CHAPTER ONE

The Supervisor’s Job

Learning objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Define supervision.
2. Describe the work of a supervisor.
3. Present the types of skills necessary to perform the job of supervision.
4. State the key reasons for supervisory success.
5. Explain the glass ceiling concept.
Global Insurance is a worldwide company with several thousand employees. Jane Harris and John Lewis are employees in one of the company’s claims-processing offices. Both have been with the company for approximately six years. This morning, their department head, Les Thomas, gave Jane and John a big shock. He asked both of them if they would like to become supervisors in the claims-processing office. Les explained that two of the supervisors in the department were being promoted and that he needed two new supervisors. Les also stated that he felt that Jane and John would make good supervisors because they knew the job and knew the people in the department. Les asked both of them to think it over and let him know their decisions the next day. Later, John saw Jane at lunch and they began discussing the possibilities of the new jobs. However, both of them agreed that they had never given much thought to being a supervisor. Both wondered just what that would entail.

SUPERVISION DILEMMA

What Is Supervision?

Supervision is defined in this book as the first level of management in the organization and is concerned with encouraging the members of a work unit to contribute positively toward accomplishing the organization’s goals and objectives. This means that the supervisor does not do the operative work but sees that it is accomplished through the efforts of others.

Although the definition is simple, the job of supervision is quite complex. The supervisor must learn to make good decisions, communicate well with people, make proper work assignments, delegate, plan, train people, motivate people, appraise performance, and deal with various specialists in other departments. The varied work of the supervisor is extremely difficult to master. Yet mastery of supervision is vital to organizational success because supervisors are the management persons that most employees see and deal with every day.

Who Are Supervisors?

The need for supervision dates back to biblical times. When Moses was attempting to lead the people of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land, his father-in-law, Jethro, advised him as follows:

Find some capable, godly, honest men who hate bribes and appoint them as judges, 1 judge for each 1,000 people; he in turn will have 10 judges under him, each in charge of 100; and under each of them will be 2 judges, each responsible for the affairs of 50 people; and each of these will have 5 judges beneath him, each counseling 10 persons.

Figure 1.1 shows the form of organization suggested to Moses. It contains the three levels of management that exist in most organizations. The top management of private enterprise organizations usually includes the chairman of the board, the president, and the senior vice presidents. This level of management establishes the goals and objectives of the organization and the policies necessary to achieve them. Middle management includes all employees below the top-management level who manage other managers. A supervisor’s boss is normally classified as a middle manager. Middle management develops the departmental objectives and procedures necessary to achieve the organizational goals and objectives.
The third level of management includes supervisors. Supervisors manage operative employees—those who physically produce an organization’s goods and services. Many names are used to describe the people who supervise. These names vary from industry to industry. Figure 1.2 lists some of the names given to supervisory jobs in different types of organizations. Regardless of the name, a supervisor is the manager who serves as the link between operative employees and all other managers.

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and the Taft-Hartley Labor Act contain conditions that determine whether a person is considered to be a supervisor. The FLSA states that a person is considered to be a member of management if the person is paid on a salary basis rather than an hourly basis and if the primary duties of the person are administrative, professional, or supervisory in nature. The Taft-Hartley Labor Act provides two guidelines in determining whether an employee is a member of management: (1) an employee is paid a specified base salary that is supposed to indicate managerial or professional
status and (2) the duties or responsibilities of the job are associated with managerial or professional work. Generally, such duties require the employee to exercise judgment for a group of employees.

Sources of Supervisory Talent

The vast majority of new supervisors are promoted from the ranks of operative employees. Employees with good technical skills and good work records are the ones who are normally selected by management for supervisory jobs.

However, it should be noted that good technical skills and a good work record do not necessarily make a person a good supervisor. In fact, sometimes these attributes can act adversely to productive supervisory practices. As will be seen later in this chapter, other skills are also required to be an effective supervisor. Officers of labor unions are sometimes chosen for supervisory jobs. Because union officers are elected, it can be assumed that the voting employees view them as having some leadership abilities. Thus, they are a source of supervisory talent. Another source is new college graduates. Many organizations place such graduates in supervisory jobs after a brief training period.

