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Supervisor and Supervisory Skills



Being a good supervisor is an important part of maintaining productivity and morale among staff. Individuals who are successful in this role often possess both interpersonal and management skills, plus an approachable, confident and supportive personality. A great supervisor is one who strives to continually learn, build upon their strengths and identify any areas of weakness in which to improve.

What is a supervisor?

A supervisor is a manager who closely oversees a small group or department of employees. Being a supervisor means overseeing the daily activities of those employees and guide them through their responsibilities. Supervisors usually perform the following duties:

- Schedule work shifts.
- Train employees for their roles.
- Give employees feedback on their performance.
- Solve workplace challenges or conflicts.
- Convey department goals and targets to their team.
- Communicate updates and status reports to upper management.

A successful supervisor is a good collaborator who communicates well and is comfortable taking the role of a leader.

Qualities of a good supervisor

There are several characteristics, habits and qualities that contribute to someone being a good supervisor. Employers value supervisors who are proactive, responsible, reliable and capable. The best supervisors aid each member of their team by helping them to grow and succeed. Here are some other elements of a good supervisor to consider:

- Resourceful and determined
- Values each member of their team equally
- Shows respect and consideration to both management and employees
- Capable of giving employees both positive feedback and constructive criticism
- Handles in-office conflict quickly and fairly

What are Supervisory Skills?

A **supervisor** is a front-line manager that is on the ground and working alongside the employees. They typically oversee a group of subordinates to confirm tasks are complete, evaluate employee performance, identify needs, provide resources for employees to perform tasks, and work as an agent between staff and upper management.

Every good supervisor needs a mix of soft and hard skills. Soft skills are social skills and consist of leadership/management, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, project management, and time/priority management. Hard skills are technical skills that one learns

through education or job experiences. Financial skills are a good example of a hard skill as it focuses on managing monetary distribution and effectiveness. All of these are **good supervisory skills** as they can help an individual lead and motivate their employees.

Types of Supervision Skills

- **Leadership/Management Skills:** Leadership skills are soft skills essential for effective leadership so that supervisors know how to use the talents of their employees. Successful supervisors are careful to 'lead' their subordinates rather than 'boss' them. Accomplished supervisors motivate employees through a positive work climate where employees feel valued, where needed resources are provided, and where realistic goals are set and achieved. Productivity and quality are the results of an effective supervisor. An example of good leadership/management skills would be assigning a group of employees who have been ability-matched to work on a project together. This leader would design the team with a common purpose and empower them to accomplish the task.
- **Communication:** Communication skills are soft skills that are crucial to a supervisor's success. Effective communication helps supervisors listen to the needs of both the organization and employees and create a clear, honest, and focused exchange of two-way communication. A good communicator fosters positive connections with employees and builds teamwork through convincing and confident verbal and non-verbal techniques. An example of good communication skills is listening to an employee's ideas or frustrations regarding feelings about a work situation.
- **Collaboration:** Being open-minded and having the ability to communicate, organize, and remain flexible are positive characteristics of collaboration. Good supervisor skills embrace remaining open to new ideas from employees in order to foster a team spirit. This adaptability motivates employees to feel they are trusted and active participants in their work environment. Soliciting input for projects or long-term goals is an example of collaboration.
- **Critical Thinking:** Solving problems through logic and research involves critical thinking. Supervisors with solid critical thinking skills have the ability to develop processes that are streamlined and effective for employees. These skills also help supervisors work through employee disputes, work independently and operate collaboratively when developing long-term goals. Critical thinking also occurs when supervisors need to strategize fix problems in order to make the company consistently

productive. Critical thinking is a soft skill that supervisors use in almost every aspect of employee interaction.

