as Microsoft Outlook. Most people who do not have the discipline to update software programs.

A notebook and Post-It notes can be used at a desk by:

- Creating a master list of prioritised tasks (A,B,C)
- Using Post-It notes to write a visible reminder from the master list when tasks are due.

A diary can be also be used to create “To-do” lists and write reminders of when tasks are due.

A diary is very useful for those people who have jobs which require them to be on the move.

Communication

The purpose of communication as a supervisor is four fold. It is to have subordinates, colleagues and our bosses to:

- Understand
- Agree
- Care
- Act accordingly.

To fulfil that purpose we must use three different channels of communication:

- Facts
- Emotion
- Symbols.

We must also go through a process to check that people do understand, agree, care and do act accordingly.

Sometimes, the process is second nature to us and the individual with whom we are communicating.

Sometimes we need a more formal approach. We need to check that people do understand and they do know what to do and by when. (Standards are helpful in ensuring that people know what to do).

When people listen to us, they filter the communication based on their upbringing, personality, mood, thinking style and their previous experiences with us.

Different people therefore have different communications styles.

Different people have different communication preferences.

If we communicate to our colleagues, subordinates and bosses in a way in which they do not prefer, we run the risk of them not understanding what we say.

COMMUNICATION STYLES TABLE (from GST Telecom, formally Call America)

FACTORS:	EXPRESSER	DRIVER	RELATER	ANALYTICAL
How to Recognise:	They get excited.	They like their own way; decisive & strong viewpoints.	They like positive attention, to be helpful & to be regarded warmly.	They seek a lot of data, ask many questions, and behave methodically & systematically.
Tends to Ask:	Who? (the personal dominant question)	What (the results oriented question.)	Why? (The personal non-goal question.)	How? (The technical analytical question.)
What They Dislike:	Wasting time with too many boring facts.	Someone wasting their time trying to decide for them.	Rejection, treated impersonally, uncaring & unfeeling attitudes.	Making an error, being unprepared, spontaneity.
Reacts to Pressure and Tension By:	"Selling" their ideas or argumentative.	Taking charge taking more control.	Becoming silent, withdraws, introspective.	Seeking more data & information.
Best way to Deal With:	Get excited with them. Show emotion.	Let them be in charge.	Be supportive; show you care.	Provide lots of data & information.
Likes To Be Measured By:	Applause, feedback, recognition.	Results, Goal-oriented.	Friends, close relationships.	Activity & busyness that leads to results.
Must Be Allowed To:	Get ahead quickly. Likes challenges.	Is competitive. Likes to win.	Relax, feel, care, and know you care.	Make decisions at own pace, not pressured.
Will Improve With:	Recognition & some structure with which to reach the goal.	A position that requires cooperation with others.	A structure of goals & methods for achieving each goal.	Interpersonal and communication skills.
Likes to Save:	Effort. They rely heavily on hunches, intuition, feelings.	Time. They like to be efficient, get things done now.	Relationships. Friendship means a lot to them.	Face. They hate to make an error, be wrong or get caught without enough info.
For Best Results:	Inspire them to bigger & better accomplishments.	Allow them to do things their own way.	Care & provide specific plans & activities to be accomplished.	Structure a framework or "track" to follow.

Communication medium

The old maxim, "It's not what you say but how you say it", is true.

- You will need to use all channels (facts, emotions and symbols) in a large group and specific channels for a one-on-one to get your communication through
- You will also need to be clear on the choice of words (see the section of giving feedback for examples)
- You will need to be aware of your tone and pace of voice and your body language. When we listen to someone talking directly to us and we are trying to find out whether they really believe in what we tell them, people take into account the words we use, our tone and pace of voice and our body language.

The ratios are generally:

- Body Language: 55%
- Tonality: 38%
- Actual words: 7%.

When we do it by phone, the ratios are generally:

- Body language: 0
- Tonality: 75%
- Actual words: 25%.

Setting Goals

Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Realistic
- Timely.

Specific - A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you must answer the six "W" questions:

1. Who: Who is involved?
2. What: What do I want to accomplish?
3. Where: Identify a location.
4. When: Establish a time frame.
5. Which: Identify requirements and constraints.
6. Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

EXAMPLE: A general goal would be, "Improve customer service." But a specific goal would say, "Reduce negative written and telephone complaints from leisure and conference guests to one per month by December 2011 to increase guest return rate."

Measurable - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. If a goal cannot be measured accurately enough for the people being measured by it to believe in it, do not use that particular goal.

For a goal which is related to a standard e.g. Rake bunkers daily, consider if it is sensible to have a 100% attainment of the standard. The goal may be; meet the bunker raking standard on a minimum of 98% of all occasions. It may well be impossible to meet the standard 100% of the time without incurring very high costs or undertaking the activity at inappropriate times.

Actionable – Goals must be constructed such that doing something will progress an outcome towards the goal. For example a goal, “Build a customer service culture” is noble but difficult to action. If it is actioned, everybody will have a different interpretation of the action to take.

Realistic - To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress. A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labour of love.