Figure 1.3 shows a normal progression into supervision. A person who gets into supervision does not necessarily stop progressing. It is possible to rise from supervision to the top of the organization. In fact, developing the skills required for supervision prepares a person for higher levels of management.

The Functions of Supervision

The complex work of supervision is often categorized into five areas, called the functions of management or the functions of supervision. These functions are planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling.
Planning involves determining the most effective means for achieving the work of the unit. Generally, planning includes three steps:

1. Determining the present situation. Assess such things as the present condition of the equipment, the attitude of employees, and the availability of materials.
2. Determining the objectives. The objectives for a work unit are usually established by higher levels of management.
3. Determining the most effective way of attaining the objectives. Given the present situation, what actions are necessary to reach the objectives?

Everyone follows these three steps in making personal plans. However, the supervisor makes plans, not for a single person, but for a group of people. This complicates the entire process.

Organizing involves distributing the work among the employees in the work group and arranging the work so that it flows smoothly. The supervisor carries out the work of organizing through the general structure established by higher levels of management. Thus, the supervisor functions within a general structure and is usually given specific work assignments from higher levels of management. The supervisor then sees that the specific work assignments are done.

Staffing is concerned with obtaining and developing good people. Since supervisors accomplish their work through others, staffing is an extremely important function.

Leading involves directing and channeling employee behavior toward the accomplishment of work objectives and providing a workplace where people can be motivated to accomplish the work objectives.

Controlling determines how well the work is being done compared with what was planned. Basically, this involves measuring actual performance against planned performance and taking any necessary corrective action.

Figure 1.4 indicates the relative amounts of time that each level of management devotes to the functions of management. Note that supervisors spend the largest portions of their time on the leading and controlling functions. The other functions are not necessarily less important, but they usually take less of the supervisor’s time. The supervisor must perform all of the functions in order to be successful. For instance, organizing is difficult without a plan. Good employees obtained through staffing will not continue to work in a poorly planned, poorly organized work environment. Furthermore, it is very difficult to lead people if planning, organizing, and staffing are not done properly. Thus, the five functions of supervision can be viewed as links in a chain. For the supervisor to be successful, each of these links must be strong. (See Figure 1.5.) It is also important to remember that the supervisory functions do not involve a sequential process, but generally occur simultaneously.
The supervisor’s work can also be examined in terms of the types of skills required. Four basic types of skills have been identified:

1. **Technical skills** refer to knowledge about such things as machines, processes, and methods of production.
2. **Human relations skills** refer to knowledge about human behavior and to the ability to work well with people.
3. **Administrative skills** refer to knowledge about the organization and how it works—the planning, organizing, and controlling functions of supervision.
4. **Decision-making and problem-solving skills** refer to the ability to analyze information and objectively reach a decision.

It is generally agreed that in most organizations supervisors need a higher level of technical, human relations, and decision-making skills than of administrative skills. The mix of skills needed changes as a person moves up the managerial ladder. Figure 1.6 illustrates this concept. This does not imply that a supervisor needs more technical skills than a top manager, but that a supervisor needs more technical skills relative to human behavior, administrative, and decision-making skills. A supervisor who is ambitious and wishes to move up in the organization must develop all four types of skills.
Supervisors are successful for many reasons. However, five characteristics are important keys to supervisory success:

1. **Ability and willingness to delegate.** Most supervisors are promoted from operative jobs and have been accustomed to doing the work themselves. An often difficult, and yet essential, skill that such supervisors must develop is the ability or willingness to delegate work to others.

2. **Proper use of authority.** Some supervisors let their newly acquired authority go to their heads. It is sometimes difficult to remember that the use of authority alone does not get the support and cooperation of employees. Learning when not to use authority is often as important as learning when to use it.

3. **Setting a good example.** Supervisors must always remember that the work group looks to them to set the example. Employees expect fair and equitable treatment from their supervisors. Too many supervisors play favorites and treat employees inconsistently. Government legislation has attempted to reduce this practice in some areas, but the problem is still common.

4. **Recognizing the change in role.** People who have been promoted into supervision must recognize that their role has changed and that they are no longer one of the gang. They must remember that being a supervisor may require unpopular decisions. Supervisors are the connecting link between the other levels of management and the operative employees and must learn to represent both groups.