- **Financial Skills:** Most of the supervisors' decisions can make or cost a business a lot of money. For this reason, financial skills are identified as hard skills as they usually are developed through education or on-the-job experience. Financial skills enable supervisors to evaluate data to determine effectiveness for production, cost-saving measures, developing or balancing budgets. Most supervisors prepare financial data and reports for upper management to report progress or develop solutions.
- **Project Management:** Project Management involves the process of planning, organizing, and controlling resources in order to achieve a task. This soft skill combines many of the other supervisory skills, such as effective communication and leadership/management skills. In project management, supervisors communicate the vision and mission of a project and use interpersonal skills to develop a compatible team so that a project can be completed in a timely and cost-saving manner. A good example of project management skills would be leading a new group to develop the design of a new car.
- **Time/Priority Management:** This skill involves the process of planning, organizing, and controlling resources in order to achieve a task. Planning a project or developing fair employee schedules would require a supervisor to possess this soft skill. With this skill, supervisors are able to recognize effective multi-tasking, effective delegation, plan the length it would take to reach goals, and schedule tasks at the proper pacing. They also know how to streamline procedures in order to reduce waste, cost.
- **Approachability and empathy:** A good supervisor works closely with their team and should be easily accessible when questions, conflicts or issues arise. As a supervisor, you will need to listen when your employees come to you with workplace complaints or suggestions. This requires important social skills such as empathy and emotional intelligence (being aware of your own emotions as well as those of others).
- **Adaptability:** No list of good supervisory skills is complete without mentioning the ability to think and react quickly and efficiently. You may need to be able to strategize and make decisions based on an individual situation, rather than trying to follow a rigid protocol. Be flexible and creative in your problem-solving, and do not be afraid to

implement new ideas. Doing so can give your team more confidence and trust in your ability to lead.

- **Confidence and positivity:** Your attitude and demeanor are contagious and can greatly influence the atmosphere in your workplace. Try to approach each day and situation with positivity and optimism. Also, focus on showing confidence both in yourself and your team. As much as possible, show passion for the company and its objectives and inspire your team members can share that excitement. Supervisors lead by example as often as they lead by command.
- **Transparency:** While you will be required to keep some matters private, such as sensitive employee information or company trade secrets, try to operate as transparently as possible. Being a great supervisor means being honest and direct with your employees. Share with your staff any department or organization successes, failures, opportunities or concerns, as you deem appropriate.

Whenever possible, give them immediate feedback and encourage open dialogue. Also, have the humility to accept responsibility for any project failures or poor choices. This type of transparency and honesty can help boost your team's respect for you as a leader.

- **Teamwork:** Treat your employees more like equal team members than as subordinates. Rather than issuing a steady stream of orders and commands and expecting staff to stay on task, try to include them in the decision-making and strategizing processes. Treat them as partners and encourage collaboration.

A team-oriented approach makes for a more productive and positive workplace. If a conflict arises, be confident and firm in your supervisory role, but also remain neutral and unbiased. Ideally, each member of your team should feel valued and involved.

- **Willingness to learn:** Just because you're a team leader does not mean you know everything there about your job, your career or your industry. The best supervisor is always trying to enhance his or her skills and knowledge. You can learn not only from the people and employees around you but also from self-education opportunities provided through your workplace or online. Share what you learn with your team members, and encourage them to pursue their continued professional development as well.

How to be an effective supervisor

Whether you're a seasoned supervisor or you're just starting your first management job, you can always find ways to improve.

Here are some supervisory tips to remember:

- **Get feedback:** Ask other managers and your team for input and advice. Use this feedback to better handle a difficult scenario or to improve your own skills and knowledge.
- **Lead effective team meetings:** To get the most participation, productivity and results out of meetings, seek advice from a mentor or take a course on meeting management. An effective meeting environment is one your employees will want to attend and contribute to.
- **Find a trusted confidant:** As a supervisor, it's not appropriate to rant to your own staff. Instead of gossiping with another employee, find an unbiased and trustworthy friend, colleague, family member or even human resources professional with whom to talk or vent to about work.
- **Develop your interpersonal skills:** Just as a good supervisor always seeks out more training, experience and knowledge, to improve your employee interactions. Always think about how you can develop your people skills.
- **Accommodate change:** Be cognizant of how you handle change, as you will experience a lot of it in your supervisory role. Be ready to adapt to new processes or projects and to pass that adjustability on to your employees.
- **Delegate responsibilities:** Remember that you do not have to undertake every task yourself. Your responsibility as a supervisor is to make sure tasks are done properly and on time. Learn to let go by assigning these tasks to your employees and trusting in their abilities.

The Benefits of Good Supervisory Skills

A good team leader or staff supervisor can elevate the performance of their team and encourage every member to perform well. They work with the team and make sure they're on the right track and meet all company goals. However, supervisory skills do require time and effort to develop, because few people are born with innate leadership skills.

