

Special Report



How You Can Be a Great Supervisor

New Leader Series # 1

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The 15 Rules of Great Supervision

Yes, You Too Can Be a Great Supervisor!

Congratulations, if you are a supervisor you are an expert at your job and your company recognizes that. The bad news is that 55% of new supervisors receive no management training before starting in their new role as supervisor. I wrote this special report to serve as your new supervisor rulebook. If you follow these tried and true guidelines, your chances of supervisor success are sure to improve. Congratulations and good luck in your new role.

Just Follow These 15 Simple Rules to Supervisor Success

Ok, here is the most important thing you need to know in order to be a great supervisor. **To be a great supervisor, you should know what behaviors you should be able to expect from your employees and they should know what behaviors they should be able to expect from you.** If you want a head-start to success, then just follow these 15 supervision rules. While you may have to make some minor adjustments to suit your own organization, these principles of great supervision will serve you well throughout your entire career. If you want to be seen as a leader who inspires others to work together, you now have the recipe for success. Good luck and best wishes for a very successful career.

1. You Must Treat All Your Employees Fairly

Workers expect that the workload will be fairly distributed and that the supervisor will treat all team members equally. Do not play favorites or develop special friendships with anyone you supervise. That will undermine your authority and open you up to charges of favoritism. As a supervisor you should base all rewards and recognition on observable behavior, not personality or attitude.

2. Give Clear Answers to All Your Employees' Questions

Workers will look to you for clear answers on a variety of topics. They want to know if they are performing up to the expected standard. They want to know if you are interested in their opinion. They want to know if layoffs are coming or if they might be in line for a raise. It's fine to tell an employee, "Let me find out and I will get back to you as soon as I can." In fact, it's much better to say, "I don't know" rather than to just offer a guess and later be proven wrong.

3. Act with Integrity to Establish Your Credibility

Workers need to know that they can trust what you say to be accurate and true. Never speculate about a company policy. Your credibility is based on a consistent experience of trust and reliability in what you tell employees. As a new supervisor, you will have less experience so try and maximize your trust by being reliable and honest in all your communications. Do not take any chances that you may not be in

agreement with what senior managers are telling your employees. It's your job to read all the company memos, updates, human resources policies and company policies and procedure manuals. Become an expert on the rules. Yes, this will take time, but when you have a problem you will be very glad you did. Then you will be able to confidently follow your company's policies and procedures. Further, if problems escalate, your Human Resources Department will be able to support your decision. This will allow senior managers to see you as leader who supports the organization and it will help you get noticed for future promotions.

4. Be Crystal Clear with Your Performance Expectations

As a supervisor, it is your job to tell employees exactly how to do their job. They need to know how and at what rate they need to perform to meet the expected job standard. They also need clear instruction on all company policies such as attendance or safe work practices. Make sure you communicate this information in simple and easy-to-understand terms. It's fine to politely ask people to paraphrase back to you any information you have just told them. This way you can be certain they understand your instructions and expectations. If something is really important, then write it down and make sure they can read and understand what you have written. Giving clear direction and expectations is not just about holding people accountable when they fail, it also helps you catch people being good when they are doing things right. If they know exactly what is expected of them, they are much more likely to succeed.

5. Employees Expect You to Act Decisively

Employees need to know that you can make a decision and then stick to it. Do not play the blame game with your employees when things go wrong. If you made a bad call, take responsibility for it. This is called leading by example. You will be surprised at how many workers will approach you with very minor questions that may seem like common sense to you. Never criticize them or make fun of an employee's questions or else they will not come to you with really important matters because they may feel like they might be ridiculed. Instead, talk with them calmly and explain what the decision is and what they need to do to get things done right. When an employee makes an honest mistake, keep things in perspective. Do not lose your temper over small matters and never become enraged, scream, or use profanity with an employee. Everyone will make mistakes and you want your employees to feel comfortable approaching you early with honest errors. Otherwise, they will try and hide mistakes and the problems will just escalate. Get a reputation for expecting excellence from your employees, not perfection.