5. **Desire for the job.** Many people who have no desire to be supervisors are promoted into supervision merely because of their technical skills. Regardless of one's technical skills, the desire to be a supervisor is necessary for success in supervision. That desire encourages a person to develop the other types of skills necessary in supervision—human relations, administrative, and decision-making skills.

The five characteristics discussed above are not the only ones necessary for supervisory success, but they are certainly some of the most important.

### The Changing Nature of the Supervisor's Environment

Anyone who reads a newspaper recognizes that rapid changes are occurring in lifestyles, resources, information availability, and the work environment. These changes influence the supervisor. This section reviews some of these changes and examines their impact on the supervisor.

#### Changes in Information Availability

Because of the increasing sophistication of communication systems and the rapid increase in the use of computers, new data and information are being provided at an accelerating rate. For example:

- Access to the Internet provides a wide array of information that previously was unavailable and/or difficult to obtain.
- Cell phones, e-mail, and teleconferencing enhance the opportunities for improved communications within businesses.

The rapid increase in information availability increases technological change. Increases in information availability and technological change require supervisors to have increased technical skills. Furthermore, these changes require more skilled and trained employees. This then increases the importance of the supervisor’s role in training. Higher levels of skill and training require new approaches to motivation and leadership. Thus, the supervisor needs more skill in the human relations area.
Changes in Outlook toward the Work Environment

Some forecasters predict that there will be more emphasis on the quality of work life in the future. The factors that can improve the quality of work life include:

1. Safe and healthy working conditions.
2. Opportunity to use and develop individual capabilities.
3. Opportunity for personal and professional growth.
4. Work schedules, career demands, and travel requirements that do not regularly take up family and leisure time.
5. The right to personal privacy, free speech, equitable treatment, and due process.

Because some of these factors fall within the scope of supervision, changes affecting them will have a direct impact on the supervisor’s job.

Changes in Workforce Demographics

One of the more prevalent changes in today’s work environment is the increasing diversification of the workforce. Diversity of the workforce encompasses many different dimensions, including sex, race, religion, age, and types of disability. Compared to a workforce that historically consisted of white males, today’s workforce is very diverse, and this diversity is projected to increase. The latest demographic data show that the United States is becoming older and more racially and ethnically diverse. Hispanics will likely surpass African Americans around 2006 to become the largest ethnic group.1 Figure 1.7 gives a forecast on the composition of the labor force between 1996 and 2006.

Almost everyone has heard the phrase “the graying of America.” By the year 2006, the average age of employees will climb to 40.5 from 38.2 in 1996. This will be accompanied by a significant drop in the number of employees from 25 to 39 years old. In 1996, 45 percent of the labor force was age 40 or older; by 2006, almost 52 percent of the labor force will be in this age category. This age increase and the drop in the younger labor pool will have a mixed effect. The older workforce will likely be more experienced, reliable, and stable, but possibly less adaptable to change and retraining. One direct result of this trend is that the retirement age is already increasing.

FIGURE 1.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entrants</td>
<td>Leavers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic origin</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian and other, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING AT KRAFT FOODS

Kraft Foods is a strategic business unit of the Philip Morris Company. Kraft would rank number 48 in the Fortune 500 list of companies if it were a stand-alone company. Its annual revenues are almost $27 billion. It is the largest and most profitable food company in North America. For the past five years, Kraft has been growing profits faster than anyone else in its industry peer group.

Kraft is run by a woman, Betsy Holden, who is Kraft’s president and CEO. Women head six of Kraft’s 11 operating divisions. Three of the six are African American. Eight of Kraft’s 24 operating committee members are women, and 26.4 percent of Kraft’s corporate officers are women.

Kraft’s success has been achieved by following five principles:

1. Reward results.
2. Ideas have no gender.
3. Eliminate anything that interferes with ideas and results.
4. Help people to help themselves.
5. Measure what you want done—what gets measured is what gets done.

Source: Adapted from Mary Kay Haben, Executive Speeches, April–May 2001, pp. 1–9.

Another dimension of diversity is related to the increasing globalization of many companies. As companies become more global, diversity must be defined in global and not just Western terms. Defining diversity in global terms means looking at all people and everything that makes them different from one another, as well as the things that make them similar. Differentiating factors often go beyond race and language and may include such things as values and customs.

