Basic Supervisory Skills

Stan Brown
City Manager
City of Oakwood
"In organizations, real power and energy is generated through relationships. The patterns of relationships and the capacities to form them are more important than tasks, functions, roles, and positions."

Margaret Wheatley
Compared with those of the 1970s, today’s local governments...

- Are more complex
- Employ more people with nongovernmental backgrounds
- Provide a broader scope of services
- Have more influence on citizens’ daily lives
- Tend to be flatter organizations, with more emphasis on teams.

**How the Workplace has Changed**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>1970s</th>
<th>Today</th>
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<tr>
<td>Relatively predictable</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power based</td>
<td>Relationship based</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Cooperative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emphasis on independent work</td>
<td>Emphasis on team work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emphasis on “working harder”</td>
<td>Emphasis on “working smarter”</td>
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**Four Factors Changing the Character of Local Government**

1. Demographic changes
2. Technological changes
3. Changes in legal accountability
4. Shifts in employees’ expectations and attitudes
Changes in Employees Expectations and Attitudes

Many employees today….

• Expect their jobs to fulfill needs for friendship, affirmation, and acceptance
• Seek a balance between work and home
• View their talents and skills as commodities to be marketed
• See their careers as cyclical, not linear
• Look for jobs that are interesting, meaningful, and enjoyable.

Top-down hierarchical management is giving way to self-managed teams in which the supervisor plays the role of liaison.

Supervisory Skills
Four Fundamental Tasks of Supervisors

1. Achieving pre-defined results and outcomes
2. Sustaining a spirit of teamwork and cooperation
3. Continually developing the skills and talents of employees
4. Fostering a work environment that is flexible but in which accountability is maintained

To Build Good Working Relationships,

• Respect and listen to employees
• Help set goals
• Involve employees in decisions
• Communicate frequently

Delegation responsibility effectively

Find the right balance between being “one of the gang” and being the person in charge
• Relate to everyone on the work team equally well
• Be fair, compassionate, and predictable
To Cultivate a Management Attitude,

• Learn the larger goals and processes of the organization

• Help employees understand how their work fits into the organization’s goals and processes

• Encourage employees to develop a forward-looking attitude.

If you are not quite sure how to be a better supervisor, try asking your employees.

Questions for the Supervisor to Help Measure the Strength of a Workplace

1. Do I know what is expected of me?
2. Do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
3. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
Questions for the Supervisor to Help Measure the Strength of a Workplace

4. Does my supervisor, or someone else, care about me as a person?
5. Is there someone who encourages my development?
6. Do my opinions seem to count?
7. In the last six months, has someone talked to me about my progress?

“We believe that civilized society cannot function effectively without effective government.”

David Osborne and Ted Gaebler

Competing Values Framework: Categories of Management and Leadership Skills

1. Clan skills
2. Adhocracy skills
3. Market skills
4. Hierarchy skills
Clan Skills

• Communicating supportively
• Building teams and teamwork
• Empowering

Adhocracy Skills

Robert H. Waterman, Jr. defined adhocracy as "any form of organization that cuts across normal bureaucratic lines to capture opportunities, solve problems, and get results".

• Solving problems creatively
• Articulating a vision
• Fostering innovation

Supervisors Who Identify and Resolve Problems Early On

• Are approachable
• Budget the time to evaluate potential risks within the context of the work team’s mission and goals, and the organization’s expected outcomes
• Actively watch for small signs of trouble
• Look for trends or patterns that may indicate that a problem is developing.
Market Skills

- Motivating others
- Gaining power and influence
- Managing conflict

Hierarchy skills

- Managing personal stress
- Managing time
- Maintaining self-awareness
- Analytical problem solving

Supervisory Situation 4/1
1. If you were to take over Bill Johnson’s supervisory role, would you handle the crew differently from Bill? If so, how?

2. What are specific leadership skills that Bill could practice to help his unit function as a team?

Supervisory Leadership

The Three Sources of a Supervisor’s Influence

1. **Role**: The more a supervisor has to rely on the power of role to influence people, the less real leadership may be exerted.

2. **Reputation**: A supervisor’s image—what others say about the supervisor—can add to or detract from his or her ability to exert positive influence.

3. **Behavior**: Behavior is a better predictor of effective leadership than personal traits.
The Three Conditions for Influence

1. **Trustworthiness**: Most people are reluctant to allow those they don’t trust to exert influence.