6. Give Employees the Right Tools They Need for the Job

It is your job as supervisor to assure that your employees have all the tools and supplies they need to be successful. You need to establish the policies and procedures to monitor and maintain all needed inventory and the availability of

supplies and equipment to keep the work stream flowing smoothly. It is fine if you choose to delegate some of these responsibilities, but remember it is ultimately your responsibility to assure that your employees have all the tools and supplies they need to get the job done right.

7. Make Sure Your Employees Get Adequate Training

Job demands are shifting more rapidly today than any time in history. Today's standard operating procedure will soon become tomorrow's outdated method of doing things. Technology and globalization is a wave sweeping across the world of work. It is your responsibility as a supervisor to assure that your employees' ride the crest of this wave and do not get swamped overboard by it. Workers expect training and need to be taught how to master new skills to stay current within industry standards. This is especially true for workers who have been just promoted or whose job gets upgraded. It is pointless to criticize someone for doing a bad job if you have failed to provide them with the training they need to succeed.

8. Reward Employees Based on Their Job Performance

The world is full of people who do the least they have to do at work just to avoid being fired. But, believe it or not, many of these same people were once hard working and dedicated employees. They were once committed to excellence and high productivity. So, what happened to them and their job performance? The

answer is nothing happened! I mean nobody ever noticed them doing anything right. But if they did something wrong, then you can be sure it got noticed and someone let them know about it. Ignoring good behavior and focusing only on bad job performance is the hallmark of bad supervision. It's the most reliable way to turn a good employee into a mediocre one. Strive to be the kind of supervisor who is constantly alert for people doing things right. High performing workers deserve greater rewards than low performing workers. This is the way the world works. The more value an employee adds to the organization, the greater should be their reward. If everyone just gets a 3% cost-of-living pay raise every year, regardless of their individual performance, then the high performers slow down and the job performance bar gets lowered. In contrast, if coworkers see that high performance results in higher rewards, then the performance bar gets raised and all employees tend to produce more and work harder.

9. Always Show Appreciation for Your Employee's Efforts

Every employee wants to feel that they are valued and appreciated. This is one of the most basic of all human needs and good supervisors use this knowledge to better manage their employees. For example, an encouraging word to a low performing employee will often do more to improve things than constant criticism for poor performance. Research has shown that a four-to-one ratio of compliments to criticism produces the best level of job performance. That means for every one negative comment or criticism you make to an employee, you have to make four

positive comments for that employee to still feel valued and appreciated. In fact, your employees will be more responsive to your negative feedback if they know that you have a track record of noticing their successes and have previously given them positive feedback. When supervisors constantly focus on poor performance and what employees are doing wrong, employees quickly learn to tune them out and start to feel like there is just no pleasing that supervisor. Under constant criticism, they may work harder when the supervisor is watching them. But this negative approach will cripple employee morale and lower overall team productivity.

10. Defend Your Employees From Unfair Criticism

If you expect loyalty from your employees, then you must be prepared to show loyalty to them by defending them when they receive undeserved or harsh and extreme criticism from others. You should act with civility and politeness toward everyone. Never let anyone treat your employees disrespectfully or in an unprofessional manner. Everyone can occasionally lose their temper, but supervisors are professionals and are responsible for setting the standard for acceptable conduct and behavior at work. It's your job to create a positive work environment for all employees. If a higher level manager starts to openly argue with one of your employees, you need to politely intervene and stop things from escalating. For example, let's say that your boss, Mr. Jones, has a problem with your employee, Pete. When Mr. Jones starts criticizing and yelling at Pete in front of everyone, it's your job to bring things back to a polite and acceptable level of

communication. You might try to say something like; "Mr. Jones, I am sure you would agree that it would be better if you and I talked to Pete about this matter in private. I know that is how I would want you to handle it if you had a problem with me and I think we should show Pete that same level of respect. We can use my office." When you act to save an employee from public embarrassment and humiliation, everyone will notice and you will be building good will with all your employees. If another supervisor at your own job level has a problem with Pete, just say, "If you have a problem with Pete's performance, please discuss it with me in private and I will take steps to manage my own employee's behavior."