Opportunities and Challenges of Diversity

What challenges and contributions does the increasingly diverse workforce present? From an overall viewpoint, organizations must get away from the tradition of fitting employees into a single corporate mold. Everyone will not look and act the same. Organizations must create new human resource policies to explicitly recognize and respond to the unique needs of individual employees.

Greater diversity will create certain specific challenges but also make some important contributions. Communication problems are certain to occur, including misunderstandings among employees and managers as well as the need to translate verbal and written materials into several languages. Solutions to these problems will necessitate additional training involving work in basic skills such as writing and problem solving. An increase in organizational factionalism will require that increasing amounts of time be dedicated to dealing with special-interest and advocacy groups.

One of the most significant issues facing women in management is the glass ceiling—a reference to a level within the managerial hierarchy beyond which very few women advance. Much emphasis is expected to be placed by both the government and business during the next decade on breaking this glass ceiling. Supervision Illustration 1–1 describes how Kraft Foods has broken the glass ceiling.

In addition to creating the above challenges, greater diversity presents new opportunities. Diversity contributes to creating an organization culture that is more tolerant of different behavioral styles and wider views. This often leads to better business decisions. Another potential payoff is a greater responsiveness to diverse groups of customers.

The increasing diversification of the workforce is fact. Learning to effectively manage a diverse workforce should be viewed as an investment in the future. Supervision Illustration 1–2 describes the diversity awareness by Allstate Insurance Company.
DIVERSITY AT ALLSTATE

Allstate Insurance Company has received the following awards: “Best Company for Hispanics to Work” (1999), “Top 10 Companies for Minority Managers” (1998), and “Best Companies for Working Mothers” (1997). For Allstate, the concept of diversity is not limited to ethnicity and gender. It is based on a wider perspective that includes diversity in age, religion, sexual orientation, and disability.

From the moment employees join Allstate, they hear a clear message from management that they will enjoy a bias-free work environment. Management sets the tone by giving each employee a booklet entitled “The Allstate Partnership,” which is similar to an employment contract without the legality. The contract states in plain language what employees and the company can expect from each other. For example, an employee can count on being treated with respect and dignity. On the other hand, the company expects employees to develop their skills so the company can outperform competition.


GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING DIVERSITY

Diversity management has been defined as “the process by which a company (or manager, human resource department, or any individual) incorporates the dissimilarities of its workforce into the decision-making process in order to motivate, direct, lead, organize, plan, and staff more efficiently.” From an overall viewpoint, supervisors must get away from the tradition of fitting employees into a single corporate mold. Everyone will not look and act the same. New policies must be created to explicitly recognize and respond to the unique needs of individual employees. Specifically, there are certain guidelines that today’s supervisors should follow for supervising within and among a diverse workforce:

1. **Focus on observable behavior.** Don’t jump to conclusions but instead focus on actual observations. Resist saying things like “There goes Mary again” or “Joe looks like he hasn’t heard a thing I said for the last two hours.”

2. **Avoid stereotyping.** One suggestion is to use people’s names even when thinking about them. It’s easy to stereotype people when they’re thought of in terms of “types,” but it’s hard to do so when using an individual’s name. For example, think “What can I expect from Tom?” as opposed to “What can I expect from them?”

3. **Evaluate output, not input.** Results are what counts. Don’t worry about minor habits and idiosyncrasies, especially when the work is getting done.

4. **Don’t make assumptions about nonstandard behavior.** Begin with the fact that a nonstandard behavior is different but not necessarily inappropriate. Remember the old saying, “There is more than one way to skin a cat.”

5. **Provide feedback based on observations.** Let employees know how you see certain behaviors or events. Often others don’t perceive things the way the supervisor does. Don’t dismiss dysfunctional behavior as either improvable or deliberately manifest. Often the person’s perception is simply different and, in the absence of feedback to the contrary, he or she will continue to think so.

6. **Don’t tolerate nonbehavioral assumptions from anyone.** Regardless of how unpopular it might be at the time, confront any form of stereotyping. One approach is to point out that the accuser is really describing behavior that everyone in the workplace engages in to some extent.