2. **Expertise**: We are more likely to be influenced by people who have a high level of expertise.

3. **Attractiveness**: People are more likely to be influenced by people who have values and beliefs that are similar to theirs.

What qualities or characteristics do you believe to be important for leaders in your local government organization?

“Researchers have failed to uncover any single group of qualities that characterize all leaders; nor have they found any one leadership style that characterizes all effective leaders.”
Supervisory Situation 4/2

1. What did Barb do right when assuming her new leadership position? What mistakes did she make?

2. Should Barb use her performance review to get assistance or advice from her supervisor? What help should she ask for?

Organizing for Productivity
Advantages of Using Teams

• Different perspectives, views, and skills, resulting in better decisions
• Breakdown of organizational barriers
• Use of hidden talents

Advantages of Using Teams

• Synergy
• Promotion of communication and participation
• Skill development
• Improved quality of work life

Groups Versus Teams

Groups
• Members have no sense of responsibility to each other
• No collaborative effort to accomplish common goals
• Little or no concern for the outcome of a project
• Absence of unified effort

Teams
• Members support one another
• Members work toward common goals
• Members value one another for their participation
• Genuine trust
• Sense of camaraderie
Four Main Stages of Team Development

1. Forming
2. Norming
3. Storming
4. Performing
5. Adjourning

Seven Steps to Teamwork

1. Show team members where they fit into the system.
2. Hold frequent meetings with team members.
3. Set goals with team members.
4. Encourage team members to suggest solutions to problems.
5. Let team members tell you things you may not like to hear.
7. Respect diversity.
When a Work Group becomes a Team

• Workers gain a sense of belonging
• The whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts

The Supervisor’s Responsibilities as Team Leader

• Involving employees in decision making
• Delegating
• Identifying and resolving problems
• Making jobs more interesting and rewarding

The Supervisor’s Responsibilities as Team Leader

• Integrating employees’ personal goals into organizational goals
• Evaluating progress
• Determining when goals have been met
Empowering a team

• Actively involve employees in areas of decision making traditionally reserved to management.
• Develop leadership skills of employees.
• Provide support.

Empowering a team

• Help team members develop confidence in their own abilities.
• Encourage team members to respect themselves and one another.
• Get to know team members' characteristics and behavior patterns.

Communicating with Employees
"Word is not crystal, transparent and unchanged; it is the skin of a living thought and may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and the time in which it is used."

Oliver Wendell Holmes

The Average Supervisor Spends 80% of the Day in Verbal Communication

- Face-to-face with an individual
- Face-to-face with a group
- Over the telephone
- In written memos or letters
- Through e-mail

Communication is “the exchange of information, facts, ideas, and meanings.”
Components of Communication

- Sender
- Message
- Medium
- Receiver
- Feedback
- Noise

Nonverbal Communication

- Tone of voice
- Pitch
- Emphasis
- Speed
- Loudness
- Pauses

Nonverbal Communication

- Body language
  - Posture
  - Hand gestures
  - Facial expressions
  - Eye contact
Nonverbal Communication

- Personal space: Proximity to comfort zone
- Personal style
  -- Clothes
  -- Way you carry yourself
  -- Volume you use when speaking

Barriers to Effective Communication

On the part of the sender
- Lack of clarity about goal of message
- Failure to adapt message to receiver
- Failure to ask for feedback
- Misinterpretation of feedback
- Failure to clarify the message on the basis of feedback

On the part of the receiver
- Failure to hear entire message
- Misinterpretation of message
- Inattention, distraction, or emotion
- Rejection because message contradicts beliefs or assumptions
- Failure to ask for clarification
Steps for Improving Communication

• Review message in your head; consider meaning and clarity.
• Use language and nonverbal cues that receiver will easily understand.
• Ask for feedback.
• Avoid defensiveness.

Steps for Improving Communication

• Think about who the receiver is and his or her emotional state.
• Clarify your objective in sending message.
• Make physical surroundings comfortable and free of distractions.

Tips for Giving Feedback

• Give feedback promptly.
• Be descriptive rather than evaluative.
• Describe concrete events; be specific.
**Tips for Giving Feedback**

- Offer feedback, do not impose it.
- Avoid overload; focus on what is most important.
- Avoid emotional words and phrases.
- Don’t avoid giving feedback; this may give a negative message.
- Ask employees for feedback on your performance.