11. Under Stress Act Professionally and Remain Calm

Before you can supervise or manage anyone else successfully, you must first learn to manage your own behavior. Never lash out at an employee in a moment of anger or rage. Never curse or use profanity, no matter how upset you become with an employee. Getting upset and losing your temper solves nothing and only makes a bad situation much worse. You should strive to remain calm when problems arise. Anyone can steer a ship in calm seas. It takes a real leader to remain calm and professional during times of stress or crisis. As a supervisor, your employees will look to you to model the behavior you expect others to display. Employees feel more secure and comfortable with supervisors who handle things calmly and consistently. When you get a reputation for remaining calm under stress,

employees see you as a leader and their respect and loyalty will increase dramatically.

12. Be Flexible When Managing Other People

While consistency provides day-to-day security, employees also need and expect some degree of personal flexibility when unexpected problems arise. This is especially true in situations where your employees have to deal with unexpected personal problems. As a supervisor, you should be able to show empathy, concern, and understanding when a good employee has an unexpected personal crisis. If someone's car is broken down or their child is sick and they cannot leave them at daycare, they will feel upset enough. Good supervisors do not make things worse by criticizing people for things they cannot control. Your calm understanding will go a long way toward generating employee loyalty and good will. Follow the "Golden Rule" and try to act the way you would hope your boss would to act toward you if you had an unexpected family crisis. When employees are absent or late because of unexpected problems, it's your job to personally pitch in and help your other employees keep up a high level of performance. Of course, if people abuse time off policies or have excessive problems that affect their job performance then it becomes your responsibility to hold them accountable and get them back on track. You can do this best with a spirit of cooperation and partnership. Be honest, and calmly tell them they have not met their job responsibilities and ask them how you can help get them back to an acceptable level of job performance. Maybe they just

need a shift in their work schedule or they might have personal problems and need a referral to your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

13. Display a Positive Attitude While on the Job

As a supervisor, it's your responsibility to set the tone and attitude for your team. Enthusiasm is contagious and it's your job to get the ball rolling. Smile warmly and personally greet everyone each day. Make an extra effort to make sure all of your employees' feel welcome, wanted, and appreciated. At the end of an especially hard day of work, take the time to walk around and personally thank every employee for their efforts. When employees complain or criticize each other, remind them that no one can expect every day to be problem free and that everyone can make mistakes. Become the voice of calm reason that restores a positive balance to the team. Actively try to make work a pleasant place for every employee to be. Take time to celebrate team accomplishments and go out of your way to notice special occasions. Take an interest in the lives of others. People love to talk about their children and they appreciate any supervisor who treats them as a person instead of a machine.

14. Show Respect for Your Employees Ideas & Opinions

Every employee wants to be recognized for having job knowledge, skills, and new ideas about how to do their job better. The best ideas come from the people actually doing the job. Work to inspire your employees to innovate and think of

new ways to do things that add value or reduce costs. You may already have a formal suggestion program in place where employees receive a financial reward for ideas that result in increased profits or decreased costs. Even if you do not have a formal program, in order to create an environment where people are committed to innovation and are willing to suggest ideas for improvement, they need to feel that their ideas and opinions are valued by you and the organization. Never call an idea “silly” or “foolish” even if it does not make immediate sense to you or anyone else. If people feel that their ideas are going to be ridiculed if they are not perfect, you will lose out on many good ideas. Other employees can help improve and add real value to your team and organization. Praise and reward your employees for just being willing to suggest ideas – even if they do not turn out to be impractical or do not get used.