7. **Test your own behaviors.** Ask employees for feedback to determine what effects your own behaviors have on others and look for what you might do to improve.
Greater diversity can be expected to create certain specific challenges but also some important contributions. Communication problems are certain to occur. This includes misunderstandings among employees and supervisors. There may also be a need to translate verbal and written materials into several languages. Additional training, including remedial work in very basic skills such as writing and problem solving, will be necessary. Organizational factionalism can be expected to increase. This will require that increasing amounts of time be dedicated to dealing with special-interest and advocacy groups.

In addition to creating the above challenges, greater diversity also presents new opportunities. Diversity contributes to creating an organization culture more tolerant of different behavioral styles and wider views. This often leads to better business decisions. Another potential payoff is a greater responsiveness to diverse groups of customers.

The increasing diversification of the workforce is fact. Not only are the demographics of today’s workforce different, but so are its attitudes, expectations, and needs. Learning to effectively supervise a diverse workforce should be viewed as an investment in the future.
By studying this chapter, Jane and John have learned that supervision is the first level of management in an organization and is concerned with encouraging the members of a work unit to contribute positively toward accomplishing the organization’s goals. They have learned what work a supervisor performs. Planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling (pp. 5–6) are the five forms of work that a supervisor must perform. They have also learned that four basic types of skills are required to do the work of supervision (p. 7). These are technical skills, human relations skills, administrative skills, and decision-making and problem-solving skills. Finally, they have learned five reasons why supervisors are successful (p. 8). If they are to be good supervisors, they must understand the work of supervision, master the skills necessary to perform that work, and consistently apply the elements necessary for supervisory success.

Section V—Controlling Skills—describes the supervisor’s role in determining how well the work is being done compared with what was planned. Topics such as supervisory control and quality; improving productivity through cost control; safety and accident prevention; discipline; and grievance handling are all described in detail.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a clear understanding of what supervision involves. The chapter also discusses several reasons why supervisors are successful.

1. Define supervision. Supervision is defined in this book as the first level of management in the organization and is concerned with encouraging the members of a work unit to contribute positively toward accomplishing the organization’s goals and objectives.

2. Describe the work of a supervisor. The work of a supervisor is often categorized into five areas: planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling. Planning involves determining the most effective means for achieving the work of the unit. Organizing involves distributing the work among the employees in the work group and arranging the work so that it flows smoothly. Staffing is concerned with obtaining and developing good people. Leading involves directing and channeling employee behavior toward the accomplishment of work objectives. Controlling determines how well the work is being done compared with what was planned.

3. Present the types of skills necessary to perform the job of supervision. Four basic types of skills have been identified. Technical skills refer to knowledge about such things as machines, processes, and methods of production. Human relations skills refer to knowledge about human behavior and the ability to work well with people. Administrative skills refer to knowledge about the organization and how it works. Decision-making and problem-solving skills refer to the ability to analyze information and objectively reach a decision.

4. State the key reasons for supervisory success. Five key reasons for supervisory success are ability and willingness to delegate, the proper use of authority, setting a good example, recognizing the change in role, and desire for the job.

5. Explain the glass ceiling concept. The glass ceiling concept refers to a level within the organizational hierarchy beyond which very few women and minorities advance.

6. Describe guidelines for managing diversity in the workforce. The guidelines are as follows:
   - Focus on observable behavior.
   - Avoid stereotyping.
   - Evaluate output, not input.
   - Don’t make assumptions about nonstandard behavior.
   - Provide feedback based on observations.
   - Don’t tolerate nonbehavioral assumptions from anyone.
   - Test your own behaviors.
Review Questions

1. What is supervision?
2. What are three general levels of management?
3. Give five names (or job titles) of supervisors.
4. Name three sources that organizations can use when seeking to fill supervisory positions.
5. What are the five functions of management that a supervisor performs?
6. Outline the four classifications of skills necessary to do supervisory work.

Skill-Building Questions

1. “A good supervisor in a manufacturing plant could be a good supervisor in a bank.” Discuss.
2. Do you think that supervision can be learned through books and study or only through experience? Why?
3. Do you think that the best worker also makes the best supervisor? Why or why not?
4. “A good supervisor should be able to do any job that he or she supervises better than any of the operative employees.” Discuss your views on this statement.