**Tips For Receiving Feedback**

- Make sure you are ready to hear things that may make you uncomfortable.
- Monitor your reactions carefully.
- Ask for clarification if needed.
- Do not debate validity of the other person’s opinions.
- Express your appreciation for feedback.

**Active Listening**

- Face speaker and look at him or her attentively.
- Use appropriate facial expressions; nod or say, “I see.”
- Wait patiently for speaker to gather his or her thoughts.
- Avoid interrupting.
Active Listening

• Listen for and acknowledge feelings; note both verbal and nonverbal messages.
• Do not make judgments.
• Give feedback on or paraphrase what was said.
• Ask open-ended questions.

Supervisory Situation 9/1

1. What were the active listening steps that each employee was asked to follow?

2. How do you think active listening may have helped in this case?
Coaching, Counseling, and Mentoring

“In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.”

~Eric Hoffer

Hats Worn by Today’s Supervisors

• Role model
• Boss
• Adviser
• Disciplinarian
• Teacher
• Friend
Three Supervisory Roles

Coach
• Tries to improve performance and abilities
• Sets goals
• Provides advice on how to achieve goals

Counselor
• Helps employees address performance problems stemming from personal circumstances

Mentor
• Acts as a role model
• Provides opportunities for personal and professional growth

Principles for Coaching

1. Clarify your coaching role
2. Engage employees’ interests and passions
   – Offer “stretch” assignments
3. Be a conversation partner
   – Have regular, frequent discussions about performance
4. Define business results
5. Clarify performance expectations
6. Build dynamic capability
   – Help employees prepare for change
   – Help employees learn to learn
7. Recognize “teachable moments”
8. Use multiple coaching media
9. Provide recognition and rewards
Three Aspects of Delegation

• Responsibility
• Authority
• Accountability

Tips for Effective Delegation

• Be clear about what you want done.
• Choose the right employee for the task.
• Give the employee time and space to complete the assignment.
• Maintain open communication and check on progress.
• Do not rescue the employee.
• Give employee the necessary authority to complete the task.

Tips for Effective Delegation

• Hold the employee accountable.
• Recognize the employee’s accomplishments.
• Consider delegating new responsibilities beyond the specific work of your team.
  – Serving on a committee
  – Leading a cross-departmental work team
  – Teaching other employees a task
  – Researching and reporting on a new business practice
  – Attending a high-level meeting
1. What are some coaching tips that may help Hassan teach his crew new techniques?

2. How can Hassan motivate his crew to participate more fully in his daily meetings?

Basics of Effective Counseling

- Empathy
  - Acknowledging and affirming another’s emotional state

- Caring
  - Respecting individuality and preferences
  - Understanding the need for time and personal space
  - Accepting opinions, beliefs, and emotions as valid
  - Treating employees fairly

- Listening
- Confidentiality
A Mentor

• Serves as inspiration for personal growth and development
• Supports the employee on his or her career path
• Acts as a sounding board for difficult decisions
• Serves as an ally and adviser.

Mentoring in a Formal Setting

1. Set a time limit on the relationship of not more than a year.
2. Schedule regular meetings.
3. Find a protégé who does not report directly to you.
4. Seek a mentor of your own who can guide you in mentoring others.

Benefits of Mentoring

• Stretches employees and helps them broaden their skill sets
• Helps to develop leadership for the organization
• Passes on institutional memory
• Fosters collaboration
• Can ease the transition to new assignments
• Can help facilitate organizational change
Small-group assignment:
**Coach, Counsel, Mentor**

- Discuss the supervisory skill assigned to your group and define the term.
- List the characteristics that define the supervisory skill assigned and then prioritize them.
- Develop a list of do’s and don'ts for the skill assigned—and when it is appropriate to use that skill.
- You have 20 minutes.

**Coach, Counsel, Mentor**

With your neighbor, discuss:

- A time when you coached an employee / or were coached and its effectiveness
- A time when you counseled an employee / or were counseled and its effectiveness
- A time when you mentored an employee / or were mentored and its effectiveness

Supervisory Situation 10/2
1. If you were Sandy, how would you begin your discussion with Leo?

2. What type of questions might help you determine more clearly whether Leo has a problem and how you might help remedy it?

Motivating Employees

“A leader’s role is to raise people’s aspirations for what they can become and to release their energies so they will try to get there.”