15. Be Willing to Help Employees with Personal Problems

Every one of your employees also has a life outside of work that impacts and affects their ability to perform while on the job. Maybe their job performance is slipping because they are going through a divorce or caring for an aging parent. Do not assume that they are just getting lazy or goofing off. All of us can be affected by stress and having to deal with an angry supervisor will not help anyone improve their performance. No one expects a supervisor to become a counselor or a therapist, but a good supervisor can always offer a word of kindness and encouragement to an employee who is facing a personal crisis. It's your

responsibility to direct employees to Human Resources or the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) so they can be directed to where they can get the help they need. Employees should know that you are interested in their lives and are always willing to try and do whatever you can to help them get the help they need. Just imagine that one of your employees comes in to work with bruises and a black eye due to a domestic violence problem. They are already going to feel embarrassed and be worried about losing their job. Let them know that anyone can find themselves in a bad situation and you have no desire to punish or fire them. Tell them not to worry about what people think and remind them that team members care about each other and are not going to laugh or make fun of someone having problems. Get them to understand that you are willing to try and get them the professional help they need. Tell them that they can focus on work when they get things under control and that you and your team want them back because they contribute to the team's success. Even if you have to give them the day off and do their work that day yourself, the kindness you show toward your employees in a time of need will come back to you in the form of high morale, employee loyalty and respect, and professional credibility.

Bonus Rule # 16

Always Conduct Yourself with Humility and Modesty

If you are a supervisor it means you are an expert and your company has recognized your performance and potential. It's fine to have confidence in your own skills and abilities, but remember that no one can be expected to always have

all the answers. Give up the idea of trying to be perfect and having all the answers. Succeeding at work is a team effort and your success as a supervisor is much more dependent upon the performance of others rather than on your own performance. It takes a strong person to admit when they are wrong or do not know the answer to a question. Your job as a supervisor is to create dialogue, not to win every argument with your employees. Learn that all of us, including you, will make mistakes and be willing to apologize when it happens. If you act like a know-it-all, when you do make the inevitable mistake your employees will take great delight in your misfortune, and they will happily spread the news of your embarrassment to others. In contrast, if you act like a decent and caring person, people can easily forgive a good supervisor who has a bad day. This is especially true when you can take ownership and responsibility for your own bad behavior, honestly apologize and expresses sincere regret. If you want to be seen as a leader, remember your job is to help others succeed not to be the superstar player on your team. If you practice this approach you will build good will with your employees and coworkers across all levels of the organization. Always remember that a leader's job is to inspire others to work together to achieve mutually beneficial goals.

Always Remember - Success is a Process Not an Event

I hope these rules will serve as the foundation of your success as a supervisor. I know that I like to have a set of rules and steps to follow when I am learning new things and that is why I wrote this special report. I also know that being a great supervisor is a process and not an event. Give yourself time to grow and look for mentors or more experienced supervisors who can offer you guidance and support as you grow into your role. Your willingness to read this report is evidence of your openness to feedback and advice – a sign of a great supervisor. Please accept my best wishes for career success and personal happiness and feel free to send me an email at thaizlip@skillsforsuccess.ws and let me know how things are going. From this moment on, you can now consider me part of your personal success team!

About Thomas Haizlip

Thomas Haizlip was a clinical psychologist for 14 years before moving from the couch to the corporation. Tom is now President of Skills For Success, Inc. and is an executive coach and management consultant. Tom specializes in helping managers and executives learn how to become emotionally intelligent leaders. Tom sees leadership as much more than just being in charge. He works to help his clients become better leaders by learning how to build relationships based on trust and how to positively manage the inevitable conflicts that will occur in the workplace. His clients learn how to master the hard work of becoming a soft skills expert. If you or your organization need help transforming managers and executives into leaders, Tom is available for executive coaching, professional workshops, and leadership seminars. Contact him at (336) 664-1100 or email him at thaizlip@skillsforsuccess.ws .