References


Additional Readings

Perican, John. “Casually Yours” [Shortcomings of Supervision], Supervision, September 1996.
Incident 1–1
Promotion into Supervision
Roy Thomas has been with the Rebc0 Manufacturing Company for 15 years. He joined Rebc0 right after his high school graduation and has been with the company ever since.

Ten years ago, Rebc0 became unionized and Roy was one of the people primarily responsible for its unionization. He helped the organizer from the Teamsters Union plan the union election campaign. He helped get the local union established after the election and then served as its president for its first three years. After that, he continued to serve in various capacities with the local union. Two years ago, he was again elected for a three-year term as its president.

Over the years, Roy has developed a reputation for being firm but fair with the management of Rebc0. He is well respected by both the members of the union and the management of Rebc0.

Roy was quite shocked when he was recently called into the plant manager’s office for the following discussion.

Bill Lindsay (Plant Manager): Good to see you, Roy.

Roy: Yeah, it’s good to see you, Bill, especially when we’re not arguing over a problem. I hope you didn’t call me here for that.

Bill: No, Roy, I didn’t. In fact, I called you here to talk about something else entirely. Some of our older supervisors are retiring shortly, as you know, and we would like you to consider becoming a supervisor.

Roy: A supervisor—you’ve got to be kidding! I’ve fussed and fought with you and the other managers around here for 10 years. Now you want me to join you. How would the employees react?

Bill: That’s just it, Roy. We think they would be pleased. After all, they’ve elected you president of the local twice already. You’ve got their respect. A good supervisor just needs to know how to handle people, and you sure know how to do that.

Roy: I just don’t know, Bill. Give me a couple of days to think about it.

Questions (Explain your answers in writing.)
1. Do you think Roy would be a good supervisor?
2. What qualities does Roy possess that support your answer?
3. Do you agree with Bill Lindsay’s statement that “a good supervisor just needs to know how to handle people”?
4. What do you think the reaction of the employees would be if Roy accepted the job?

Incident 1–2
Not Enough Time to Supervise
Len Massey is a supervisor in a large fire and casualty insurance company. He is in charge of a group of clerical workers who review policies and endorsements, calculate commissions, and maintain records. Before his promotion to supervisor, Len himself was a clerical worker in the department. It was largely due to his reputation as the best worker in the department that he was promoted. “If Len did the work,” his co-workers said, “it is right.”

This reputation has carried over into Len’s supervisory practices. Everything coming out of his group is perfect. In fact, Len rechecks in detail all the work coming out of his group to ensure that it is accurate. It is not unusual for him to turn work back to one of his employees several times until it is perfect. Len’s employees quickly recognized his eye for detail and his checking and rechecking of their work. One of them was recently overheard to say, “I don’t really worry about accuracy in my work too much, because if I make an error, I know Len will catch it.”

Last week, at Len’s annual performance evaluation, his boss, Pam Levine, said that Len was spending too much time on detail work and not enough time on supervision. In fact, she said that he must start spending more time in supervision and less time in doing the work of others. Len’s response to Pam was, “People in my unit don’t seem to care about sloppy work, and since I’m responsible, I feel obligated to check it before it goes out.”

Questions
1. Is Pam Levine right?
2. What does Len need to know about supervision?
3. What do you think of the reasons given for Len’s promotion?
Exercise 1–1

**Understanding the Job of a Supervisor**

Exhibit 1.1 gives a job description for a maintenance supervisor in a manufacturing company. From this job description, classify the duties and responsibilities as to whether they are planning, organizing, staffing, leading, or controlling.

Also identify the specific skills of supervision—technical, human relations, administrative, and decision making—that are described in this job description.

Exercise 1–2

**Required Attributes of a Supervisor**

1. From the supervisory jobs listed on the page 17, choose the one that is most attractive to you.
2. Form into groups of four or five with others who selected the same job as you.
3. Develop a group list of required and desirable skills for the job.
4. Present and defend your group’s list before the entire class.

Exercise 1–3

**The Supervisor’s Personal Inventory**

The following inventory has helped many supervisors determine to what extent their behaviors or practices contribute to difficulties for their employees. The items below represent important supervisor behaviors and practices that build positive work relationships. Rate yourself and your company on each item, giving yourself

---

**EXHIBIT 1.1**

**Position of Maintenance Supervisor**


**Basic Purpose**

To supervise the maintenance activity through the implementation of a preventive maintenance program and an ongoing maintenance repair program for the facility, vehicles, production maintenance, and process equipment.