Having said that, it's never too late to add a professional with good supervisory skills to your team, as their leadership will improve the overall productivity. You can either hire someone who already has those skills, or you can promote from within and assist them with team leader training to speed up the development process.

1. Keeping the team organized:

A supervisor's primary role is to keep the team organized, and ensure everyone accomplishes their job well. They'll assign tasks to different members of the team, set goals, and keep track of sales. Without a supervisor, the team will have no common point of communication and no leadership, which can lead to problems down the line.

The supervisor also handles all projects, reports, and keeps track of performance reviews, and even handles any complaints and problems from the customers. That helps keep departments like sales running smoothly and without any big problems.

2. Improved productivity:

Supervisors act as a guiding force to help improve the overall productivity of the team.

They set small daily goals so that team members can see visible results of their efforts. For example, a sales team supervisor can set a goal of 10 closings every day and help the team reach that goal.

This ensures the team remains focused on their task and is more productive. They'll also address any problems the team members face and help them resolve the issues to ensure nothing hampers the productivity in the team.

3. Communications:

Supervisors are the point of communication between executives and the team members. A good supervisor has great communications skills and will establish a rapport with their team. They'll also make sure the team communicates well with each other and support one another to reach a common goal. Supervisors often establish the communication guidelines for the team and team members lead by example. If the supervisor is open and friendly, the team will follow through and establish open and friendly communication as well. This helps improve teamwork and that has a positive impact on the overall productivity as well.

4. Confidence:

A good leader and supervisor is confident in their own abilities and skills. They make decisions, provide clear instructions, and resolve conflicts in a firm in controlled manner.

That helps the team become more confident as well. They draw inspiration from the supervisor's confidence and inject some of it into their own work ethic. That helps them perform better, especially if they know their supervisor will support them if needed.

Competent and confident leaders usually have thriving and enthusiastic teams working under them.

5. Motivation on slow days:

Every team faces slow days and that can have an impact on any team member's mood and performance. A supervisor can help the team become more motivated on slow days and ensure they're working at the right pace to meet the goals.

When the morale is low, the supervisors work to lift the morale with challenges, contests or other driving incentives.

Supervisors are responsible for keeping everyone in the team on track.

6. Implementing changes:

Changes are never easy and can cause a great deal of havoc in the team.

For example, if the company introduces a new policy or new management takes over, the various teams can feel the impact of it on them. The productivity levels can drop, which can lead to a drop in performance, such as closings and profit for the sales team.

The supervisor can ensure the boat isn't rattled too much by the change. They will make sure all members of the team understand what kind of changes they can expect and adjust well to the storm. They will also set goals and clear targets to help the team transition. Without a supervisor, there will be a disconnect between the management and the team, which will lead to chaos.

7. Troubleshooting:

A good supervisor is also an expert problem solver. Any members of the team should be able to approach them if they have problems with other employees, if a client is being particularly stubborn, or if the client has complaints, etc.

The supervisor has the authority, knowledge, patience, and the ability to handle these problems and ensure they don't harm the business or hinder the goals.

This ability to handle problems at the team level ensures that all issues are addressed promptly and before they can impact productivity and the flow of work.

8. Representation:

The supervisor is the representative of their team when they interact with company executives. They provide the management reports on the team's performance, explain all or any of the milestones that they achieved, and inform the management about any problems or concerns the team might have.

A team can essentially communicate their interests and requirements to the management through the supervisor. They will also take responsibility of any failures and problems that happen due to the team. They're essentially the guardians of the team.

9. Training:

Supervisors should always keep a track of the team's performance, and know when the team members need a refresher course. For example, salespersons need to keep their skills sharp, and must undergo refresher training to ensure they don't fall into bad habits.

When any member of the team needs training, the supervisor will inform the HR department and make the relevant arrangements. As supervisors work closely with the team, they're aware of problems like low productivity, any increased number of mistakes and other such factors.

Management might not notice these problems until they have had a significant impact on something, such as the sales and revenue, or survey reports that show a drop in customer satisfaction. That can have an impact on the company's reputation and profits, which is why the matter should be addressed quickly.

Conclusion:

As you can see, your team and business can benefit if you hire a professional with good supervisory skills for your team.

You can also help one of the more experienced members of your team to learn how to be a good supervisor or team leader by offering them focused training for the job.

(Reference: Internet Resources)

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