David Gergen
Research Findings on Motivation

• Whatever people do, they do to satisfy a need.

• Raises, bonuses, and fringe benefits may not be the best way to encourage productivity.

• Employees' attitudes toward their jobs are largely the result of past experiences.

• Every employee is different; what motivates one member of a work group may not motivate another.

Four “Types” Motivated by Public Service

1. Samaritans
2. Communitarians
3. Patriots
4. Humanitarians

To Release Higher Levels of Motivation in Employees, *Supervisors Need to*

• Provide fair and accurate performance appraisal
• Demonstrate concern for employees' job satisfaction
• Recognize and acknowledge good work
To Release Higher Levels of Motivation in Employees, Supervisors Need to

- Involve employees in decision making and goal setting
- Create conditions that will help get the work done more efficiently and effectively
- Regularly talk with and listen to employees.

Strategies for Identifying Employee Motivations

- Informal dialogue or survey
- Focus groups
- Self-assessment exercises
- 360-degree assessments

Strategies for increasing job satisfaction and motivation

Job redesign
- Assigning additional responsibility for planning work
- Allowing employees to set their own work pace
- Changing the types of tasks undertaken regularly
Strategies for Increasing Job Satisfaction and Motivation

Job rotation
• Having employees take on different jobs for a specific period (cross-training)
• Providing something new for employees to learn

Approaches for Developing Positive Behavior among Employees

• Reward desired behavior promptly
• Fit the person to the task
• Use positive reinforcement
• Be a teacher, mentor and guide
• Celebrate success

Planning Work and Time
"There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all."

Peter F. Drucker

Good Planning Can

• Help you stay on top of things
• Give you time to do those things you must do and want to do
• Help produce better results
• Reduce stress.

For supervisors, Planning Means Determining

• What needs to be done
• The order of the tasks
• When the work must be completed
• What support will be needed to complete it
• Who will do the work
• What the expected quality of the results will be
Planning Also Means

• Scheduling your time and the time of your employees

• Scheduling the use of equipment, materials, and any other resources needed to get the job done.

Elements of an Effective Work Plan

• A clear statement of the specific work goals to be accomplished

• A step-by-step description of the tasks requiring completion

• A schedule that details the people and supplies that are needed to reach the goals

• A description of ways to measure progress and results

Five Steps for Planning Work

1. State goals
2. Streamline the work
3. List objectives, tasks, and activities
4. Schedule resources
5. Check on progress
Goal Statements Should Be SMART

• Specific
• Measurable
• Aligned
• Results based
• Time bound

The Purpose of Goals

• To serve as a target
• To state exactly what must be done, who must do it, and when it must be completed
• To foster trust throughout a work group or organization
• To provide a means for measuring progress
• To help set priorities

To Check on Progress, Ask

• Are we on schedule?
• Is the work being done correctly?
• Are the quality and service level as expected?
• Can we improve on our processes for next time?
• Could any part of the operation be improved by teaching new skills?
Most supervisors spend only 20% of their time on the activities that produce 80% of the results...this means that 80% of their time is spent on work that has little payoff.

Improving Time Management

• Concentrate on doing those things that help your team reach goals.
• Identify your top priority and tackle that first.
• Break large projects into smaller parts.
• Keep a log for one week to see how you are using our time.

Time-Saving Tips

• Jot down the main points you want to discuss before you make a phone call.
• Be friendly on the phone, but businesslike.
• To avoid playing “phone tag,” make phone appointments.
• Visit employees where they are working.
**Time-Saving Tips**

- Schedule a block of time for employees to drop by with questions or concerns.
- Include time in your schedule for unexpected interruptions.
- Use a day-planner.
- Delegate effectively.

**Individual assignment: Action plans**

- Select a goal related to supervisory skills that you will continue to strive toward.
- Write down at least three steps that you will take to meet this goal.
  - Be realistic and specific.
  - Make at least one step something that you can accomplish in the next two weeks.

**Supervisory Situations 5/1 & 2**
Supervisory Situation 5/1

1. What are the steps Joan’s team is likely to follow in developing their strategic plan?
2. What role would you see Joan taking with her team during the planning process?

Supervisory Situation 5/2

1. What other problems may occur if Donna follows through with her proposed solution?
2. What are some ways Donna might alleviate her problem, without overburdening her staff?