**Duties and Responsibilities**

1. Plans and implements effective procedures and policies for the maintenance department to ensure that all equipment, facilities, and utilities are in an acceptable state of repair.
2. Coordinates with vendors, suppliers, and contractors the installation of new equipment or equipment processes.
3. Establishes, with direction from the plant manager, priorities of all maintenance activities through a work order procedure.
4. Supervises all daily activities of the maintenance department through subordinates to ensure completion of assigned projects that will result in the least amount of machine downtime.
5. Monitors completion of maintenance projects to ensure that safety and quality standards are met.
6. Approves all requisitions relating to new and replacement parts, supplies, machinery, and equipment for the maintenance department.
7. Provides technical knowledge and expertise to solve problems of a mechanical, electrical, or hydraulic/pneumatic nature.
8. Develops and maintains responsible labor/management relations consistent with the labor agreement, including representing the company in certain grievances.
9. Schedules and assigns hourly personnel to maintain good housekeeping for the facility grounds and administrative offices.

**Organizational Relationships**

This position reports to the manager/engineering and maintenance and indirectly to the plant manager. Coordinates work with all service and production departments.

**Position Specifications**

Must possess 8 to 10 years’ experience in maintenance, engineering, or related fields. Prefer minimum of 3–5 years’ supervisory experience. Must be familiar with each of the following areas: boilers, air compressors, heating and air-conditioning, plumbing, welding, carpentry, electrical/electronic equipment, pneumatic hydraulics, and heavy manufacturing equipment.
SUPERVISOR
RIGHTS-OF-WAY AND LAND

ABC is a diversified energy company making important contributions in the pursuit of new energy resources around the world. A position of Supervisor—Rights-of-Way and Land is currently available at ABC's Houston location.

A college education is required, with a degree preferably in business, law, or engineering. Strong experience in pipeline right-of-way work is required with a minimum of three years of right-of-way field experience. Additional experience must include a minimum of five years of general right-of-way office experience, with a heavy supervisory background in right-of-way. The responsibilities will include supervising the acquisition of right-of-way and the settlement of claims; following litigations; and conducting and coordinating contact with the state and local authorities. The ability to negotiate and prepare amendatory, alteration, and relocation agreements is mandatory.

ABC offers competitive salaries, a comprehensive employee benefits program, and a variety of career challenges. If interested, send résumé and salary history to:

P.O. Box 000

An equal opportunity employer
Principals Only!

ACCOUNTING
A/R SUPERVISOR

Progressive company with high-volume receivables department is looking for a sharp individual with accounts receivable supervisory experience. Excellent starting salary and benefits. If you are a motivated self-starter, respond with salary history to Box 000.

SUPERVISING
Senior Auditor: Plan, direct, and conduct audits for client operations. Review and prepare corporate tax returns, develop budget forecast and analysis, and develop and improve accounting systems. Must have Bachelor's in Accounting for Business Administration with two years' experience in job or as Analyst or Accountant. Hours 9:00 AM–5:00 PM, Monday–Friday, overtime as needed. Those qualified, résumé to P.O. Box 000.

WEEKEND PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR

XYZ Corporation, a smoke-free environment and manufacturer of soft contact lenses and solution-related products, has an immediate opening for a Weekend Production Supervisor. This individual must be able to plan, organize, and control staffing, equipment, and facilities in an efficient manner within budgetary guidelines. This includes being held accountable for the quality and quantity of products produced, compliance with CGMP and OSHA standards, and guiding the department toward achieving departmental and company goals and objectives. BS/BA and one year production supervisory experience required. Solid background in highly technical production environment. Good written and oral communication skills. Must work weekends (11:00 PM to 11:00 AM), and a minimum of one additional day per week is required. We regret that we are unable to respond to all inquiries. We will only respond to those candidates selected for an interview.

