



Successful Supervisor Part 1

The Critical Junction

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

This is the first part of a series of short articles on how to be or create a more successful supervisor. Each part will be posted in this blog. As of this writing, I cannot tell how many episodes there will be. Readers are encouraged to comment on any of the parts, which may create additional dialog along with more key points.

I believe one of the most challenging jobs in the management ranks is that of first line supervisor. Since different organizations use various terminology for the same function, let me define the role I am discussing in this series.

In every business, there is a junction between the working group of employees and the management levels. In most cases, the junction is between non-exempt and exempt employees. Individuals in these roles have huge responsibility and are often caught in a kind of squeeze play between management and workers. Think about your own situation, whether you are operating as a supervisor or trying to coach people in that role; this series provides ideas that can help make work life more enjoyable and effective regardless of your position.

The viewpoint from above

There is a whole ***network of management layers*** working in a matrix to accomplish organizational goals. The supervisor represents the layer that actually translates the needs of the organization directly to the people who actually make the product or provide the service. From this perspective, upper management counts on the supervisor level to keep things running efficiently and provide the motivational impetus to the workers (Note: this is often referred to erroneously as “motivating the troops” as I will describe in a future post.)

The viewpoint from below

There is a ***two-level system of workers and managers***. The supervisor is the person in the organization that is both worker and manager, but really this person represents

“management” to the workers. The supervisor becomes the focal point for everything going on in the organization, whether that is good or bad in the opinion of the workers.

These two distinct perspectives result in a kind of inter-organizational tension that the supervisor is supposed to resolve in both directions simultaneously. It is incredibly challenging because a statement that might be viewed as positive to the employees, might have the wrong spin from the management perspective, and vice versa.

Recognize that the supervisor role is often a thankless task that is poorly understood from both directions. If you are a management person who is blessed with individuals who are excellent at the supervisor role, consider yourself very lucky and cherish these people for the work they do. If you have people who are not well suited for this role, consider whether you should get them some training or perhaps find them a different role where they, and the organization, are simultaneously better off.

If you are or have been in a supervisor role yourself, I hope these articles provide some support and ideas to lighten your load. You have an incredibly important role to play, and often are not given the tools you need to do it well. I will offer many ideas and resources you can use to make your work experience more enjoyable and successful. Here is a partial list of the topics we will be discussing over the next several weeks:

- How to improve the initial success when a new supervisor is named
- How supervisors can maintain control without coming across as a tyrant
- The methods by which supervisors can build and maintain trust
- How to reduce the tendency to use rank as leverage
- How to employ peer pressure without the danger of backlash
- Techniques to please both the top brass as well as the workers simultaneously
- The secret to inspiring motivation, and the mistakes to avoid in doing so
- How body language is the most valuable communication tool that is often overlooked or misunderstood
- How to see what is really going on and not be fooled by the appearance of things
- Employing superior listening techniques to get to a full understanding
- Why Emotional Intelligence is the key leadership skill and how to harness it
- How to give more effective employee reviews that drive true motivation
- The steps to create a great culture where everyone is fully engaged

Whether you are a new supervisor, an incumbent supervisor, or a manager who is coaching supervisors, this series of articles will provide accessible education and insight at no cost. The segments are laid out in small chunks of pragmatic and tested advice that will provide the basis for continuous improvement and excellence in supervisory skills. Please join us for this series by clicking on the “Sign me up” button on the right

side of your screen. You will receive an e-mail every time a new episode is posted (usually once a week).

This is a part in a series of articles on “Successful Supervision.” The entire series can be viewed on www.leadergrow.com/articles/supervision or on this blog.

*Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of four books: 1. *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals* (2003), 2. *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online* (2006), 3. *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind* (2009), and 4. *Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change* (2014). In addition, he has authored over 500 articles and videos on various topics in leadership and trust. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations. For more information, or to bring Bob in to speak at your next event, **contact him at www.Leadergrow.com, bwhipple@leadergrow.com or 585.392.7763***