Time Bound - A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there's no sense of urgency. If you want to lose 5 kg, when do you want to lose it by? "Someday" won't work. But if you anchor it within a timeframe, "by May 1st", then you've set your unconscious mind into motion to begin working on the goal.

Giving Feedback

The way in which feedback is given and received contributes to the learning process.

Feedback that is vague, judgmental and ill timed, is not as valuable as feedback that is specific, descriptive, timely, and practical. Similarly, although being criticised is often not pleasant, being open to well-intentioned, well-crafted feedback can only further a person's development.

When giving feedback, try to:

- Be specific rather than general. The more concrete the feedback is, the more useful it will be to the person receiving it. Thus, rather than saying, “Mike, sometimes you weren't clear in your explanations . . .” tell Mike exactly where he was vague and describe why you had trouble understanding him.
- Similarly, it's nice but not very helpful to say, “Joan, I thought you did an excellent job.” Rather, list the specific things that Joan did well. For example, she might have created a strong introduction for a presentation, used transitions advantageously in a written document, or communicated interest and enthusiasm. Tell her how these techniques contributed to the success of her work.
- Be descriptive, not evaluative. Focus on the effect the letter, memo, presentation, etc. had on you, rather than on how good or bad you perceive it to be.
 - For example, saying, “It's wrong to use indirect structure,” is a generalisation that may or may not be true in all cases. However, saying “I had trouble understanding the point of this memo until the very end,” can help the person realise that other readers may have the same reaction.
 - Remember, too, that some of your responses will come from your own perceptions (for example, in some cultures using direct structure is considered brusque if not rude.) Thus it's good practice to begin most feedback with, “In my opinion . . .” or, “In my experience . . .”
- Describe something the person can act upon. Commenting on the vocal quality of someone whose voice is naturally high pitched is only likely to discourage him/her. However, if the person's voice had a squeaky quality to it because he/she was nervous, you might say, “Barbara, you might want to breathe more deeply to relax yourself, and that will help lower the pitch of your voice as well.”
- Choose one or two things the person can concentrate on. People can usually act on only a few pieces of feedback at any one time. If they are overwhelmed with too many suggestions, they are likely to become frustrated. When giving feedback, call attention to those areas that need the most improvement.
- Avoid inferences about motives, intentions or feelings. To say, “You don't seem very enthusiastic about this presentation” is to imply something about the person. A better comment might be, “Varying your rate and volume of speaking would give you a more animated style.”

Feedback Sandwich

The sandwich technique is a simple, easy to remember technique of giving negative feedback.

Negative feedback is sandwiched between two elements of praise.

The following is an example of the sandwich technique of giving feedback:

- Praise: You were very calm in the face of that customer's emotional tirade. Keeping calm in the face of such an angry response is half the battle
- Criticism: When you responded straight away with, "Would you please calm down, Sir", it inflamed the situation. I suggest that as long as no-one else is being upset by the customer allow another 30 seconds for the customer to get the anger out of their system and then say something like, "I appreciate you are very angry about this Sir, can you tell me what has happened?"
- Praise: The customer was satisfied in the end that you solved their problem thanks to your creativity.

Managing Your Boss

Your boss is a human being. They have all of the emotional baggage that we carry; they have all of the pressures we carry and then some. They are not only responsible for what they do; they are accountable for all that we do and that our subordinates do.

- They are responsible for our progress and success
- They are busy
- When a boss seems to be micro-managing, they may just be reacting to those pressures and our inability to manage their expectations.

Managing Expectations

To manage a boss's expectations, we need to:

- Understand what they want us to do when
- To what quality
- At what cost.

We can do this two ways:

- Ask our boss to be very clear about exactly what he or she wants us to do, when and at what cost
 - Always paraphrase what our boss asks us to do – we will not get it right often from the first time of hearing
- Put a plan together and tell our boss what we plan to do when at what cost and have our boss critique our plan.

The practicalities of day-to-day working may preclude us from putting together a plan, but the principles still work. Either our boss tells us what to do exactly or we tell our boss what we are going to do or can do.

Receiving feedback

When you receive feedback, try to:

- Be open to what you are hearing. Being told that you need to improve yourself is not always easy, but, as we have pointed out, it's an important part of the learning process. Although you might feel hurt in response to criticism, try not to let those feelings deter you from using the feedback to your best advantage.

- If possible, take notes. If you can, take notes as you are hearing the other person's comments. Then you will have a record to refer to, and you might discover that the comments you thought were the harshest at the time they were being said were actually the most insightful and useful.
- Ask for specific examples, if you need to. If the critique you are receiving is vague or unfocused, ask the person to give you several specific examples of the point he/she is trying to make.
- Judge the feedback by the person who is giving it. You don't have to agree with every comment. Think about the person's credibility when assessing the validity of her/his statements. Ask other people if they agree with the person's critique.

In summary, be practical, tactful, and upbeat when giving and receiving feedback.

We welcome your comments.

Contact Kevin by email at kevin.dwyer@changeactory.com.au or via phone on +61 (0)408 508 490