Qualified applicants should forward résumé with salary requirements to:

XYZ Corporation
P.O. Box 000

SUPERVISOR & SALES MANAGER

French-owned, U.S.-based corporation seeks National Supervisor & Sales Engineer to supervise and coordinate the U.S. marketing and distribution efforts. Experience in the processes of importation of European products into the United States as well as fluency in written and spoken French are required. Applicants must have four years' experience in the stone products industry as well as six years' experience in construction supervision and sales of stone products. Send résumé to: P.O. Box 000.
If you are not a supervisor, discuss how your current boss/supervisor behaves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Scale</th>
<th>Applies Rarely</th>
<th>Applies Sometimes</th>
<th>Applies Most of Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Know my job</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Know my employees’ jobs</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Know my company’s objectives and standard procedures</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Convey my objectives and procedures to my employees</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Define my objectives and procedures clearly</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Try to resolve those objectives and procedures that are in conflict</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Establish clear performance standards</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Convey performance standards to my employees</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Insist that performance standards are met</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Try to improve substandard performance</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Set standards for myself and follow them</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My employees know what to expect from me</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Avoid self-centeredness</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Am employee-centered</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Know my employees’ strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Keep my employees well informed on matters affecting them</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Keep channels of communication open</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Actively lead, direct, and control employees when necessary</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Allow my employees to lead and control themselves when they are able to</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Avoid unjust criticism</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Criticize employees in private</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Give credit when it is earned</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Command employees publicly</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Avoid taking credit for things my employees did</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Show respect toward employees</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Command respect from employees by my conduct</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Discipline fairly</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Discipline only when needed</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Back employees to fullest when they are right</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Refuse to back employees when they’re wrong even though such refusal may lessen my popularity</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Delegate as far down the line as possible</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Value my employees’ input</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Provide opportunities to get employee input</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Use the input I receive</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Encourage employees to develop their sense of responsibility and initiative</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Use my authority appropriately</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. My employees have pride in their accomplishments</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Actively try to build esprit de corps</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Practice what I preach</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Recognize my shortcomings</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Compensate for my shortcomings</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

one (1) point if the item rarely applies, two (2) points if it sometimes applies, and three (3) points if it applies to you most of the time.
Chapter 1  The Supervisor’s Job  19

Exercise 1–4

Understanding Diversity

As a part of communicating that an organization is truly committed to supporting a highly qualified and diverse workforce, supervisors should take every opportunity to demonstrate the use of nonsexist language.

A. In this vein, try and identify a nonsexist word to use in place of each of the following words that may carry a sexist connotation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Word</th>
<th>Nonsexist Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man-hours</td>
<td>Waiter/Waitress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Friday</td>
<td>Watchman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout man</td>
<td>Repairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>Man-made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreman</td>
<td>Spokesman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policeman</td>
<td>Draftsman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42. Retain my sense of humor in dealings with employees
43. Admit my errors when I’m wrong
44. Apply the same standards of conduct and performance to men and women
45. Continually strive to improve myself and my company

Scoring: Total all your points for the 45 items. If you scored 125 or above, your supervisory behaviors and company practices promote positive work relationships. If you scored between 100 and 124, some of your behaviors/practices may contribute to difficulties with employees, but no urgency for change is indicated unless one or more items scored very low. If you scored between 75 and 99, probably many of your behaviors/practices contribute to difficulties with employees, and you should ask yourself what you can do to improve the low scoring items. If you scored below 75, improving your overall supervisory behaviors/practices should be a high priority for you.

Regardless of your score, the awareness that comes from taking such an inventory is the prerequisite for self-improvement. Your inventory results can serve as the basis for eliminating managerial blind spots and creating a personal development plan to ensure that the impact of your behaviors and practices is a positive one.

Source: Adapted from “Eliminating Managerial Blind Spots,” by Gary W. Hobson, Supervision, August 1990. Reprinted by permission of © National Research Bureau, P.O. Box 1, Burlington, IA 52601-0001.

Selected Supervisory and Related Periodicals

This list provides the reader with the names of the more commonly referenced supervisory and related periodicals.

- Academy of Management Review
- Administrative Management
- Arbitration Journal
- Business Horizons
- Business Week
- California Management Review
- Forbes
- Fortune
- Harvard Business Review
- Human Resource Management
- Journal of Business
- Management Review
- Management Solutions
- Management Today
- Personnel Administrator
- Personnel Journal
- Supervision
- Supervisory Management
- Training and Development Journal
- Wall Street Journal (newspaper)